

Public Document Pack



Tuesday, 19 November 2024

Tel: 01993 861000

e-mail: democratic.services@westoxon.gov.uk

COUNCIL

You are summoned to a meeting of the Council which will be held in Council Chamber, Council Offices, Woodgreen, Witney, Oxfordshire OX28 1NB on **Wednesday, 27 November 2024 at 2.00 pm.**



Giles Hughes
Chief Executive

To: Members of the Council

Councillors: Elizabeth Poskitt (Chair), Andrew Coles (Vice-Chair), Joy Aitman, Lidia Arciszewska, Thomas Ashby, Hugo Ashton, Mike Baggaley, 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, 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 and Alistair Wray

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

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

AGENDA

1. **Apologies for Absence**
To receive any apologies for absence. The quorum for full Council is 13 Members.
2. **Declarations of Interest**
To receive any declarations from Members of Council on any items to be considered at the meeting
3. **Minutes of Previous Meeting (Pages 9 - 22)**
To approve the minutes of the meeting held on 25 September 2024.
4. **Receipt of Announcements**
To receive any announcements from the Chair, Leader, Members of the Executive or the Chief Executive.
5. **Participation of the Public**
A member of the public, who is a registered elector in the District, may ask questions of the Chair of Council, any Member of the Executive or the Chair of any Committee, on any matter in relation to which the Council has powers or duties or which affects the District.

A member of the public is limited to asking one such question at any meeting of the Council, other than Annual Council. No more than one question can be asked on behalf of any organisation or body at any Council meeting.

Notice that the question is to be asked, together with a written copy of the question, must be provided to the Director of Governance, via email to democratic.services@westoxon.gov.uk, and is to be received no later than noon on the seventh working day before the day of the meeting.

The deadline for submissions for public participation to be received by Democratic Services was 12.00pm on Monday 18 November 2024.

No questions from the public will be allowed where the requisite notice has not been given.

6. **Questions by Members**
The following questions have been submitted by Members of Council to Members of the Executive, in accordance with the Council Procedure Rules (Constitution Part 5A, Rule 12).

Written responses will be circulated to Members and published on the Council's website at least one working day prior to the meeting. A Member submitting a question is entitled to ask one supplementary question at the meeting which must arise directly from the question or the response to it.

The supplementary questions and answers will be detailed in the minutes of the meeting.

Question 1: Councillor Michele Mead to Councillor Andy Graham, Leader of the Council

How many bookings have you received to hire the Chamber?

Question 2: Councillor Michele Mead to Councillor Duncan Enright, Deputy Leader and Executive Member for Economic Development

As yet another shop closes in Marriots walk please can we have a update on what the Executive are doing to fill these empty units?

Question 3: Councillor Ruth Smith to Councillor Rachel Crouch, Executive Member for Stronger Healthy Communities

What are the latest developments in the Council's work towards becoming a Local Authority of Sanctuary and what are the Council's next steps on this?

Question 4: Councillor Alex Wilson to Councillor Andy Graham, Leader of the Council

Please could you confirm when a mental health champion will be in position?

Question 5: Councillor Jane Doughty to Councillor Geoff Saul, Executive Member for Housing and Social Care

How many homeless people is the Council aware of in West Oxfordshire and more specifically Witney?

Question 6: Councillor Jane Doughty to Councillor Geoff Saul, Executive Member for Housing and Social Care

Following on from that when was the last time the Council's Housing Policy in relation to homeless people was reviewed and how frequently is this done?

Question 7: Councillor Thomas Ashby to Councillor Lidia Arciszewska, Executive Member for Environment

Given that West Oxfordshire District Council is recording a deficit in regard to Green Waste, will the Executive Member consider reducing the Green Waste Fee from the current £50 ahead of the 25/26 budget?

Question 8: Councillor Thomas Ashby to Councillor Lidia Arciszewska, Executive Member for Environment

There have been a number of complaints regarding trees. There have been many claims of subsidence over the past few years within my ward, therefore there is a real need for the Tree Management Policy to be reviewed urgently.

Not only are there cases of subsidence, but many elderly residents are unable to afford Tree Surgeons to maintain Council owned shrubs, bushes and trees that are affecting their homes. Please can the Executive Member start the review on the Tree Management Policy in January 2025, as this is a Policy which is now out of date.

Question 9: Councillor Thomas Ashby to Councillor Lidia Arciszewska, Executive Member for Environment

How many fly-tipping incidents have been reported? How many that have been reported have had action taken against them?

Please can the Executive Member review the Policy to ensure that all housing estates are covered by this policy?

Recommendations from the Executive and the Council's Committees

7. Recommendations from the Executive (Pages 23 - 28)

Purpose:

To receive and consider recommendations made by the Executive since the previous meeting of Council.

Recommendation:

Subject to the resolutions of the [Executive on 20 November 2024](#), the Executive recommends that Council resolves to:

1. Agree from 01 April 2025 to levy the maximum level of premium for Empty Homes as set out in the Levelling Up and Regeneration Act 2023:
 - i) Premium of 100% for dwellings which are unoccupied and substantially unfurnished (Empty Homes Premium) after 1 year up to 5 years of becoming empty;
 - ii) Premium of 200% for dwellings which are unoccupied and substantially unfurnished (Empty Homes Premium) between 5 years and 10 years;
 - iii) Premium of 300% for dwellings which are unoccupied and substantially unfurnished (Empty Homes Premium) for 10 years or more;
2. Agree from 1 April 2025 to the implementation of a premium (Second Homes Premium) of 100% for dwellings that are no one's sole or main residence and which are substantially furnished;
3. Note that where premiums are to be applied, the Council is mindful of the outcome of the government consultation which recommends exceptions in certain circumstances outlined within the report may be amended, and as such guidance may change
4. Agree that any amendments to the guidance which may change the criteria for Premiums be delegated to the Chief Finance Officer in consultation with the Executive Member for Finance.

8. Gambling Act 2005 Statement of Principles (Policy) Review 2024 (Pages 29 - 68)

Purpose:

The report details the proposed revisions to the Council's Statement of Principles (Gambling Act 2005), based on legislative requirements, statutory guidance and any amendments following public consultation.

Recommendation:

The [Licensing Committee on 19 November 2024](#) agreed to recommend to Council to:

1. Approve the Statement of Principles; and,
2. Agree that the Council continues to adopt a "no-casino resolution" for inclusions in the published Gambling Act 2005 Licensing Policy Statement.

9. Review of standards arrangements (Pages 69 - 114)

Purpose:

To consider the Council's Member Code of Conduct Complaint Handling Arrangements and the Standards Sub-Committee Procedure Rules following a review by officers.

Recommendation:

The [Audit and Governance Committee on 26 September 2024](#) agreed to recommend that Council resolves to:

1. Adopt the revised Member Code of Conduct Complaint Handling Arrangements (Annex A2).
2. Adopt the revised Standards Sub-Committee Procedure Rules (Annex B2) following a review undertaken by officers and the three Independent Persons.

Reports from Officers

10. **Review of political proportionalities (Pages 115 - 120)**

Purpose:

To review the political proportionalities on committees following receipt of a notice that a member has joined a group.

Recommendation:

That Council resolves to:

1. Agree the political proportionalities as set out in Annex A.
2. Appoint to any vacant seats on committees in accordance with the wishes of the political group to which the seat has been allocated, as expressed at the meeting.
3. Note that any remaining vacancies on committees shall be appointed to by the Monitoring Officer in accordance with the wishes of the political group to which the vacant seat has been allocated and that Council will be asked to ratify and note any such appointments at the next ordinary Council meeting.

11. **Council Size Proposal (Phase I of the Electoral Review of West Oxfordshire District) (Pages 121 - 180)**

Purpose:

To consider the submission of a Council Size Proposal to the Local Government Boundary Commission for England as part of the electoral review of West Oxfordshire, and any associated change to the electoral cycle for the district council and town and parish councils within the West Oxfordshire district area.

Recommendation:

That Council resolves to:

1. Approve the Draft Council Size Proposal (Annex A) for submission to the Local Government Boundary Commission for England.
2. Delegate authority to the Head of Democratic and Electoral Services, in consultation with the Chair of the Constitution Working Group, to make any minor amendments required to finalise the document to reflect the discussion at full Council, correct typographical errors or otherwise strengthen and improve the proposal document.
3. Note that whole-Council elections will be held on new ward boundaries in May 2027 in any scenario.
4. Agree in principle to move to whole-Council elections every four years from May 2027.
5. Agree to convene a special meeting of full Council on 29 January 2025 at 4.00pm for the purpose of formally deciding whether to change the electoral cycle to whole-Council elections every four years from May 2027 (which will require a

2/3 majority at the specially convened meeting).

6. Authorise the Chief Executive Officer to seek the views of town and parish councils on whether to harmonise ordinary elections of all town and parish councils within the district area with district council elections from May 2027, in the event that the District Council does decide to move to whole-Council elections from May 2027.

12. **Polling District and Places Review (Pages 181 - 206)**

Purpose:

To update Members on the review of the Parliamentary Polling Districts and Polling Places within West Oxfordshire, following the public consultation which was in place from 24 September to 4 November 2024.

Recommendation:

That Council Resolves to:

1. Note the consultation feedback as set out in Annex A.
2. Approve the recommended changes to polling districts and polling places as set out in Annex A.
3. Approve the full schedule of polling districts and polling places set out in Annex B.
4. Note that the Council will undertake a further review of polling districts and polling places following the Local Government Boundary Commission for England's electoral review of West Oxfordshire District Council.

13. **Results of Member Survey on Meeting Start Times (Pages 207 - 214)**

Purpose:

To report to Council the results of the Member Survey on Council start times which Council agreed to undertake following a trial of a 4.00pm start time for the 25 September full Council meeting.

Recommendation:

That Council resolves to:

1. Note the report.
2. Consider any proposal to change the start time of future Council meetings from the default start time of 2.00pm.

Motions on Notice

14. **Motion A: Suicide Prevention (Proposer: Cllr Alex Wilson, Cllr Michele Mead)**

We as a Council can and should be calling for further support for those who struggle with their mental health and the thoughts that may come from this. The motion below is a further step forward in the correct direction in supporting the many people who struggle and to assist our officers and Mental Health Champion, once chosen, to increase the support available.

Council resolves to:

1. Join the Zero Suicide Alliance network.
2. Promote existing safeguarding and suicide prevention training and resources to all council workers and signpost to the council's wellbeing pages and Mental Health First Aiders.
3. Include appropriate signposting to suicide prevention and/or mental health support in cost-of-living material, on the online community hub, and in arrears

letters.

4. For the Council Leader to write to local MPs informing them of the situation and calling for them to lobby for the increased awareness and for an increase in support of the national suicide prevention strategy put forward under the Conservative Government in September 2023.

15. **Matters exempt from publication**

If Council wishes to exclude the press and public from the meeting during its consideration of the item on the exempt from publication part of the agenda, it will be necessary for Council to pass a resolution in accordance with the provisions of Section 100A(4) of the Local Government Act 1972 specifying the grounds on which their presence could involve the likely disclosure of exempt information as defined in paragraphs 1 and 3 of Schedule 12A of the Act.

Council may maintain the exemption if and so long as, in all the circumstances of the case, the public interest in maintaining the exemption outweighs the public interest in disclosing the information.

16. **Salaries and Terms and Conditions of Chief Officers (Pages 215 - 252)**

Purpose:

Following formal Job Evaluation under the LGA Senior Management Evaluation Scheme (undertaken by South West Councils), to consider the salary for the Chief Executive Officer, Director of Finance and Director of Governance and Regulatory Services, to ensure that additional duties and Line Management responsibilities are reflected in salary and that salaries are consistent with that of the newly recruited Director of Place.

Initial agreement has been sought from the Leader and a recommendation was passed by Performance and Appointments Committee (13.11.24).

In addition, as per the WODC Constitution to move the Chief Executive. and Directors to the terms and conditions of Joint National Committee (JNC), from National Joint Council (NJC) which was also recommended to Council by the Performance and Appointments Committee (13.11.24).

Recommendation:

The [Performance and Appointments Committee on 13 November 2024](#) agreed to recommend that Council resolves to:

1. Approve the appropriate salary for the post of Chief Executive Officer, Director of Finance, and Director of Governance effective from 1 November 2024 and the movement to Joint National Committee (JNC) Terms and Conditions.

(END)

This page is intentionally left blank

WEST OXFORDSHIRE DISTRICT COUNCIL

Minutes of a meeting of Council.

Held in the Council Chamber, Council Offices, Woodgreen, Witney, Oxfordshire OX28 1NB,
at 4.00pm on **Wednesday 25 September 2024.**

PRESENT

Councillors: Elizabeth Poskitt (Chair), Andrew Coles (Vice-Chair), Joy Aitman, Lidia Arciszewska, Thomas Ashby, Andrew Beaney, Michael Brooker, Adam Clements, David Cooper, Julian Cooper, Rachel Crouch, Jane Doughty, Genny Early, Duncan Enright, Phil Godfrey, Andy Goodwin, Andy Graham, David Jackson, Edward James, Natalie King, Liz Leffman, Nick Leverton, Dan Levy, Andrew Lyon, Paul Marsh, Charlie Maynard, Stuart McCarroll, Michele Mead, David Melvin, Rosie Pearson, Andrew Prosser, Nigel Ridpath, Carl Rylett, Geoff Saul, Sandra Simpson, Alaric Smith, Ruth Smith, Sarah Veasey, Liam Walker, Mark Walker, Adrian Walsh and Alistair Wray.

Officers: Giles Hughes (Chief Executive), Andrea McCaskie (Director of Governance), Max Thompson (Senior Democratic Services Officer) and Anne Learmonth (Democratic Services Officer).

CL.183 Apologies for Absence

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Hugo Ashton, Steve Cosier, Roger Faulkner, Martin McBride, Tim Sumner and Alex Wilson.

CL.184 Declarations of Interest

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

CL.185 Minutes of Previous Meeting

Councillor Andy Graham, Leader of the Council, proposed that the minutes of the previous meeting of Council, held on Wednesday 24 July 2024, be agreed by Council as a true and accurate record and signed by the Chair of the Council. This was seconded by Councillor Duncan Enright and was put to a vote.

There were 38 votes for, 0 votes against and 4 abstentions. The vote was carried.

Council **Resolved** to:

- I. Agree the minutes of the previous meeting, held on Wednesday 24 July 2024 as a true and accurate record.

CL.186 Receipt of Announcements

Councillor Elizabeth Poskitt, Chair of the Council, welcomed members and officers to the meeting.

The Chair gave an update of their engagements since the last meeting of Council in July 2024, and stated that after a quieter month in August, September had gathered pace once more. The Chair stated they had attended two Battle of Britain church services in Carterton and Banbury.

The Chair also stated they had attended an event hosted by the Lord Lieutenant where awards were presented to various Cadet forces.

Council

25/September2024

The Chair also advised that a Chair's reception would possibly take place on 1 November 2024 at Woodgreen in support of Woodgreen School. The Chair advised that the Council's Executive Assistant would disseminate more details to Members as appropriate when they were available.

The Chair advised Council that the meeting started at 4.00pm on a trial basis, owing to a resolution that was passed at the Council's previous meeting. The Chair advised that members would be surveyed on the start time of the meeting, to ascertain their views and thoughts as to how the trial had proceeded. In the same vein, the Chair advised that the next meeting of Council would take place on 27 November 2024 in the Council Chamber and would revert to its normal start time of 2.00pm.

The Chair reminded Council that there was a recent cyber security incident at Tewkesbury Borough Council. The Chair reminded Council that officers had rolled out a training programme on Cyber Security, which was referred to as "Cyber Ninjas". The Chair advised that for those who successfully completed the training package, it was time to complete the Cyber Security Refresher Training programme, and that the information had been sent to all Members. The Chair stated that the incident at Tewkesbury Borough Council was a useful reminder that training on Cyber Security was 'mission critical' for all to complete. The Chair reminded Councillors that they were the last line of defence as individual ICT users.

Councillor Andrew Coles, Vice-Chair of the Council, paid tribute to the Council's Senior Democratic Services Officer (SDSO), Max Thompson, who would leave the Council after the meeting to pursue a new, external role in Parliament.

The Vice-Chair gave a brief overview of the SDSOs career within Publica, and more generally of their post-military career. The Vice-Chair thanked the SDSO, on behalf of the whole Council, for their service and contribution to West Oxfordshire District Council and the residents of the district. The SDSO would leave WODC after the meeting to become Executive Office Manager to Charlie Maynard MP, Member of Parliament for Witney.

Councillor Andy Graham, Leader of the Council, advised that Rizvana Poole had resigned as a WODC Councillor due to personal reasons. The Leader thanked them for their service and contributions to Council, and to the town of Chipping Norton which they represented. The Leader also confirmed that Councillor Rachel Crouch, would replace Rizvana Poole as the Executive Member for Stronger, Healthy Communities with immediate effect.

CL.187 Participation of the Public

There was no public participation at the meeting.

CL.188 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.

Council

25/September2024

CL.189 Appointments Made under Delegated Authority

Councillor Andy Graham, Leader of the Council, introduced the item, which updated Council on appointments to committees and sub-committees made by the Director of Governance under delegated authority (Constitution Part 5A, 2.4).

The Leader advised that since the previous meeting of Council held on 24 July 2024:

1. Councillor Elizabeth Poskitt had replaced Councillor Joy Aitman on the Oxfordshire Joint Health Overview & Scrutiny Committee; and
2. Councillor Julian Cooper has resigned from the Future Oxfordshire Partnership Scrutiny Panel and had been replaced by Councillor Carl Rylett.

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

Council **Resolved** to:

1. Note and ratify the appointments made under delegated authority.

CL.190 Recommendations from the Executive

Councillor Andy Graham, Leader of the Council, introduced the report, which sought to agree recommendations made to Council by the Executive, from its meetings since 24 July 2024.

At the invitation of the Leader, Councillor Alaric Smith, Executive Member for Finance, gave Council an overview of the recommendation, that the Executive had made at its meeting of 11 September 2024, which asked Council to agree to include an additional £750,000 in the revised Capital Budget for 2024/25, [as set out in paragraph 2.25 of the original Executive report](#).

In debate, members of opposition parties highlighted they could not support the proposals owing to an overspend within Quarter 1 of 2024/2025, and other budget shortfalls contained within the published figures, including additional spending on planning appeals and investment properties such as Marriott's Walk shopping centre in Witney.

Members of alliance parties highlighted that the additional £750,000 in the revised Capital Budget for 2024/25 was to invest in the Council's properties to enable the best return on taxpayer's money, adding perceived mismanagement of finances and a lack of an Asset Management Strategy from a previous Council administration had meant that the current administration had to bring forward a revised Capital Budget for 2024/25.

Members also highlighted the differences in day-to-day spending that the Council makes, compared to capital spending on property and managing the Council's assets. Members also highlighted that the cost of a WODC Green Waste Licence was the second lowest in Oxfordshire.

Members also stated that misinformation could be construed in different ways to what the reality showed, and that sound financial management of the Council had allowed the Council to undertake significant projects and investment across the district, thus enabling the best return for residents.

Council

25/September2024

Councillor Andy Graham proposed that Council agree the recommendation as listed on the original report. This was seconded by Councillor Alaric Smith and was put to a vote. There were 31 votes for, 11 votes against and 0 abstentions. The vote was carried.

Council **Resolved** to:

1. Agree to include an additional £750,000 in the revised Capital Budget for 2024/25, as set out in 2.25 of the original Executive report.

CL.191 Recommendations from Constitution Working Group

Councillor Alaric Smith, Chair of the Constitution Working Group, introduced the report, which presented Council with recommendations that arose from a meeting of the Council's Constitution Working Group, held on Friday 19 July 2024.

In debate, Members stated that the recommendations made would enable a general tidy up the Council's Constitution and would make the document more user-friendly. Members also added that the document would retain its non-controversial nature.

Councillor Alaric Smith proposed that Council agree the recommendations as listed on the original report. This was seconded by Councillor Joy Aitman, was put to a vote, and was unanimously agreed by Council.

Council **Resolved** to:

1. Adopt the Lawyers in Local Government (LLG)'s Members Planning Code of Good Practice, as an addition to Part 6 of the Council's Constitution, following appropriate revision by Officers;
2. Agree to extend the time period for Councillor Call-In from 21 days to 28 days (from the date of notification), to align with the time period for representations;
3. Agree to make the size of the Lowlands and Uplands Area Sub-Committees more flexible in Part 3C: Committee Functions:
 - The Uplands and Lowlands Sub-Committees must have a minimum of 10 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. Where wards cross the Lowlands and Uplands boundary the ward member may be appointed to either Sub-Committee. This would also be kept under review in future;
4. Agree that instruction be given to private practice solicitors or suitable counsel to undertake legal work when considered necessary or appropriate;
5. Agree to include the Protocol for Recording at Public Meetings in Part 6 of the Council's Constitution.

CL.192 Appointment of Independent Persons

Councillor Carl Rylett, Chair of the Audit and Governance Committee, introduced the report, which recommended the appointment of two appropriately skilled and experienced members of the public to be "independent members" of the Audit and Governance Committee.

In debate, Members added the independent members would bring dedicated expertise to the Committee, resonating from their professional experience and that the Committee would gain further strength to pursue its formal business.

Council

25/September2024

Members welcomed the closer alignment with recommendations made to the Committee by CIPFA, and also welcomed the addition of external expertise and independent thinking to the Committee. Members also thanked the work of officers for their rigorous selection process, highlighting that the recommendations would not have been put before Council if officers had not exercised the required due diligence during the recruitment process.

Councillor Carl Rylett proposed that Council agree the recommendation as listed on the original report. This was seconded by Councillor Ruth Smith, was put to a vote, and was unanimously agreed by Council.

Council **Resolved** to:

- I. Appoint Gemma Collings and Richard Deuttenburg to the Council's Audit & Governance Committee for a four-year term, commencing immediately.

CL.193 Motion A: Winter Fuel Payments – Proposed by Councillor Thomas Ashby, Seconded by Councillor Michele Mead

Councillor Thomas Ashby, proposer of the original motion [as listed on the agenda](#), stated that they had accepted the amendment to the motion, which had been circulated in advance of the meeting.

The tabled amendment, proposed by Councillor Alaric Smith and seconded by Councillor Andrew Prosser, sought a cross-party consensus to promoting a district awareness campaign working with local NHS partners, Parish Councils and charitable, civic and religious groups, to encourage elderly residents who are eligible for means-tested benefits such as Pension Credit, to register and claim Pension credit to ensure that they continue to receive Winter Fuel Payments (WFPs) during the Winter, and to ensure that those in need are sign-posted to the continuing Household Support Fund.

The tabled amendment also sought to request that the Leader of the Council write to the Chancellor of the Exchequer, Rachel Reeves MP, urging an impact assessment of the government's decision to means test WFPs without public consultation and asking HM Treasury to examine transitional measures to ensure that vulnerable pensioners, particularly those who are eligible for, but who do not – or cannot – claim, other benefits under current thresholds are protected from fuel poverty.

In the debate of the substantive motion (as amended), members stated that the decision by Government would mean that 22,000 pensioners across the West Oxfordshire district would become worse off, and that a collaborative approach to requesting that the Government means-test WFPs was the right approach and made sense.

Members agreed that WFPs should be means-tested, and also highlighted that communications had been sent out to residents by individual councillors to ensure that residents were signposted to the appropriate support where required. Members also stated that they would consult with their individual Town and Parish Councils to help signpost support to residents.

Members highlighted the Household Support Fund, and said that the fund could also give residents the help they were entitled to, and also encouraged all residents of the district to apply for help, even if they were unsure of entitlements. Members also reminded the Council of the ongoing Cost-of-Living Crisis and further emphasised the need for communications to be disseminated to residents regarding the financial help and support that was available during the winter months.

Council

25/September2024

Members referenced the history of the WFPs, stating it was a Labour government who introduced the WFPs in 1997 as part of a series of measures introduced to tackle pensioner poverty. Members also stated that several previous governments have reviewed the modelling of WFPs and whether it was the best use of limited public funds.

Members stated that there would be many 'not-well-off' pensioners in the district who would lose out as a result of the decision taken by Government, and that an impact assessment and the means testing of WFPs was the right approach to attempt to tackle inequality.

Members highlighted that communication with residents had already taken effect on the subject matter, with a number of Councillors having received contact from residents regarding WFPs and questions about what the impact that the government's decision would mean for them. Members also called for a unanimous voice when liaising with residents and those across the wider district when it came to signposting available support.

Members also referenced a vote that had taken place on the subject matter in the House of Commons, where Liberal Democrat MPs had voted against the government's decision, and reaffirmed the need for Council to work together to ensure that Pension Credit could be accessed more effectively.

Councillor Michele Mead, seconder of the substantive motion thanked members for their contributions to the debate and for their support to the motion that had been tabled. Councillor Mead also highlighted communications received from residents, emphasising that it was proof of the strength of feeling on the issue. Councillor Mead also advised Council of the unfortunate conversation had with a neighbour regarding the subject matter which had arisen as a result of the government's decision.

Councillor Mead highlighted that the affected generation of people tended to be very proud and may shy away from admitting that they were struggling, and urged all Councillors to consider these people when providing help towards support and information.

At the request of Councillor Michele Mead, a recorded vote was taken on the substantive motion (as amended) in accordance with Section 17.6, Part 5A of the Constitution (Council Procedure Rules). All 11 Conservative Group members present voted in favour a recorded vote, as outlined by Section 17.6.

FOR the proposition – Councillors:

J Aitman, L Arciszewska, T Ashby, A Beaney, M Brooker, A Clements, A Coles, D Cooper, J Cooper, R Crouch, J Doughty, G Early, D Enright, P Godfrey, A Goodwin, A Graham, D Jackson, E James, N King, L Leffman, N Leverton, D Levy, A Lyon, P Marsh, C Maynard, S McCarroll, M Mead, D Melvin, R Pearson, E Poskitt, A Prosser, N Ridpath, C Rylett, G Saul, S Simpson, A Smith, R Smith, S Veasey, L Walker, M Walker, A Walsh and A Wray.

There were 42 votes in favour, 0 votes against and 0 abstentions, with 6 Members not in attendance and one vacancy following Councillor Poole's resignation. The vote was carried.

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

This Council notes the government's decision to means-test Winter Fuel Payments (WFPs). Age UK estimates that the government's changes to WFPs could hit 2 million people across the country, some of whom badly need the money to stay warm this winter. This Council also notes the parlous state of the Public Finances that the new Government has inherited.

Council

25/September2024

This Council resolves to:

1. Request that the Executive considers a report from officers with proposals for promoting a District awareness campaign working with our local NHS partners, Parish Councils and charitable, civic and religious groups, to encourage elderly residents who are eligible for means-tested benefits such as Pension Credit to register and claim them to ensure that they continue to receive WFPs this Winter and to ensure that those in need are sign-posted to the continuing Household Support Fund;
2. Request that the Leader of the Council writes to the Chancellor of the Exchequer, urging an impact assessment of the government's decision to means test WFPs and asking HM Treasury to examine transitional measures to ensure that vulnerable pensioners, particularly those who are eligible for, but who do not – or cannot – claim, other benefits under current thresholds are protected from fuel poverty.

The Meeting closed at 4.55pm.

CHAIR

This page is intentionally left blank

Questions by Members – Council – 25 September 2024

<u>Written Question</u>	<u>Written Answer</u>	<u>Verbal Supplementary Question</u>	<u>Verbal Supplementary Answer</u>
Q1. Councillor Julian Cooper to Councillor Hugo Ashton, Executive Member for Planning:			
<p>Can the Executive Member for Planning please update the Council on the progress of the Motion passed by Uplands Area Planning Sub-Committee on 13 November 2023 concerning World Heritage Site buffer zones?</p>	<p>The request which was made which was made at the Uplands Area Planning Sub-Committee on 13 November 2023, was as follows:</p> <p><i>‘That planning policy officers produce a full and comprehensive report on the Blenheim World Heritage Site, with comparisons made to other World Heritage Sites, to inform the Local Plan review process’.</i></p> <p>Given the time and resource implications of producing such a report, the Planning Policy Manager contacted Historic England to understand whether any such report and comparative analysis already exists.</p> <p>In their subsequent response, Historic England confirmed that there is no single report covering the broad scope of information being sought and that because there is so much detail within World Heritage Sites, higher-level abridgements tend not to be helpful or easy to produce.</p>	<p>In relation to the last paragraph, can we be assured a full report will be brought back to us, and not just me?</p>	<p><i>(answered by Councillor Andy Graham, Leader of the Council)</i></p> <p>I’ll make sure Councillor Ashton gives you a written response.</p> <p>--</p> <p>Written response sent to Councillor Julian Cooper by Councillor Hugo Ashton, on 30 September 2024:</p> <p><i>“I have since spoken with the Council’s Planning Policy Manager, who has suggested that the summary overview document referred to, be shared with yourself initially and once you have had the opportunity to review, a view can then be formed on how it can most appropriately be taken forward.”</i></p>


	<p>It was therefore suggested that the scope of the request be clarified, and on this basis, Councillor Cooper was contacted by email on 3 July 2024.</p> <p>In his subsequent response of 18 July 2024, Councillor Cooper confirmed that he is particularly interested in the following world heritage sites:</p> <p>Liverpool Cornish Tin Mines Stonehenge Hadrian's Wall Lake District</p> <p>He drew particular attention to Liverpool which lost its World Heritage Status in 2021.</p> <p>Since then, a meeting has been held with Historic England on 22 July, the notes of which are now in the process of being provided to Councillor Cooper.</p> <p>The Planning Policy Team have also started to produce a summary overview document relating to Blenheim WHS and the other sites mentioned by Councillor Cooper in his email of 18 July.</p>		
--	---	--	--

	This will be provided to Councillor Cooper by mid-October 2024.		
Q2. Councillor Andrew Coles to Councillor Lidia Arciszewska, Executive Member for Environment:			
In light of a few complaints I have received recently regarding the way this Council manages its trees; in particular the trees on the Deer Park estate in Witney which overhang onto properties in Windrush Valley Road in my ward, and also the woodland at Loom Lane near the Old Bathing Place, would the Executive Member be willing to see that this Council undertakes a review of the Tree Management Policy to ensure it is fit for purpose and meeting the needs of residents?	The Council's Tree Management Policy was adopted in 2019, and this will be reviewed in the next year.	N/A	N/A
Q3. Councillor Michele Mead to Councillor Duncan Enright, Deputy Leader of the Council and Executive Member for Economic Development:			
Please can you update us on which Towns benefitted from the UK shared prosperity funding?	There are 5 UK Shared Prosperity Fund (SPF) funded projects that are specifically benefiting certain towns. These are: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Deer Park South accessibility project and trail (Witney); • Carterton Strategic Plan (Carterton); • Hexagon refurb for shared working space (Witney); 	No, I won't ask a follow up here, but I would like to arrange a meeting with Councillor Enright is that's possible. --	Councillor Enright agreed to this request.

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Market Towns Feasibility Study (All 7 Towns); • Town Centre improvements (Chipping Norton, with more to come). <p>I have provided a full breakdown of projects and the towns that are benefiting from the scheme, and this information is appended to the Member Questions document.</p> <p>Small Business Grants, whilst not directly benefiting, would have an economic impact felt throughout the district.</p>	<p>(Meeting arranged by Democratic Services for Councillors Mead and Enright, with Economic Development Officers, on Friday 18 October 2024.)</p>	
<p>Q4. Councillor Michele Mead to Councillor Alaric Smith, Executive Member for Finance:</p>			
<p>Quarter one figures show this council is already £250k overspent £91k of this is from people not buying green waste licenses can I ask will you consider reducing the cost of the license next year?</p>	<p>Income from green waste licenses in 2023/24 was £1,483,443. The latest figure for 2024/25 is £1,614,180.</p> <p>The average price of a green bin licence in Oxfordshire is £63.00. The council currently charges £50.00 which is the second lowest amount of all local authorities in the county.</p>	<p>N/A</p>	<p>N/A</p>

	Analysis of the adverse budget monitoring variances, in all areas, will be taken into consideration when setting the 2025/26 budget.		
--	--	--	--

Project Lead	Status	Project name	Area benefitting
Abingdon & Witney College	Live	Developing careers in hospitality and care and green skills	Whole district
Cotswold Tourism	Live	Help to Thrive	Whole district – sector specific
Cotswold Tourism	Live	Navigate	Whole district – sector specific
Cotswold Tourism	Live	Sustainability Champions	Whole district – sector specific
FarmAbility	Live	FarmAbility	Whole district – by referral
North East Cotswold Farmer Cluster	Live	Feasibility study to develop a farmer-led abattoir, processing and cold supply chain.	Whole district – sector specific
OxLEP	Live	Spark programme	Whole district
OxLEP	Live	Accelerator programme	Whole district
OxLEP	Live	No Limits 3	Whole district
WODC Climate Action Team	Complete	Deer Park South accessibility project and trail	Witney
WODC Economic Dev Team	Complete	Small Business Grant Scheme	Whole district
WODC Economic Dev Team	Live	Carbon Action Fund	Whole district
WODC Planning and Eco Dev Team	Complete	Carterton Strategic Plan	Carterton
WODC Property and Estates	Live	Hexagon refurb for shared working space	Witney
WODC Planning and Eco Dev Team	Complete	Rural Services Feasibility Study	Whole district
WODC Economic Dev Team	Complete	Market Towns Feasibility Study	All 7x towns
WODC Communities Team	Live	WestHive – Communities Infrastructure Fund	Whole district
WODC Economic Dev Team	Live	Town centre improvements	To date: Chipping Norton

 <p>WEST OXFORDSHIRE DISTRICT COUNCIL</p>	<p>WEST OXFORDSHIRE DISTRICT COUNCIL</p>
<p>Name and Date of Committee</p>	<p>COUNCIL – 27 NOVEMBER 2024</p>
<p>Subject</p>	<p>RECOMMENDATIONS FROM EXECUTIVE TO COUNCIL</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>Andrew Brown – Business Manager, Democratic Services. Email: andrew.brown@publicagroup.uk</p>
<p>Report Author</p>	<p>Andrew Brown – Business Manager, Democratic Services. Email: andrew.brown@publicagroup.uk</p>
<p>Purpose</p>	<p>To agree recommendations made to Council by the Executive, from its meetings since 27 November 2024.</p>
<p>Annexes</p>	<p>Annex A – Recommendations from Executive to Council.</p>
<p>Recommendation</p>	<p>Subject to the resolutions of the Executive on 20 November 2024, the Executive recommends that Council resolves to:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> I. Agree from 01 April 2025 to levy the maximum level of premium for Empty Homes as set out in the Levelling Up and Regeneration Act 2023: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> i) Premium of 100% for dwellings which are unoccupied and substantially unfurnished (Empty Homes Premium) after 1 year up to 5 years of becoming empty; ii) Premium of 200% for dwellings which are unoccupied and substantially unfurnished (Empty Homes Premium) between 5 years and 10 years; iii) Premium of 300% for dwellings which are unoccupied and substantially unfurnished (Empty Homes Premium) for 10 years or more; 2. Agree from 1 April 2025 to the implementation of a premium (Second Homes Premium) of 100% for dwellings that are no one's

	<p>sole or main residence and which are substantially furnished;</p> <p>3. Note that where premiums are to be applied, the Council is mindful of the outcome of the government consultation which recommends exceptions in certain circumstances outlined within the report may be amended, and as such guidance may change</p> <p>4. Agree that any amendments to the guidance which may change the criteria for Premiums be delegated to the Chief Finance Officer in consultation with the Executive Member for Finance.</p>
Corporate Priorities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Working Together for West Oxfordshire
Key Decision	NO
Exempt	NO
Consultees/ Consultation	N/A

1. BACKGROUND

- 1.1 The Council is required to consider recommendations made to it by the Executive, from its meetings since 25 September 2024.

2. MAIN POINTS

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

3. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

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

4. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

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

5. RISK ASSESSMENT

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

6. EQUALITIES IMPACT

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

7. CLIMATE AND ECOLOGICAL EMERGENCIES IMPLICATIONS

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

8. BACKGROUND PAPERS

- 8.1 None.


(END)

This page is intentionally left blank

Annex A – Recommendations from Executive to Council.

<u>Date</u>	<u>Meeting</u>	<u>Recommendations</u>
9 October 2024	Executive	<p data-bbox="519 376 1496 408">Council Tax Premiums – Second Homes and Long-Term Empty Properties.</p> <p data-bbox="519 448 2033 520">Subject to the resolutions of the Executive on 20 November 2024, the Executive recommends that Council resolves to:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li data-bbox="573 552 2067 624">1. Agree from 01 April 2025 to levy the maximum level of premium for Empty Homes as set out in the Levelling Up and Regeneration Act 2023: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li data-bbox="618 639 2067 719">i) Premium of 100% for dwellings which are unoccupied and substantially unfurnished (Empty Homes Premium) after 1 year up to 5 years of becoming empty; <li data-bbox="618 735 2067 815">ii) Premium of 200% for dwellings which are unoccupied and substantially unfurnished (Empty Homes Premium) between 5 years and 10 years; <li data-bbox="618 831 2067 911">iii) Premium of 300% for dwellings which are unoccupied and substantially unfurnished (Empty Homes Premium) for 10 years or more; <li data-bbox="573 927 2067 999">2. Agree from 1 April 2025 to the implementation of a premium (Second Homes Premium) of 100% for dwellings that are no one’s sole or main residence and which are substantially furnished; <li data-bbox="573 1015 2067 1118">3. Note that where premiums are to be applied, the Council is mindful of the outcome of the government consultation which recommends exceptions in certain circumstances outlined within the report may be amended, and as such guidance may change <li data-bbox="573 1134 2067 1206">4. Agree that any amendments to the guidance which may change the criteria for Premiums be delegated to the Chief Finance Officer in consultation with the Executive Member for Finance.

This page is intentionally left blank

 WEST OXFORDSHIRE DISTRICT COUNCIL	WEST OXFORDSHIRE DISTRICT COUNCIL
Name and Date of Committee	FULL COUNCIL – 27 NOVEMBER 2024
Subject	GAMBLING ACT 2005 STATEMENT OF PRINCIPLES (POLICY) REVIEW 2024
Wards Affected	ALL
Accountable Member	Councillor Duncan Enright – Deputy Leader and Executive Member for Finance Economic Development Email: duncan.enright@westoxon.gov.uk
Accountable Officer	Jon Dearing – Assistant Director, Resident Services. Email: jon.dearing@westoxon.gov.uk
Report Author	Mandy Fathers – Business Manager, Environmental, Welfare and Revenue Services. Email: mandy.fathers@westoxon.gov.uk
Purpose	The report details the proposed revisions to the Council’s Statement of Principles (Gambling Act 2005), based on legislative requirements, statutory guidance and any amendments following public consultation.
Annexes	Annex A – Draft Statement of Principles
Recommendations	The Licensing Committee on 19 November 2024 agreed to recommend to Full Council to: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Approve the Statement of Principles; and, 2. Agree that the Council continues to adopt a “no-casino resolution” for inclusions in the published Gambling Act 2005 Licensing Policy Statement.
Corporate Priorities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Putting Residents First • Working Together for West Oxfordshire
Key Decision	NO
Exempt	NO
Consultees/ Consultation	Chief Executive, Chief Finance Officer, Monitoring Officer, Interim Head of Legal Services, Finance Business Partner, Interim Executive Director, Interim Managing Director. Consultation with Licensees and Partner

	Authorities
--	-------------

I EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

- 1.1 Section 349 of the Gambling Act 2005 (the “Act”) requires licensing authorities before each successive period of three years to:
 - a) Prepare a statement of the principles that they propose to apply in exercising their functions under this Act during that period, and
 - b) Publish the statement.
- 1.2 The next “successive period” starts on 31 January 2025. However, the Statement needs to be adopted by 31 December 2024 as it must be published at least 4 weeks before the date on which it comes into effect on the authority’s website and also be available for inspection by the public.
- 1.3 Before determining its Policy, the Authority is required to consult with the police, persons who represent the interests of gambling businesses and those who represent the interests of persons who are likely to be affected by gambling businesses.

2. BACKGROUND

- 2.1 The Gambling Act 2005 (the “Act”) came into effect on 1 September 2007, and amongst other changes, gave to Local Authorities new and extended powers for licensing premises for gambling, including betting shops, family entertainments centres, casinos, bingo premises and gaming machine arcades. Local Authorities are also responsible for registering small society lotteries and for issuing permits to pubs and clubs for gaming machines.
- 2.2 The Act contains three licensing objectives which underpin the functions that the Gambling Commission and the Licensing Authority must perform. They are:
 - a) Preventing gambling from being a source of crime or disorder, being associated with crime and disorder, or being used to support crime.
 - b) Ensuring that gambling is conducted in a fair and open way; and
 - c) Protecting children and other vulnerable persons from being harmed or exploited by gambling.

3. MAIN POINTS

- 3.1 The draft Statement of Principles have been subject to a 6-week consultation period which ended on Friday 8 November 2024.
- 3.2 All consultees were written to and invited to make a written comment. In addition, the consultation was advertised on the Council's website.
- 3.3 There were no comments made during the consultation period by any of the consultees.
- a) 3.4 Under Section 166 of the Act the Licensing Authority is empowered, if they wish, to make a ‘no casino’ resolution. This means that at this time the council does not wish to have a casino in its area. This decision has to be reviewed every 3 years. Full Council resolved

not to issue licences to casinos in 2006. This decision was renewed at meetings in 2009, 2012, 2015, 2018 and 2021.

- 3.5 The benefit of making a 'no casino' resolution means that any applications for a casino in the West Oxfordshire District area would be determined by Full Council. If a 'no casino' resolution is not renewed, then if the operator has the necessary planning permission, it is likely that the application for a casino would automatically be granted.

4. ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS

- 4.1 None.

5 FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

- 5.1 There are no financial implications associated with this report. The Council receives income through licence fees, and this covers the cost of carrying out this function.

6. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

- 6.1 The Act requires the Council to prepare and approve a Statement of Principles to cover each 3-year period. The statement must contain the principles that the Council proposes to apply in exercising its function under the Act during the period.
- 6.2 Section 2 of the Act provides that the Council is the licensing authority for the purposes of the Act 2005. Section 157 of the Act provides that in relation to premises, the licensing authority in whose area the premises are situated is also a responsible authority. Therefore it is lawful and entirely proper for the Council to carry out both of these roles.
- 6.3 Section 349 of the Act, requires the Council to advertise and publish the statement for a period of four weeks before it takes effect.
- 6.4 If the Council approves the statement and advertises it for the required period prior to publication it will comply with its requirements as above.

7. RISK ASSESSMENT

- 7.1 Should the Licensing Authority fail to carry out a review it will fail to meet its statutory obligations under the Act.

8. EQUALITIES IMPACT

- 8.1 These are statutory functions and are applied nationally.

9. CLIMATE AND ECOLOGICAL EMERGENCIES IMPLICATIONS

- 9.1 None.

10. BACKGROUND PAPERS

10.1 None.

(END)

This page is intentionally left blank



WEST OXFORDSHIRE
DISTRICT COUNCIL

GAMBLING ACT 2005

Statement of Principles

This Statement of Principles applies from 31 Jan 2025
until 30 Jan 2028
(unless revised sooner)

CONTENTS

GLOSSARY

PART A: GENERAL MATTERS

1.	The Licensing Objectives	2
2.	Introduction	2
3.	The Local Area	
3.1	The West Oxfordshire District	3
4.	Consultees	4
5.	Declaration	4
6.	Effective period	4
7.	Responsible Authorities	4
7.1	Protection of children from harm.....	4
7.2	Contact details	5
8.	Interested parties	5
9.	Information Exchange	6
10.	Enforcement	6
11.	Functions under the 2005 Act	7
11.1	Functions of the Licensing Authority	7
11.2	Others' functions	7

PART B: PREMISES LICENCES

1.	Premises Licence	8
2.	Applications	8
3.	Local Risk Assessments	9
4.	Local Area Profile	10
5.	Plans of the Premises	10
6.	Decision Making	10
7.	Other Mechanisms to address unruly behaviour	11
8.	Location	11
9.	Primary Activity	11
10.	Meaning of "Premises"	12
11.	Premises "ready for gambling"	13
12.	Planning	14
13.	Duplication with other regulatory regimes	14
14.	Licensing Objectives	14
14.1	Prevention of crime and disorder objective.....	14
14.2	Ensuring that gambling is conducted in a fair and open way objective.....	15
14.3	Protection of children and other vulnerable persons objective	15
14.4	Vulnerable Persons.....	16
14.5	Gambling Prevalence and Social Responsibility	16
14.6	Door Supervisors	17
14.7	Adult Gaming Centres.....	18
14.8	(Licensed) Family Entertainment Centres.....	18
14.9	Casinos	19
14.10	Bingo Premises	19
14.11	Betting Premises.....	19
14.12	Tracks	19
14.13	Travelling Fairs.....	21
14.14	Provisional Statements	21
14.15	Reviews	22
14.16	Complaints against Licensed Premises.....	23

PART C: PERMITS, TEMPORARY & OCCASIONAL USE NOTICES		
1.	Unlicensed Family Entertainment Centre gaming machine permits	23
2.	(Alcohol) Licensed Premises - Gaming Machine Permits	24
3.	Prize Gaming Permits	26
4.	Club Gaming and Club Machines Permits	26
5.	Temporary Use Notices	27
6.	Occasional Use Notices	27
7.	Small Society Lotteries	28
	Appendix 1 – Licensing Authority delegations – West Oxfordshire District	29
	Appendix 2 - Responsible Authorities	30

GLOSSARY

Council	West Oxfordshire District Council
Guidance	The Gambling Commission's "Guidance to Licensing Authorities" Latest edition
Licensing Authority	The Licensing Authority of West Oxfordshire District Council
The 2005 Act	Gambling Act 2005
The 2003 Act	Licensing Act 2003

PART A: GENERAL MATTERS

I. The Licensing Objectives

The Gambling Act 2005 (“the Act”) requires that in exercising its functions under the Act, the Licensing Authority must have regard to the licensing objectives set out in Section 1.

The licensing objectives are: -

- Preventing gambling from being a source of crime or disorder, being associated with crime or disorder or being used to support crime;
- Ensuring that gambling is carried out in a fair and open way;
- Protecting children and other vulnerable persons from being harmed or exploited by gambling.

The Licensing Authority is aware that, as required by section 153 of the Act, in making decisions about premises licences and temporary use notices it should aim to permit the use of premises for gambling:

- in accordance with any relevant Codes of Practice under section 24;
- in accordance with any relevant Guidance issued by the Commission under section 25;
- in accordance with this Statement of Principles, and reasonably consistent with the licensing objectives.

2. Introduction

The Act requires the Licensing Authority to prepare and publish a Statement that sets out the principles that the Licensing Authority proposes to apply when exercising its functions.

The Statement must be published at least every three years. This Statement will come into effect from the 31 January 2025 and will continue until 30 January 2028. It must also be reviewed from “time to time” and any amended parts re-consulted upon. The Statement must be then re-published before any revision is given effect.

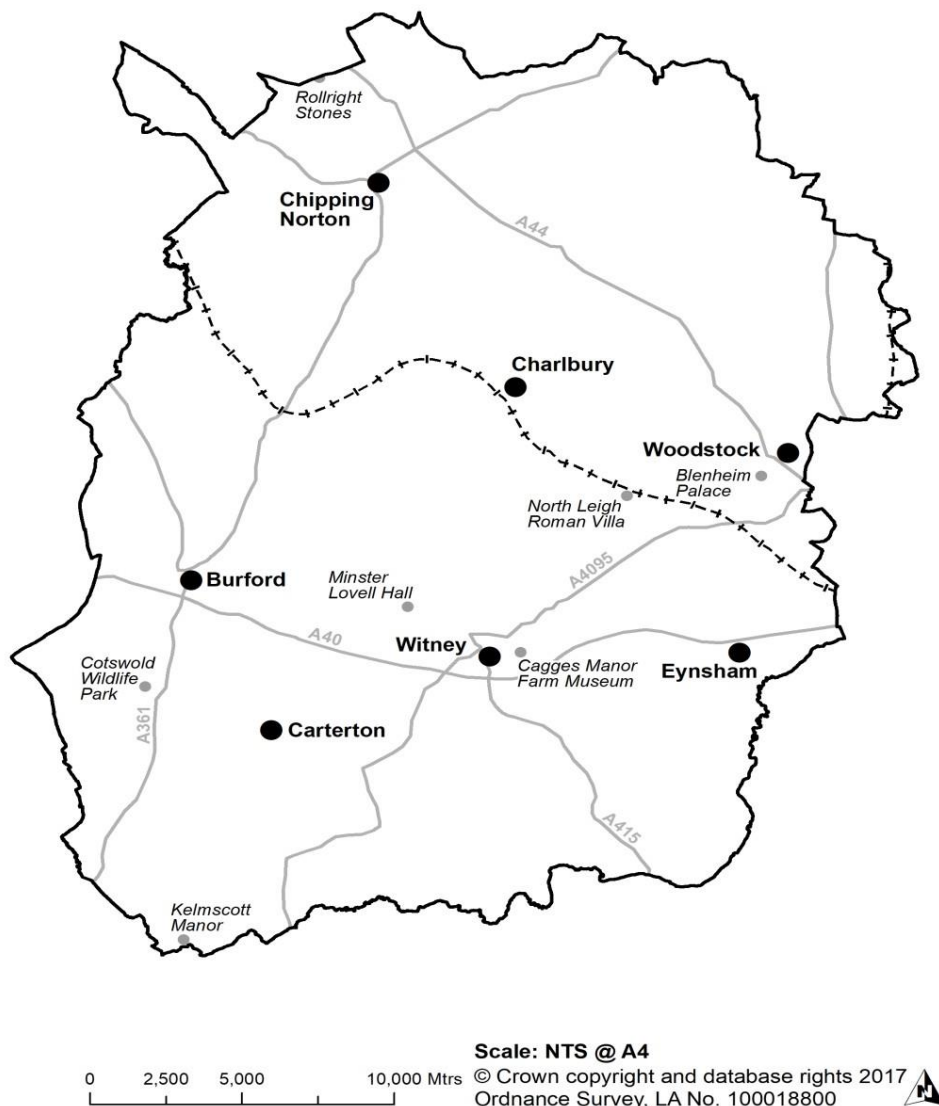
This document was approved by Full Council on ~~XXX~~

3. The Local Area

3.1 The West Oxfordshire District

West Oxfordshire has a rich architectural and historic heritage ranging from the Cotswold stone houses to the splendour of Blenheim Palace, a World Heritage Site. The business sector is made up of a mixture of 'high technology' small and medium enterprises. The area faces no major social problems and crime figures are amongst the lowest in the country. It is a rural district covering 714 km² with a population of 114,200 and is spread across 81 parishes. Situated in a prime central location, there are excellent communications to most parts of the country via the A40/M40 and the A34. There are railway stations at Charlbury, Hanborough and Kingham with regular services to London and Birmingham.

WEST OXFORDSHIRE DISTRICT



4. Consultees

The 2005 Act requires the Licensing Authority to consult the following parties:

- the chief officer of police for the authority's area
- one or more persons who appear to the authority to represent the interests of persons carrying on gambling businesses in the authority's area
- one or more persons who appear to the authority to represent the interests of persons who are likely to be affected by the exercise of the authority's functions under the Act

Before finalising and publishing this policy statement, the Council consulted the following:

- Thames Valley Police
- County Safeguarding Children Board
- Individual licensed bookmakers
- Parish and Town Councils
- Elected Members
- Representatives of the Gaming Machine Trade and Betting Industry
- Public Health Body
- The Gambling Commission
- H M Revenues and Customs
- Planning Authority
- Environmental Health department
- Fire Service
- Consultation took place from 30 September 2024 to 8 November 2024.

This Statement of Principles will not override the right of any person to make an application, make representations about an application, or apply for a review of a licence, as each matter will be considered on its own merits and according to the statutory requirements of the 2005 Act.

5. Declaration

In producing this Statement of Principles, the Licensing Authority declares that it has had regard to the licensing objectives of the Act, Guidance, and any responses from those consulted on the policy statement.

6. Effective period

This Statement of Principles becomes effective on 31 January 2025.

It will remain effective for three years (or any longer period in accordance with the 2005 Act) unless replaced sooner by a revised version that the Council adopts. At the date of publication, this licensing policy is expected to last until 30 Jan 2028.

7. Responsible Authorities

7.1 Protection of children from harm

The Licensing Authority is required by regulations to state the principles it will apply in exercising its powers (2005 Act, s.157(h)) to designate, in writing, a body which is competent to advise the authority about the protection of children from harm. The principles are:

- The need for the body to be responsible for an area covering the whole of the Licensing Authority's area; and
- The need for the body to be answerable to democratically elected persons, rather than any particular vested interest group.

In accordance with the suggestion in the Guidance the Licensing Authority has designated the County Safeguarding Children Board for this purpose.

7.2 Contact details

Appendix 3 lists details for all the Responsible Authorities under the 2005 Act that have a role in the Licensing Authority's area.

8. Interested parties

Interested parties can make representations about licence applications or apply for a review of an existing licence. The 2005 Act (s.158) defines interested parties as follows:

“For the purposes of this Part a person is an interested party in relation to an application for or in respect of a premises licence if, in the opinion of the licensing authority which issues the licence or to which the application is made, the person-

- lives sufficiently close to the premises to be likely to be affected by the authorised activities,
- has business interests that might be affected by the authorised activities, or
- represents persons who satisfy paragraph (a) or (b)”

Regulations require the Licensing Authority to state the principles it will apply in exercising its powers under the 2005 Act to determine whether a person is an interested party. Those principles are:

Each case will be decided upon its merits. This authority will not apply a rigid rule to its decision making. It will consider the examples of considerations provided in the Gambling Commission's Guidance to Licensing Authorities at 8.9 to 8.17 (*if the authority does not wish to follow the Gambling Commission's guidance in any respect it is advised to state this in its statement. Note though that decisions on premises licences and temporary use notices must be "in accordance" with Gambling Commission Guidance (Section 153)*). It will also consider the Gambling Commission's Guidance that "has business interests" should be given the widest possible interpretation and include partnerships, charities, faith groups and medical practices.

Interested parties can be persons who are democratically elected such as councillors and MP's. No specific evidence of being asked to represent an interested person will be required as long as the councillor / MP represents the ward likely to be affected. Likewise, parish councils likely to be affected will be considered to be interested parties. Other than these however, this authority will generally require written evidence that a person/body (e.g. an advocate / relative) 'represents' someone who either lives sufficiently close to the premises to be likely to be affected by the authorised activities and/or has business interests that might be affected by the authorised activities. A letter from one of these persons, requesting the representation is sufficient.

If individuals wish to approach councillors to ask them to represent their views then care should be taken that the councillors are not part of the Licensing Committee dealing with the licence application. If there are any doubts then please contact the licensing department.

9. Information Exchange

Licensing Authorities are required to include in their Statement the principles to be applied by the Licensing Authority in exercising the functions under sections 29 and 30 of the Act with respect to the exchange of information between it and the Gambling Commission, and the functions under section 350 of the Act in relation to the exchange of information between it and the other persons listed in Schedule 6 to the Act.

This Licensing Authority will act in accordance with the provisions of the Act in its exchange of information which includes the provision that the Data Protection Act 2018 will not be contravened. The Licensing Authority will also have regard to any Guidance issued by the Gambling Commission to local authorities on this matter when it is published, as well as any relevant regulations issued by the Secretary of State under the powers provided in the Act.

The Licensing Authority does not currently have any established protocols regarding the exchange of information with other bodies, however, should any such protocol be adopted, it will be published.

Full details of those persons making representations will be made available to applicants to allow for negotiation and, in the event of a hearing being held, will form part of a public document. Anyone making representations or applying for the review of a premises licence will be informed that their full details will be disclosed.

10. Enforcement

Licensing authorities are required by Regulation under the Act to state the principles to be applied by the authority in exercising the functions under Part 15 of the Act with respect to the inspection of premises; and the powers under Section 346 of the Act to institute criminal proceedings in respect of the offences specified.

This Licensing Authority's principles are that it will be guided by the Gambling Commission's Guidance (the Guidance) to Licensing Authorities and will endeavour to be:

- Proportionate: regulators should only intervene when necessary: remedies should be appropriate to the risk posed, and costs identified and minimised;
- Accountable: regulators must be able to justify decisions, and be subject to public scrutiny;
- Consistent: rules and standards must be joined up and implemented fairly;
- Transparent: regulators should be open, and keep regulations simple and user friendly; and
- Targeted: regulation should be focused on the problem and minimise side effects.

As per the Guidance to Licensing Authorities this licensing authority will endeavour to avoid duplication with other regulatory regimes as far as possible.

This Licensing Authority has adopted and implemented an intelligence-based inspection programme, based on;

- The licensing objectives
- Relevant codes of practice
- Guidance issued by the Gambling Commission, in particular at Part 36
- The principles set out in this Statement of Principles

The main enforcement and compliance role for this Licensing Authority in terms of the Act 5 is to ensure compliance with the premises licences and other permissions which it authorises. The Gambling Commission is the enforcement body for operating and personal licences. It is also worth noting that concerns about manufacture, supply or repair of gaming machines are not dealt with by the Licensing Authority but should be notified to the Gambling Commission.

This Licensing Authority also keeps itself informed of developments relating to the work of the Better Regulation Executive in its consideration of the regulatory functions of local authorities.

Bearing in mind the principle of transparency, this Licensing Authority's enforcement/compliance protocols/written agreements are available upon request to the licensing department.

11. Functions under the 2005 Act

11.1 Functions of the Licensing Authority

The 2005 Act gives Licensing Authorities the following functions:

- Licensing premises where gambling activities are to take place by issuing Premises Licences
- Issuing Provisional Statements
- Regulating members' clubs and miners' welfare institutes who wish to undertake certain gaming activities, by issuing Club Gaming Permits and/or Club Machine Permits
- Issuing Club Machine Permits to Commercial Clubs
- Granting permits for the use of certain lower stake gaming machines at unlicensed Family Entertainment Centres
- Receiving notifications of the use of two or fewer gaming machines, from premises licensed (under the 2003 Act) to sell/supply of alcohol (for consumption on the premises other than with a meal).
- Issuing Licensed Premises Gaming Machine Permits where more than two machines are required for premises licensed (under the 2003 Act) to sell/supply alcohol (for consumption on the premises other than with a meal).
- Registering small society lotteries below prescribed thresholds
- Issuing Prize Gaming Permits
- Receiving and endorsing Temporary Use Notices
- Receiving Occasional Use Notices
- Providing information to the Gambling Commission on details of licences issued (see section above on 'information exchange')
- Maintaining registers of permits and licences issued under these functions.

11.2 Others' functions

The local licensing authorities are not involved in licensing remote gambling activities (e.g. internet gambling). This will fall to the Gambling Commission. Neither are they involved in licensing the National Lottery nor in regulating spread betting. Consequently, local authorities do not have any powers to deal with the following gambling-related activities and licenses:

- Remote (online gambling)
- The National Lottery
- Gambling advertisements on television or other media
- Football pools

- Gaming machine manufacturers
- Gaming machine suppliers
- Gambling software
- Operating licences
- Personal functional licences
- Personal management licences

PART B: PREMISES LICENCES

1. Premises Licence

A premises licence can authorise the provision of facilities at the following:

- casino premises;
- bingo premises;
- betting premises, including betting tracks;
- adult gaming centres;
- family entertainment centres

Other than an application for a betting premises licence in respect of a track, the Council is not able to issue a premises licence unless the applicant holds the relevant operating licence from the Gambling Commission.

Premises licences will be subject to the requirements set out in the Act and Regulations, as well as specific mandatory and default conditions which will be detailed in Regulations issued by the Secretary of State. Licensing authorities are able to exclude default conditions and also attach others, where it is believed to be appropriate.

2. Applications

Other than an application for a premises licence in respect of a track, applications for a premises licence can only be made by a person who either holds:

- an operating licence authorising them to carry on the activity in respect of which a premises licence is sought, or
- has made an application for an operating licence which has not yet been determined.

Anyone wishing to make an objection to an application must do so by writing to the Licensing Authority and would normally be expected to relate their objection to one or more of the Licensing Objectives, or to issues raised within this Statement of Principles, the Guidance or Codes of Practice before the Licensing Authority will be able to consider it.

Where an application attracts an objection conditions will only be considered where they are necessary to promote the Acts objectives and proportionate to the circumstances.

Where it is necessary to attach conditions to a licence in order to promote the Act's objectives such conditions will not be overly onerous and will be proportionate to the risks involved.

The Licensing Authority will not, as a general rule, seek to attach conditions to a licence to mitigate concerns that are already adequately covered by other legislation.

The Council, in undertaking its licensing function, will have due regard to the need to eliminate unlawful discrimination and promote equality and good relations between persons of different

ethnic groups.

3. Local Risk Assessments

It is a requirement of the Gambling Commission's Licence Conditions and Codes of Practice (LCCP) for licensees to assess the local risks to the licensing objectives posed by the provisions of gambling facilities at each of their premises, and have policies, procedures, and control measures to mitigate those risks. In undertaking their local risk assessments, they must take into account relevant matters identified in this policy statement.

The LCCP state that licensees must review (and update as necessary) their local risk assessments:

- to take account of significant changes in local circumstances, including those identified in this policy statement;
- when there are significant changes at a licensee's premises that may affect their mitigation of local risks;
- when applying for a variation of a premises licence; and
- in any case, undertake a local risk assessment when applying for a new premises licence.

The Licensing Authority will expect the local risk assessment to consider as a minimum:

- the location of institutions, places, or areas where the presence of children and young persons should be expected such as schools, youth clubs, leisure/community centres, parks, playgrounds, and entertainment venues such as bowling alleys, cinemas etc
- locations where children may congregate such as bus stops, cafes, shops etc
- areas prone to issues of youths participating in anti-social behaviour, including underage drinking, drug taking, graffiti etc;
- the demographics of the area in relation to vulnerable groups;
- local gaming trends that may mirror days for financial payments such as pay days or benefit payments
- proximity of premises which may be frequented by vulnerable people such as hospitals, residential care homes, medical facilities, doctors' surgeries, addiction clinics or help centres
- other facilities in the proximity such as other gambling outlets, banks, public houses etc
- proximity to places where alcohol and drug dependant persons may congregate
- whether the premises is in an area subject to high levels of crime and/or disorder.
- known problems in the area such as those arising from street drinkers, and drug dealing activities etc
- policies in place at the premises to ensure that children and vulnerable person, including people with gambling dependencies are protected. This could include training records for staff such as how to recognise excessive gambling or vulnerable persons and actions that will be taken, the layout of the premises so that staff have unobstructed view of customers, location of CCTV and numbers of staff available at the premises at any one time.
- records held of the numbers of self-exclusions, and underage refusals at the premises
- results of any in house underage test purchasing at the premises

A significant change in local circumstances that would require a licensee to review their local risk assessment could include:

- A substantial residential building development which could lead to an increase in children or vulnerable persons in the area
- A development of new or change to existing education establishments
- New venues in the local area that may lead to an increase in vulnerable persons such as homeless hostels, support care facilities or medical facilities
- Increase in anti-social behaviour or drug/alcohol dependency issues in the local area

The Licensing Authority will expect that the local risk assessment is kept at the individual premises. Staff at the premises should be aware of the content of the local risk assessment and be able to locate it for inspection on request by a Police Officer or an Authorised Officer of the Local Authority or the Gambling Commission

4. Local Area Profile

The Licensing Authority has not undertaken a local area profile at this stage as there are a very low number of premises licensed under the Gambling Act 2005 in the district. However, if a profile is produced in the future it will be a separate document to this Statement of Principles and will be circulated to all licensed premises and available on the Local Authority's website. If a local area profile is produced it is expected that local risk assessments will take account of the local area profile.

5. Plans of the Premises

All new applications for a premises licence, and where relevant variation applications, must include a plan of the premises. This Authority expects the plan to show the outline of the premises defined in red, all exit/entrance points, any fixed structures and the position of counters, gaming machines etc. The plans become part of the premises licence and the Licensing Authority expects the plans to be available for inspection by an authorised officer at the premises.

If there are major changes to the layout of a premises a variation application must be made, and new plans submitted. If there is a minor change to the layout the licence holder should contact the Licensing Authority for advice. If the minor change has no impact on the Licensing Objectives the Licensing Authority may accept an updated plan. However, if there is a possibility that the change will impact on a Licensing Objective the licence holder must make a variation application. This could include the moving of gaming machines which impacts on the line of sight for staff.

6. Decision Making

When making decisions about premises licences this Licensing Authority will permit the use of premises for gambling as far as it is:

- in accordance with any relevant Code of Practice issued by the Gambling Commission;
- in accordance with any relevant guidance issued by the Gambling Commission;

- reasonably consistent with the licensing objectives; and
- in accordance with the Licensing Authority's Statement of Principles.

In determining an application, this Licensing Authority may not have regard to the expected demand for the facilities, which it is proposed to provide.

7. Other Mechanisms to address unruly behaviour

In carrying out its licensing functions the Licensing Authority also recognises that, apart from the licensing function, there are a number of other mechanisms available for addressing issues of unruly behaviour that can occur away from licensed premises, including: -

- Planning controls;
- Ongoing measures to create a safe and clean environment in these areas in partnership with local businesses, transport operators and other departments of this Licensing Authority;
- Regular liaison with the Police on law enforcement issues regarding disorder and anti-social behaviour;
- The power of the Police, other responsible authorities or local residents and businesses to seek a review of the licence.

8. Location

In determining an application or a request to review a Premises Licence, the Licensing Authority will have regard to:

- Proximity to institutions, places, or areas where the presence of young persons should be expected such as schools, youth clubs, parks, playgrounds etc.
- Proximity to residential area where there may a high concentration of families with children
- Proximity to premises frequented by vulnerable people such as hospitals, residential care homes, medical facilities, doctors' surgeries, addiction clinics, help centres etc.

The proximity of premises taken into consideration will vary depending on the size and scope of the gambling premises concerned. Each case will, however, be decided on its merits and if an applicant can effectively demonstrate how they might overcome Licensing Objectives concerns, this will be taken into account.

9. Primary Activity

By distinguishing between premises types the Act makes it clear that the primary gambling activity of the premises should be that described. Thus, in a bingo premises, the primary activity should be bingo. Subject to the gaming machine entitlements which various types of licence bring with them (and except in the case of tracks), the Act does not permit premises to be licensed for more than one of the above activities.

The Licensing Authority will take account of the Gambling Commission's document setting out the indicators that are used to assess as to whether the requirements for betting being the primary gambling activity in any particular premises are being met.

10. Meaning of “Premises”

In the Act, "premises" is defined as including "any place". Section 152 therefore, prevents more than one premises licence applying to any place. However, a single building could be subject to more than one premises licence, provided they are for different parts of the building and the different parts of the building can be reasonably regarded as being different premises. This approach has been taken to allow large, multiple unit premises such as a pleasure park, track, or shopping mall to obtain discrete premises licences, where appropriate safeguards are in place. However, Licensing Authorities should pay particular attention if there are issues about sub-divisions of a single building or plot and should ensure that mandatory conditions relating to access between premises are observed.

The Gambling Commission states in its Guidance to Licensing Authorities Part 7 that: “In most cases the expectation is that a single building / plot will be the subject of an application for a licence, for example, 32 High Street. However, that does not mean 32 High Street cannot be the subject of separate premises licences for the basement and ground floor if they are configured acceptably. Whether different parts of a building can properly be regarded as being separate premises will depend on the circumstances. The location of the premises will clearly be an important consideration and the suitability of the division is likely to be a matter for discussion between the operator and the licensing officer. However, the Commission does not consider that areas of a building that are artificially or temporarily separated, for example by ropes or moveable partitions, can properly be regarded as different premises.”

This Licensing Authority takes particular note of the Guidance in Part 7 which states that: “Licensing Authorities should take particular care in considering applications for multiple licences for a building and those relating to a discrete part of a building used for other (non-gambling) purposes. In particular they should be aware of the following:

- The third Licensing Objective seeks to protect children from being harmed by gambling. In practice that means not only preventing them from taking part in gambling, but also preventing them from being in close proximity to gambling. Therefore, premises should be configured so that children are not invited to participate in, have accidental access to or closely observe gambling where they are prohibited from participating.
- Entrances to and exits from parts of a building covered by one or more premises licences should be separate and identifiable so that the separation of different premises is not compromised, and people do not “drift” into a gambling area. In this context it should normally be possible to access the premises without going through another licensed premises or premises with a permit.
- Customers should be able to participate in the activity named on the premises licence.”

The Guidance also gives a list of factors which the licensing authority should be aware of, which may include:

- Is a separate registration for business rates in place for the premises?
- Is the premises’ neighbouring premises owned by the same person or someone else?
- Can each of the premises be accessed from the street or a public passageway?
- Can the premises only be accessed from any other gambling premises?

This Licensing Authority will consider these and other relevant factors in making its decision, depending on all the circumstances of the case.

This authority will take account of the Guidance in Part 7 which details the relevant access provisions for each premises type. These include

Adult Gaming Centre

- No customer must be able to access the premises directly from any other licensed gambling premises.

Betting Shops

- Access must be from a street (as per para 7.23 Guidance) or from another premises with a betting premises licence.
- No direct access from a betting shop to another premises used for the retail sale of merchandise or services. In effect there cannot be an entrance to a betting shop from a shop of any kind and you could not have a betting shop at the back of a café – the whole area would have to be licensed.

Family Entertainment Centre

- No customer must be able to access the premises directly from:
 - a casino;
 - an adult gaming centre;
 - a betting premises, other than a track.

11. Premises “ready for gambling”

The Guidance states that a licence to use premises for gambling should only be issued in relation to premises that the Licensing Authority can be satisfied are going to be ready to be used for gambling in the reasonably near future, consistent with the scale of building or alterations required before the premises are brought into use.

If the construction of a premises is not yet complete, or if they need alteration, or if the applicant does not yet have a right to occupy them, then an application for a provisional statement should be made instead.

In deciding whether a premises licence can be granted where there are outstanding construction or alteration works at a premises, this Authority will determine applications on their merits, applying a two-stage consideration process: -

- First, whether the premises ought to be permitted to be used for gambling;
- Second, whether appropriate conditions can be put in place to cater for the situation that the premises are not yet in the state in which they ought to be before gambling takes place.

Applicants should note that this Authority is entitled to decide that it is appropriate to grant a licence subject to conditions, but it is not obliged to grant such a licence.

More detailed examples of the circumstances in which such a licence may be granted can be found in Part 7 of the Guidance.

12. Planning

The Guidance to Licensing Authorities states in Part 7:

“In determining applications, the licensing authority should not take into consideration matters that are not related to gambling and the licensing objectives. One example would be the likelihood of the applicant obtaining planning permission or building regulations approval for their proposal.”

This Authority will not take into account irrelevant matters as per the Guidance. In addition this Authority notes the following excerpt from Part 7 Guidance:

“When dealing with a premises licence application for finished buildings, the licensing authority should not take into account whether those buildings have or comply with the necessary planning or building consents. Those matters should be dealt with under relevant planning control and building regulation powers, and not form part of the consideration for the premises licence. Section 210 of the 2005 Act prevents licensing authorities taking into account the likelihood of the proposal by the applicant obtaining planning or building consent when considering a premises licence application. Equally the grant of a gambling premises licence does not prejudice or prevent any action that may be appropriate under the law relating to planning or building.”

13. Duplication with other regulatory regimes

This Licensing Authority seeks to avoid any duplication with other statutory / regulatory systems where possible, including planning. This Licensing Authority will not consider whether a licence application is likely to be awarded planning permission or building regulations approval, in its consideration of it. It will though, listen to, and consider carefully, any concerns about conditions which are not able to be met by licensees due to planning restrictions, should such a situation arise. When dealing with a premises licence application for finished buildings, this Licensing Authority will not take into account whether those buildings have to comply with the necessary planning or buildings consents. Fire or health and safety risks will not be taken into account, as these matters are dealt with under relevant planning control, buildings and other regulations and must not form part of the consideration for the premises licence.

14. Licensing Objectives

14.1 Prevention of crime and disorder objective

This Licensing Authority places a considerable importance on the prevention of crime and disorder and will fulfil its duty under s17 of the Crime and Disorder Act 1998. A high standard of control is, therefore, expected to be exercised over licensed premises.

This Licensing Authority will, when determining applications, consider whether the grant of a Premises Licence will result in an increase in crime and disorder.

In considering licence applications, this Licensing Authority will particularly take into account the following: -

- The design and layout of the premises;
- The training given to staff in crime prevention measures appropriate to those premises;

- Physical security features installed in the premises. This may include matters such as the position of cash registers or the standard of CCTV that is installed;
- Where premises are subject to age restrictions, that procedures are in place to conduct age verification checks;
- The likelihood of any violence, public order, or policing problem if the licence is granted.

14.2 Ensuring that gambling is conducted in a fair and open way objective

Generally, the Gambling Commission would not expect licensing authorities to become concerned with ensuring that gambling is conducted in a fair and open way. This will be a matter for either the management of the gambling business (and therefore relevant to the Operating Licence) or will be in relation to the suitability and actions of an individual (and therefore relevant to the Personal Licence). Both of these options fall under the remit of the Gambling Commission.

Where this Licensing Authority has concerns that gambling at any premises is not being conducted in a fair and open way this Licensing Authority will bring those concerns to the attention of the Gambling Commission.

14.3 Protection of children and other vulnerable persons objective

Access to Licensed Premises

With limited exceptions, the access of children and young persons to those gambling premises which are adult only environments will not be permitted.

This Licensing Authority may seek to limit the advertising for premises so that gambling products are not aimed at children or advertised in such a way that makes them particularly attractive to children.

This Licensing Authority may consult with the County's Safeguarding Children Board on any application that may give cause for concern over access for children or vulnerable persons.

This Licensing Authority will also ensure that where category C or above machines are on offer in premises to which children are admitted:

- all such machines are located in an area of the premises which is separated from the remainder of the premises by a physical barrier which is effective to prevent access other than through a designated entrance;
- only adults are admitted to the area where these machines are located;
- access to the area where the machines are located is supervised;
- the area where these machines are located is arranged so that it can be observed by the staff or the licence holder; and
- at the entrance to and inside any such areas there are prominently displayed notices indicating that access to the area is prohibited to persons under 18.

These considerations will apply to premises including buildings where multiple premises licences are applicable.

This Licensing Authority will judge each separate application on its own merits before deciding whether to impose conditions to protect children on particular categories of premises. This

may include such requirements as: -

- Supervision of entrances;
- Segregation of gambling areas from areas frequented by children;
- Supervision of gaming machines in non-adult gambling specific premises.

It is noted that there are conditions which the licensing authority cannot attach to premises licences which are:

- any condition on the premises licence which makes it impossible to comply with an operating licence condition;
- conditions relating to gaming machine categories, numbers, or method of operation;
- conditions which provide that membership of a club or body be required (the Gambling Act 2005 specifically removes the membership requirement for casino and bingo clubs and this provision prevents it being reinstated; and
- conditions in relation to stakes, fees, winning or prizes.

14.4 Vulnerable Persons

This Licensing Authority does not seek to prohibit particular groups of adults from gambling in the same way that it seeks to prohibit children, but it will assume for regulatory purposes, that “vulnerable persons” include:

1. People who gamble more than they want to;
2. People who gamble beyond their means; and
3. People who may not be able to make an informed or balanced decision about gambling due to a mental impairment, alcohol, or drugs.

This Licensing Authority will expect, (if appropriate for the type of licence or permit being applied for), that an applicant will show that there are policies and procedures in place to protect vulnerable persons.

These may include:

- A training programme for staff to enable them to identify persons who may be vulnerable and where appropriate to take action to protect such vulnerable persons from being harmed or exploited by gambling
- Display Gamcare helpline stickers on all gaming machines
- Display Gamcare posters in prominent locations on the premises

Any supporting evidence of the above measures e.g. training manuals or other similar documents/written statements should be attached to the application.”

14.5 Gambling Prevalence and Social Responsibility

Gambling related harm is defined as any type of repetitive gambling that disrupts or damages a person, family, or recreational pursuits. It can have many and varied impacts, including on an individual’s physical and mental health, relationships, housing and finances and affect a wide range of people, such as families, colleagues and wider local communities (for example, where problem of gambling is associated with crime or homelessness) and society as a whole (in terms of the costs that may be created by problem gambling). Evidence suggests that certain groups are more vulnerable to problem gambling including children and young people, people with mental health issues, certain minority ethnic groups, the unemployed, homeless people,

those with low intellectual functioning, people with financially constrained circumstances and those living in deprived areas. Harms may include financial hardship, relationship breakdown, domestic violence, mental health problems and suicidal thoughts.

Gambling Operators must comply with the Gambling Commission's Licence Conditions and Codes of Practice – Gambling Commission (LCCP). The Social Responsibility Code 3 requires gambling operators to have and put into effect policies and procedures to promote socially responsible gambling and these should reduce the risk of, and seek to identify, problem gambling.

The requirements on gambling premises under the social responsibility code are based upon key areas:

- Provision of information on gambling responsibility – for example, the availability of time or monetary limits for players and information on where to get help and advice about gambling.
- Customer interaction – licensees are required to have policies and procedures in place governing customer interaction where there are concerns that a customer is displaying signs of problem gambling. These will include staff training and the types of behaviour that may trigger an intervention or where staff may consider reducing services to customers.
- Layout of the premises – operations must ensure that the layout of a gambling premises supports the effective supervision of the premises.
- Self-exclusion – licensees must have procedures for self-exclusion that ensure that individuals who wish to self-exclude from gambling are prevented from participating in gambling. In addition to operating their own self-exclusion schemes all licensees must offer the facility for customers to self-exclude on a multi-operator basis, meaning that an individual who self-excludes from one operator should be able to self-exclude from all operators offering the same type of gambling in the same locality. Trade bodies for different sectors of the gambling industry have led on the development of multi-operator self-exclusion arrangements for each sector.

Any marketing communications for gambling must be socially responsible, with particular regard to the need to protect children, young persons, and other vulnerable persons being harmed or exploited. Licensees are required to comply with the Social Responsibility Code 5 of the LCCP.

14.6 Door Supervisors

The Guidance advises that licensing authorities may consider whether there is a need for door supervisors in terms of the licensing objectives of protection of children and vulnerable persons from being harmed or exploited by gambling, and also in terms of preventing premises becoming a source of crime.

This Licensing Authority will normally expect door supervisors employed at Gambling Premises to be Security Industry Authority (S.I.A.) registered (or any subsequent equivalent). It is noted though that 'in house' door supervisors at casinos or bingo premises are exempt from the requirement to be licensed by the S.I.A. (or any subsequent equivalent). Where applicants propose to employ door supervisors who are not S.I.A. registered this Licensing Authority will expect the Applicant to show that they (the door supervisors) are trained to S.I.A. standards (or any subsequent equivalent.)

14.7 Adult Gaming Centres

This Licensing Authority will have regard to the need to protect children, young persons and vulnerable persons from harm or being exploited by gambling and will expect the applicant to satisfy it (the Licensing Authority) that there will be in place sufficient measures to, for example, ensure that under 18 year olds do not have access to the premises.

This Licensing Authority will expect applicants to offer in their application appropriate measures that they propose to take that will promote the licensing objectives, measures which could cover issues such as:

- 14.7.1 Proof of age schemes;
- 14.7.2 CCTV;
- 14.7.3 Supervision of entrances / machine areas;
- 14.7.4 Physical separation of areas;
- 14.7.5 Location of entry;
- 14.7.6 Notices/signage;
- 14.7.7 Specific Opening hours;
- 14.7.8 Self-exclusion schemes;
- 14.7.9 Provision of information leaflets/helpline numbers for organisations such as GamCare.

This list is not mandatory, nor exhaustive, and is merely indicative of example measures.

14.8 (Licensed) Family Entertainment Centres:

This Licensing Authority will specifically have regard to the need to protect children, young persons and vulnerable persons from harm or being exploited by gambling and will expect the applicant to satisfy the Licensing Authority, for example, that there will be sufficient measures to ensure that under 18 year olds do not have access to the adult only gaming machine areas

This Licensing Authority will expect applicants to offer their own measures to meet the licensing objectives, such measures cover issues such as:

- 14.8.1 CCTV;
- 14.8.2 Supervision of entrances / machine areas;
- 14.8.3 Physical separation of areas;
- 14.8.4 Location of entry;
- 14.8.5 Notices / signage;
- 14.8.6 Specific opening hours;
- 14.8.7 Self-barring schemes;
- 14.8.8 Measures / training for staff on how to deal with suspected truant school children on the premises and how to recognise signs of child sexual exploitation
- 14.8.9 Clear policies that outline the steps to be taken to protect children from

harm This list is not mandatory, nor exhaustive, and is merely indicative of example measures.

This Licensing Authority will, in accordance with the Guidance, refer to the Commission's website to see any conditions that apply to operating licences covering the way in which the area containing the category C machines should be delineated. This Licensing Authority will also make itself aware of any mandatory or default conditions on these premises' licences,

where they have been published.

14.9 Casinos

There are currently no casinos operating within the district.

At present this Licensing Authority has passed a resolution not to issue casino premises licences generally in the district. However, the Licensing Authority reserves the right to review this situation and may, at some time in the future, revoke that resolution. Any such revocation would be made by the Full Council and this Statement of Principles would be updated.

14.10 Bingo Premises

The Guidance in Part 18 states:

“Licensing authorities will need to satisfy themselves that bingo can be played in any bingo premises for which they issue a premises licence. This will be a relevant consideration where the operator of an existing bingo premises applies to vary their licence to exclude an area of the existing premises from its ambit and then applies for a new premises licence, or multiple licences, for that or those excluded areas.”

This authority also notes the Guidance in Part 18 regarding the unusual circumstances in which the splitting of a pre-existing premises into two adjacent premises might be permitted, and in particular, that it is not permissible to locate sixteen category B3 gaming machines in one of the resulting premises, as the gaming machine entitlement for that premises would be exceeded.

In Part 18 the Guidance states:

“Children and young people are allowed into bingo premises; however they are not permitted to participate in the bingo and if category B or C machines are made available for use these must be separated from areas where children and young people are allowed.”

14.11 Betting Premises

Betting machines – This Licensing Authority will, in accordance with the Gambling Guidance, take into account the size of the premises, the number of counter positions available for person-to-person transactions, and the ability of staff to monitor the use of the machines by children and young persons (it is an offence for those under 18 to bet) or by vulnerable people, when considering the number/nature/circumstances of betting machines an operator wants to offer.

14.12 Tracks

Tracks may be subject to one or more than one premises licence, provided each licence relates to a specified area of the track. In accordance with the Guidance, this Licensing Authority will especially consider the impact upon the third licensing objective i.e. the protection of children, young persons and vulnerable persons from being harmed or exploited by gambling and the need to ensure that entrances to each type of premises are distinct and that children are excluded from gambling areas where they are not permitted to enter.

This Licensing Authority will, therefore, expect the premises licence applicant to demonstrate

suitable measures to ensure that children and young persons do not have access to adult only gaming facilities. It is noted that children and young persons will be permitted to enter track areas where facilities for betting are provided on days when dog- racing and/or horse racing takes place, but that they are still prevented from entering areas where gaming machines (other than category D machines) are provided.

This Licensing Authority also expects applicants to volunteer their own measures to meet the licensing objectives such as:

- 14.12.1 Proof of age schemes;
- 14.12.2 CCTV;
- 14.12.3 Supervision of entrances / machine areas;
- 14.12.4 Physical separation of areas;
- 14.12.5 Location of entry;
- 14.12.6 Notices / signage;
- 14.12.7 Specific opening hours;
- 14.12.8 Self-barring schemes;
- 14.12.9 Provision of information leaflets / helpline numbers for organisations such as GamCare.

This list is not mandatory, nor exhaustive, and is merely indicative of example measures.

a) Gaming machines –

Where the applicant holds a pool betting operating licence and is going to use the entitlement to four gaming machines, machines (other than category D machines) should be located in areas from which children are excluded.

b) Betting machines –

This Licensing Authority will, as per Part 6 of the Guidance, take into account the size of the premises and the ability of staff to monitor the use of the machines by children and young persons (it is an offence for those under 18 to bet) or by vulnerable people, when considering the number/nature/circumstances of betting machines an operator proposes to offer.

c) Applications and plans -

The Act (s51) requires applicants to submit plans of the premises with their application, in order to ensure that the licensing authority has the necessary information to make an informed judgement about whether the premises are fit for gambling. The plan will also be used for the licensing authority to plan future premises inspection activity. (See Guidance, para 20.28).

Plans for tracks do not need to be in a particular scale but should be drawn to scale and should be sufficiently detailed to include the information required by regulations. (See Guidance, Part 20).

Some tracks may be situated on agricultural land where the perimeter is not defined by virtue of an outer wall or fence, such as point-to-point racetracks. In such instances, where an entry fee is levied, track premises licence holders may erect temporary structures to restrict access to premises. (See Guidance, Part 20).

In the rare cases where the outer perimeter cannot be defined, it is likely that the track in question will not be specifically designed for the frequent holding of sporting events or races.

In such cases betting facilities may be better provided through occasional use notices where the boundary premises do not need to be defined. (See Guidance, Part 20).

This Licensing Authority appreciates that it is sometimes difficult to define the precise location of betting areas on tracks. The precise location of where betting facilities are provided is not required to be shown on track plans, both by virtue of the fact that betting is permitted anywhere on the premises and because of the difficulties associated with pinpointing exact locations for some types of track. Applicants should provide sufficient information that this Licensing Authority can satisfy itself that the plan indicates the main areas where betting might take place. For racecourses in particular, any betting areas subject to the “five times rule” (commonly known as betting rings) must be indicated on the plan. (See Guidance, Part 20)

14.13 Travelling Fairs

It will fall to this Licensing Authority to decide whether, where category D machines and / or equal chance prize gaming without a permit is to be made available for use at travelling fairs, the statutory requirement that the facilities for gambling amount to no more than an ancillary amusement at the fair is met.

The Licensing Authority will consider whether the applicant falls within the statutory definition of a travelling fair and if it does will require all gaming machines at travelling fairs to acquire a permit.

It is noted that the 27-day statutory maximum for the land being used as a fair applies on a per calendar year basis, and that it applies to the piece of land on which the fairs are held, regardless of whether the same or different travelling fairs occupy the land. This Licensing Authority will work with its neighbouring authorities to ensure that land which crosses our boundaries is monitored so that the statutory limits are not exceeded.

14.14 Provisional Statements

Developers may wish to apply to this Authority for provisional statements before entering into a contract to buy or lease property or land to judge whether a development is worth taking forward in light of the need to obtain a premises licence. There is no need for the applicant to hold an operating licence in order to apply for a provisional statement.

S204 of the Act provides for a person to make an application to the Licensing Authority for a provisional statement in respect of premises that he or she:

- expects to be constructed;
- expects to be altered; or
- expects to acquire a right to occupy.

The process for considering an application for a provisional statement is the same as that for a premises licence application. The applicant is obliged to give notice of the application in the same way as applying for a premises licence. Responsible authorities and interested parties may make representations and there are rights of appeal.

In contrast to the premises licence application, the applicant does not have to hold or have applied for an operating licence from the Gambling Commission (except in the case of a track), and they do not have to have a right to occupy the premises in respect of which their provisional application is made.

The holder of a provisional statement may then apply for a premises licence once the premises are constructed, altered, or acquired. The Licensing Authority will be constrained in the matters it can consider when determining the premises licence application, and in terms of representations about premises licence applications that follow the grant of a provisional statement, no further representations from relevant authorities or interested parties can be taken into account unless:

- they concern matters which could not have been addressed at the provisional statement;
- stage, or
- they reflect a change in the applicant's circumstances.

In addition, the Licensing Authority may refuse the premises licence (or grant it on terms different to those attached to the provisional statement) only by reference to matters:

- which could not have been raised by objectors at the provisional statement stage;
- which in the Licensing Authority's opinion reflect a change in the operator's circumstances; or
- where the premises has not been constructed in accordance with the plan submitted with the application. This must be a substantial change to the plan and this Licensing Authority notes that it can discuss any concerns it has with the applicant before making a decision.

14.15 Reviews

Requests for a review of a premises licence can be made by interested parties or responsible authorities. However, it is for the Licensing Authority to decide whether the review is to be carried-out. This Licensing Authority will consider requests for a review of a premises licence only where that request is relevant to the matters listed below.

14.15.1 in accordance with any relevant Code of Practice issued by the Gambling Commission;

14.15.2 in accordance with any relevant guidance issued by the Gambling Commission;

14.15.3 reasonably consistent with one or more of the licensing objectives; and

14.15.4 in accordance with the Licensing Authority's Statement of Licensing Policy.

The Licensing Authority will take into consideration whether the request is frivolous or vexatious, or whether it is substantially the same as previous representations or requests for review. Where it considers this is the case it will certainly not cause this Licensing Authority to alter/revoke/suspend the licence,

This Licensing Authority can also initiate a review of a licence on the basis of any reason which it thinks is appropriate.

Once a valid application for a review has been received by the Licensing Authority, representations can be made by responsible authorities and interested parties during a 28-day period. This period begins 7 days after the application was received by the Licensing Authority, who will publish notice of the application within 7 days of receipt.

The Licensing Authority must carry out the review as soon as possible after the 28-day period for making representations has passed.

The purpose of the review will be to determine whether the Licensing Authority should take any action in relation to the licence. If action is justified, the options open to the Licensing

Authority are: -

- (a) add, remove, or amend a licence condition imposed by the Licensing Authority;
- (b) exclude a default condition imposed by the Secretary of State (e.g. opening hours) or remove or amend such an exclusion;
- (c) suspend the premises licence for a period not exceeding three months; and
- (d) revoke the premises licence.

In determining what action, if any, should be taken following a review, the Licensing Authority must have regard to the principles set out in section 153 of the Act, as well as any relevant representations.

In particular, the Licensing Authority may also initiate a review of a premises licence on the grounds that a premises licence holder has not provided facilities for gambling at the premises. This is to prevent people from applying for licences in a speculative manner without intending to use them.

Once the review has been completed, the Licensing Authority must, as soon as possible, notify its decision to:

- 14.15.5 the licence holder;
- 14.15.6 the applicant for review (if any);
- 14.15.7 the Commission;
- 14.15.8 any person who made representations;
- 14.15.9 the chief officer of police or chief constable; and
- 14.15.10 Her Majesty's Commissioners for Revenue and Customs.

14.16 Complaints against Licensed Premises

The Licensing Authority will investigate complaints against licensed premises in relation to matters relating to the licensing objectives for which it has responsibility. In the first instance, complainants are encouraged to raise the complaint directly with the licence holder or business concerned to seek a local resolution.

Where an interested party has made either a valid representation about licensed premises or a valid application for a licence to be reviewed, this Licensing Authority will, where appropriate, seek to arrange a conciliation meeting to address and clarify the issues of concern.

This process will not override the right of any interested party to ask that the Licensing Authority consider their objections, or for any licence holder to decline to participate in a conciliation meeting.

PART C: PERMITS, TEMPORARY & OCCASIONAL USE NOTICES

15. Unlicensed Family Entertainment Centre gaming machine permits

Premises that do not hold a premises licence but wish to provide gaming machines may apply to the Licensing Authority for an Unlicensed Family Entertainment Centres permit. The applicant must show that the premises will be wholly or mainly used for making gaming machines available for use (Section 238 of The Act).

The Act 2005 states that a Licensing Authority may prepare a Statement of Principles that they propose to consider in determining the suitability of an applicant for a permit and in preparing this Statement, and/or considering applications, it need not (but may) have regard to the licensing objectives and shall have regard to any relevant guidance issued by the Commission

under Part 24. The Guidance also states: "In their three-year licensing policy statement, Licensing Authorities may include a statement of principles that they propose to apply when exercising their functions in considering applications for permits...., Licensing Authorities will want to give weight to child protection issues."

Guidance also states: "...An application for a permit may be granted only if the licensing authority is satisfied that the premises will be used as an unlicensed FEC, and if the chief officer of police has been consulted on the application. Licensing Authorities might wish to consider asking applications to demonstrate:

- a full understanding of the maximum stakes and prizes of the gambling that is permissible in unlicensed FECs;
- that the applicant has no relevant convictions (those that are set out in Schedule 7 of the Act; and
- that staff are trained to have a full understanding of the maximum stakes and prizes.

It should be noted that a Licensing Authority cannot attach conditions to this type of permit.

Statement of Principles - This Licensing Authority will expect the applicant to show that there are policies and procedures in place to protect children from harm. Harm in this context is not limited to harm from gambling but includes wider child protection considerations. The efficiency of such policies and procedures will each be considered on their merits. However, they may include:

- training for staff as regards suspected truant school children on the premises,
- training covering how staff would deal with unsupervised very young children being on the premises, or children causing perceived problems on / around the premises.
- training for staff for identifying and how to report safeguarding and child sexual exploitation concerns

This Licensing Authority will also expect applicants to:

- Provide a detailed plan with the application showing the boundaries of the unlicensed FEC, the location of the gaming machines and any other fixed structures, plus the nature of any adjoining areas if relevant. There must be no direct access from an unlicensed FEC and an Adult Gaming Centre
- demonstrate a full understanding of the maximum stakes and prizes of the gambling that is permissible in unlicensed FECs;
- that the applicant has no relevant convictions (those that are set out in Schedule 7 of the Act);
- staff are trained to have a full understanding of the maximum stakes and prizes.

If there is a change in the layout of the premises after the permit is granted the Licensing Authority expects the permit holder to provide the Licensing Authority with updated plans. This will include if gaming machines are moved within the area covered by the permit. If there is a significant change that could impact on the licensing objectives a new application may have to be submitted.

16. (Alcohol) Licensed Premises - Gaming Machine Permits

The Act allows premises licensed to sell alcohol for consumption on the premises, to automatically have two gaming machines of categories C and/or D. The premises merely need to notify the Licensing Authority.

The Licensing Authority expects alcohol licensed premises with gaming machines to adhere to

the Codes of Practice. In particular there will be sufficient measures to ensure that under 18 year olds do not have access to the adult only gaming machines and all gaming machines situated on the premises must be located in a place within the premises so that their use can be supervised, either by staff whose duties include such supervision (including bar or floor staff) or by other means.

The Licensing Authority would consider the removal of the automatic authorisation in respect of any particular premises if:

- the provision of the machines is not reasonably consistent with the pursuit of the Acts' licensing objectives;
- gaming has taken place on the premises that breaches a condition of section 282 of the Act (i.e. that written notice has been provided to The Licensing Authority, that a fee has been provided and that any relevant Code of Practice issued by the Gambling Commission about the location and operation of the machine has been complied with);
- the premises are mainly used for gaming; or
- an offence under the Act has been committed on the premises.

Any premises wishing to have more than two machines must apply for a permit. Where the Licensing Authority receives such an application the Licensing Authority will consider that application based upon the licensing objectives, any guidance by the Gambling Commission issued under Section 25 of The Act, and such matters as it may think relevant. Such matters will be determined on a case by case basis but generally there will be regard to the need to protect children and vulnerable persons from harm or being exploited by gambling and will expect the applicant to satisfy the Licensing Authority that there will be sufficient measures to ensure that under 18 year olds do not have access to the adult only gaming machines. Measures which will satisfy the Licensing Authority that there will be no access may include the adult machines are in sight of any bar, or that the machines are capable of continuous monitoring being in sight of the bar, or in the sight of staff who will monitor that the machines are not being used by those under 18. Notices and signage may also be helpful. As regards the protection of vulnerable persons applicants may wish to consider the provision of information leaflets / helpline numbers for organisations such as GamCare.

The Licensing Authority will expect the applicant for a permit to provide a detailed plan with the application showing the boundaries of the area to be covered by the permit, the location of the gaming machines and any other fixed structures, plus the nature of any adjoining areas if relevant.

If there is a change in the layout of the premises after the permit is granted the Licensing Authority expects the permit holder to provide the Licensing Authority with updated plans. This will include if gaming machines are moved within the area covered by the permit. If there is a significant change that could impact on the licensing objectives a new application may have to be submitted

It is recognised that some alcohol licensed premises may apply for a premises licence for their non-alcohol licensed areas. Any such application would most likely need to be applied for and dealt with as an Adult Gaming Centre premises licence.

It should be noted that the Licensing Authority can decide to grant the application with a smaller number of machines and/or a different category of machines than that applied for. Conditions (other than these) cannot be attached.

It should also be noted that the holder of a permit must comply with any Code of Practice issued by the Gambling Commission about the location and operation of the machine.

17. Prize Gaming Permits

The Act 2003 states that a Licensing Authority can decide to prepare a Statement of Principles that they propose to apply in exercising their functions under this schedule which may in particular specify matters that the Licensing Authority proposes to consider in determining the suitability of the applicant for a permit.

Statement of Principles - This Licensing Authority requires applicants to set out the types of gaming that they are intending to offer, and that the applicant should be able to demonstrate:

- that they understand the limits to stakes and prizes that are set out in Regulations;
- and that the gaming offered is within the law;
- and they have clear policies that outline the steps to be taken to protect children from harm

In making its decision on an application for a permit the Licensing Authority does not need to (but may) have regard to the licensing objectives but must have regard to any Gambling Commission guidance.

18. Club Gaming and Club Machines Permits

Members Clubs and Miners' Welfare Institutes (but not Commercial Clubs) may apply for a Club Gaming Permit or a Clubs Gaming machines permit. The Club Gaming Permit will enable the premises to provide gaming machines, equal chance gaming and games of chance as set-out in Regulations. A Club Gaming machine permit will enable the premises to provide gaming machines Commercial clubs are not permitted to provide non-machine gaming (other than exempt gaming under section 269 of the Act) so they should apply for a club machine permit,

Gambling Commission Guidance states: "Members clubs must have at least twenty-five members and be established and conducted "wholly or mainly" for purposes other than gaming unless the gaming is permitted by separate regulations. The Secretary of State has made regulations and these cover bridge and whist clubs,. A members' club must be permanent in nature, not established to make commercial profit, and controlled by its members equally. Examples include working men's clubs, branches of Royal British Legion and clubs with political affiliations."

This Licensing Authority will only refuse such an application if:

- the applicant does not fulfil the requirements for a members' or commercial club or miners' welfare institute and therefore is not entitled to receive the type of permit for which it has applied;
- the applicant's premises are used wholly or mainly by children and/or young persons;
- an offence under the Act or a breach of a permit has been committed by the applicant while providing gaming facilities;
- a permit held by the applicant has been cancelled in the previous ten years; or
- an objection has been lodged by the Commission or the police.

When considering whether the applicant fulfils the requirements for a members' or commercial club or miners' welfare institute it will take account of the factors listed in section 25 of the Guidance.

The Act also provides for a 'fast-track' procedure for premises which hold a Club Premises Certificate under the Licensing Act 2003 (Schedule 12 paragraph 10). The Guidance for local authorities' states:

"Under the fast-track procedure there is no opportunity for objections to be made by the Commission or the police, and the ground upon which a Licensing Authority can refuse a permit are reduced."

This Licensing Authority will refuse such applications if:

- the club is established primarily for gaming, other than gaming prescribed under schedule 12;
- in addition to the prescribed gaming, the applicant provides facilities for other gaming; or
- that a club gaming permit or club machine permit issued to the applicant in the last ten years has been cancelled.

When considering whether the club is established primarily for gaming the Licensing Authority will take account of the factors listed in section 25 of the Guidance.

There are statutory conditions on club gaming permits that no child uses a category B or C machine on the premises and that the holder of such a permit complies with any relevant provision of a Code of Practice regarding the location and operation of gaming machines.

19. Temporary Use Notices

Temporary Use Notices allow the use of premises for gambling where there is no premises licence but where a gambling operator wishes to use the premises temporarily for providing facilities for gambling. Premises that might be suitable for a Temporary Use Notice, according to the Gambling Commission, would include hotels, conference centres and sporting venues.

The Licensing Authority can only grant a Temporary Use Notice to a person or company holding a relevant operating licence, i.e. a non-remote casino operating licence.

The Secretary of State has the power to determine what form of gambling can be authorised by Temporary Use Notices, and at the time of writing this Statement the relevant regulations (SI no 3157: The Gambling Act 2005 (Temporary Use Notices) Regulations 2007) state that Temporary Use Notices can only be used to permit the provision of facilities or equal chance gaming, where the gaming is intended to produce a single winner, which in practice means poker tournaments.

There are a number of statutory limits as regards Temporary Use Notices. The meaning of "premises" in Part 8 of the Act is discussed in Part 7 of the Gambling Commission Guidance to Licensing Authorities. As with "premises", the definition of "a set of premises" will be a question of fact in the particular circumstances of each notice that is given. In the Act "premises" is defined as including "any place". In considering whether a place falls within the definition of "a set of premises", the Licensing Authority needs to look at, amongst other things, the ownership/occupation and control of the premises.

This Licensing Authority expects to object to notices where it appears that their effect would be to permit regular gambling in a place that could be described as one set of premises, as recommended in the Guidance.

20. Occasional Use Notices

The Licensing Authority has very little discretion as regards these notices aside from ensuring that the statutory limit of 8 days in a calendar year is not exceeded.

When receiving such notices this Licensing Authority will consider the definition of a 'track'

and whether the notice giver is permitted to avail him/herself of the notice.

21. Small Society Lotteries

This Licensing Authority will adopt a risk-based approach towards its enforcement responsibilities for small society lotteries. This Licensing Authority considers that the following list, although not exclusive, could affect the risk status of the operator:

- submission of late returns (returns must be submitted no later than three months after the date on which the lottery draw was held)
- submission of incomplete or incorrect returns
- breaches of the limits for small society lotteries

Non-commercial gaming is permitted if it takes place at a non-commercial event, either as an incidental or principal activity at the event. Events are non-commercial if no part of the proceeds is for private profit or gain. The proceeds of such events may benefit one or more individuals if the activity is organised:

by, or on behalf of, a charity or for charitable purposes
to enable participation in, or support of, sporting, athletic or cultural activities.
Charities and community groups should contact this Licensing Authority for further advice.

APPENDICES

Appendix 1 – Licensing Authority delegations for West Oxfordshire District

Appendix 2 – Responsible Authorities for each Council area

Appendix 1 – Licensing Authority delegations – West Oxfordshire District

Matter to be dealt with	Full Council	Sub-committee of licensing committee	Officers
Final approval of three-year licensing policy	X		
Policy not to permit casinos	X		
Fee setting (when appropriate)	X		
Application for premises licence		Where representations have been received and not withdrawn	Where no representations received or all have been withdrawn
Application for a variation to a licence		Where representations have been received and not withdrawn	Where no representations received, or all have been withdrawn
Application for a transfer of a licence		Where representations have been received from the Commission	Where no representations received from the Commission
Application for a provisional statement		Where representations have been received and not withdrawn	Where no representations received or all have been withdrawn
Review of a premises licence		X	
Application for club gaming/ club machine permits		Where objections have been made (and not withdrawn)	Where no representations received or all have been withdrawn
Cancellation of club gaming/ club machine permits		X	
Applications for other permits			X
Cancellation of licensed premises gaming machine permits			X
Consideration of temporary use notice			X
Decision to give a counter notice to a temporary use notice		X	


Appendix 2 - Responsible Authorities

The Responsible Authorities under the 2005 Act and their contact details are as follows.

West Oxfordshire District Council:

Responsible Authority	Address	Telephone number and email address
Gambling Commission	Gambling Commission Victoria Square House Victoria Square Birmingham B2 4BP	0121 230 6666 info@gamblingcommission.gov.uk
Thames Valley Police	Thames Valley Police Licensing Office 165 Oxford Road Kidlington OX5 2NX	01865 266109 licensing@thamesvalley.pnn.police.uk
Oxfordshire Fire and Rescue Service	Oxfordshire Fire and Rescue Service Sterling Road Kidlington OX5 2DU	01865 842999 fire.service@oxfordshire.gov.uk
Oxfordshire Safeguarding Children Board	Oxfordshire Safeguarding Children Board (OSCB) 3rd Floor County Hall New Road Oxford OX1 1ND	01865 810628
Environmental Services - Public Protection	Operations Team Environmental and Regulatory Services Woodgreen Witney OX28 1NB	01993 861000 ers@publicagroup.uk
Planning and Regulatory Services	Planning Services West Oxfordshire District Council Elmfield Witney OX28 1PB	01993 861000 planning@westoxon.gov.uk
Public Health	Merlyn Mistry, Health Improvement Practitioner Public Health Team Oxfordshire County Council County Hall New Road Oxford OX1 1ND	public.health@oxfordshire.gov.uk

This page is intentionally left blank

 <p style="text-align: center;">WEST OXFORDSHIRE DISTRICT COUNCIL</p>	<p>WEST OXFORDSHIRE DISTRICT COUNCIL</p>
<p>Name and Date of Committee</p>	<p>COUNCIL – 27 NOVEMBER 2024</p>
<p>Subject</p>	<p>REVIEW OF STANDARDS ARRANGEMENTS</p>
<p>Wards Affected</p>	<p>None</p>
<p>Accountable Member</p>	<p>Councillor Carl Rylett – Chair of Audit and Governance Committee. Email: carl.rylett@westoxon.gov.uk</p>
<p>Accountable Officer</p>	<p>Andrea McCaskie – Director of Governance. Email: andrea.mccaskie@westoxon.gov.uk</p>
<p>Report Author</p>	<p>Andrew Brown – Business Manager, Democratic Services. Email: democratic.services@westoxon.gov.uk</p>
<p>Summary/Purpose</p>	<p>To consider the Council’s Member Code of Conduct Complaint Handling Arrangements and the Standards Sub-Committee Procedure Rules following a review by officers.</p>
<p>Annexes</p>	<p>Annex A1 - Revised Complaint Handling Arrangements with changes shown Annex A2 - Revised Complaint Handling Arrangements – clean version Annex B1 - Revised Standards Sub-Committee Procedure Rules with changes shown Annex B2 - Revised Standards Sub-Committee Procedure Rules with changes shown – clean version</p>
<p>Recommendation(s)</p>	<p>The Audit and Governance Committee on 26 September 2024 agreed to recommend that Council resolves to:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Adopt the revised Member Code of Conduct Complaint Handling Arrangements (Annex A2). 2. Adopt the revised Standards Sub-Committee Procedure Rules (Annex B2) following a review undertaken by officers and the three Independent Persons.
<p>Corporate Priorities</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Working Together for West Oxfordshire

Key Decision	NO
Exempt	NO
Consultees/ Consultation	Independent Persons Audit and Governance Committees

1. BACKGROUND

- 1.1** The Council has in place complaint handling arrangements to enable an individual to make a formal complaint that an elected or co-opted member of West Oxfordshire District Council, or a Town or Parish Council within the district area, has failed to comply with their Council's Code of Conduct for Members. The complaint handling arrangements seek to ensure that complaints are dealt with fairly and are resolved informally where appropriate.
- 1.2** The Audit and Governance Committee is responsible for promoting high standards of ethical behaviour by developing, maintaining and monitoring the Members' Code of Conduct. The Committee has appointed a Standards Sub-Committee, which has responsibility for undertaking hearings to determine whether or not a Member has breached the Code of Conduct.
- 1.3** The report considers proposed changes to the Council's Member Code of Conduct Complaint Handling Arrangements and to the Standards Sub-Committee Procedure Rules following a review of these arrangements by officers and the Council's three Independent Persons who advise on standards matters.

2. CONCLUSIONS AND LESSONS RESULTING FROM CODE OF CONDUCT COMPLAINTS

- 2.1** There were a number of learnings taken from a complaint that progressed to the local hearing stage, which was the first hearing held since the Director of Governance joined the Council.
- 2.2** The Council's complaint handling arrangements and the Standards Sub-Committee Procedure Rules are considered to have generally worked well but could be strengthened in certain respects, in particular around complaints brought by third parties. Officers, following receipt of external legal advice and in conjunction with three Independent Persons, have reviewed these documents and present amended versions showing changes which are attached at Annex A and B respectively. The main substantive changes are summarised below:

Member Code of Conduct Complaint Handling Arrangements

- Change of title
- Change of timeline for deciding whether a complaint merits investigation from 14 days to 28 days at 4.1
- Inclusion of initial assessment criteria in the table at 4.5 including the tests for disrespect and bullying.
- Gender neutral language throughout.
- Removal of out of date annexes (to be replaced by current versions).

Standards Sub-Committee Procedure Rules

- Clarity about how complaints about multiple subject members will be dealt with at 2.1.

- Stating that the Sub-Committee is not a court of law at 5.5 and that any evidence including hearsay evidence may be taken into account and given whatever weight the Sub-Committee deems appropriate.
- Hearing from witnesses in exceptional circumstances at 5.6.3 and 5.6.6.

3. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

- 3.1 The processing of code of conduct complaints does not have direct financial implications for the Council but is relatively resource-intensive for officers. The Council has allocated a budget of £4,000 per annum for externally-provided member training, which is used to fund, for example, equality and inclusion training for members which has previously been identified by the Audit and Governance Committee as an area that additional development opportunities should be provided. Two Inclusion and Diversity events have been held, on 18 September 2023 and 10 July 2024, with 20 members attending overall.

4. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

- 4.1 The Localism Act 2011 requires the Council to have a Members' Code of Conduct which sets out the standards expected of Members whenever they act in their official capacity. The Code must also have in place a suitable procedure at a local level to investigate and determine allegations that elected Members and co-opted Members of the district council or town and parish councils within the district area have breached the Code of Conduct.

5. RISK ASSESSMENT

- 5.1 If the Council fails to adopt and maintain a Members' Code of Conduct and a process for the investigation of complaints that are fit for purpose, robust and transparent then there are risks to the Council's reputation and to the integrity of its corporate governance and decision-making processes.

6. EQUALITIES IMPACT

- 6.1 Equalities and Human Rights issues are taken into account in the handling of Member Code of Conduct complaints.

7. CLIMATE AND ECOLOGICAL EMERGENCIES IMPLICATIONS

- 7.1 Not applicable.

8. BACKGROUND PAPERS

- 8.1 None.

(END)

~~Arrangements for Dealing with Allegations of Breaches of the West Oxfordshire District Council's Code of Conduct for Members and Co-opted Members; and breaches of the Codes of Town and Parish Councils in West Oxfordshire~~

Member Code of Conduct Complaint Handling Arrangements

CONTENTS

1.	Context	1
2.	The Code of Conduct.....	1
3.	Making a complaint.....	1
4.	Will your complaint be investigated?	2
5.	How is any investigation conducted?	2
6.	What happens if the Investigating Officer concludes that there is no evidence of a failure to comply with the Code of Conduct?.....	3
7.	What happens if the Investigating Officer concludes that there is evidence of a failure to comply with the Code of Conduct?.....	3
	Local Resolution	3
	Local Hearing	3
8.	What action can the Standards Sub-Committee take where a member has failed to comply with the Code of Conduct?.....	4
9.	What happens at the end of the Hearing?.....	5
10.	What is the Standards Sub-Committee?.....	5
11.	Who are the Independent Persons?	5
12.	Revision of these arrangements	6
	Annex A: The West Oxfordshire District Council code of conduct.....	7
	Annex B: Parish and Town Councils in West Oxfordshire.....	9

I. CONTEXT

- 1.1. West Oxfordshire District Council is required to have in place “arrangements” under which allegations that a member or co-opted member of the council or of a town or parish council within the district has failed to comply with their authority’s Code of Conduct can be made and investigated, and decisions made on such allegations.
- 1.2. This document sets out the arrangements adopted by the ~~council~~Council.
- 1.3. The arrangements must also provide for the ~~council~~Council to appoint at least one Independent Person, whose views must be sought before the ~~council~~ Council takes a decision on an allegation which it has decided shall be investigated, and whose views can be sought by the ~~council~~ Council at any other stage. An Independent Person may also be consulted by a member or a co-opted member of the district council or of a town or parish council in the district who is the subject of a complaint.

2. THE CODE OF CONDUCT

- 2.1. The District Council has adopted a Code of Conduct for members, which is attached as [Annex A](#) to these arrangements and which is also available from the Council’s website at www.westoxon.gov.uk/conduct and from its offices at Woodgreen, Witney.
- 2.2. *Each town and parish council in the District is also required to adopt a Code of Conduct. If you wish to inspect a town or parish council’s Code of Conduct, you may visit any website operated by that council and/or contact the town or parish clerk (see www.westoxon.gov.uk/parishes).*
- 2.3. A list of the relevant Town and Parish Councils is set out in [Annex B](#) to this document.

3. MAKING A COMPLAINT

- 3.1. If you wish to make a complaint, please write to –
The Monitoring Officer
West Oxfordshire District Council
Council Offices
Woodgreen
Witney
Oxon
OX28 1NB
or email enquiries@westoxon.gov.ukdemocratic.services@westoxon.gov.uk, marking your email for the attention of the Monitoring Officer.
- 3.2. The Monitoring Officer is a senior officer of the authority who has responsibility for administering the system in respect of complaints of member misconduct, and for maintaining the register of members’ interests.
- 3.3. To ensure that we have all the information which we need to be able to consider ~~you~~ the complaint, please complete and send us the ~~model~~Code of Conduct ~~C~~omplaint ~~F~~orm, which can be downloaded from the District Council’s website at www.westoxon.gov.uk/conduct, and is available on request from reception at the offices at Woodgreen, Witney.

- 3.4. A complaint must provide substantiated information and should outline an indication of the form of resolution the Complainant is seeking.

Please provide us with your name and a contact address or email address, so that we can acknowledge receipt of your complaint and keep you informed of its progress. If you want to keep your name and address confidential, please indicate this in the space provided on the complaint form. The Council will not normally consider ~~This paragraph will be adjusted if all or the majority of town and parish councils adopt the same code as the District.~~

- 3.5. ~~you want to keep your name and address confidential, please indicate this in the space provided on the complaint form. The council will not normally consider~~ anonymous complaints, unless there is a clear public interest in doing so.
- 3.6. The Monitoring Officer will acknowledge receipt of ~~your~~ complaints within five working days of receiving it, and will keep ~~the complainant~~~~you~~ informed of the progress of ~~your~~ ~~their~~ complaint.
4. **WILL ~~YOUR~~ A COMPLAINT BE INVESTIGATED?**
- 4.1. The Monitoring Officer will review every complaint received and, after consultation with an Independent Person(s), take a decision as to whether it merits formal investigation. This decision will normally be taken within ~~14~~ 28 days of receipt of ~~your~~ ~~the~~ complaint. The Monitoring Officer will inform ~~you~~ the complainant of the decision and the reasons for that decision.
- 4.2. If the Monitoring Officer requires additional information in order to come to a decision, ~~you~~ ~~the~~ complainant may be asked for such information. The Monitoring Officer will usually advise the member of ~~the~~ ~~your~~ complaint, and will also decide whether to request information or comment from ~~him/her~~ ~~them~~. In exceptional cases, where it is appropriate to keep ~~your~~~~the~~ complainant's identity confidential or disclosure of details of the complaint to the member might prejudice consideration of the complaint or any investigation, the Monitoring Officer can delete ~~your~~ ~~the~~ complainants name and address from the papers given to the member, or delay notifying the member until matters have progressed sufficiently.
- 4.3. *Where ~~your~~ a complaint relates to a Town or Parish Councillor, the Monitoring Officer may also inform the Town or Parish Council of ~~your~~ ~~the~~ complaint and seek the views of the Town or Parish Council before deciding whether the complaint merits formal investigation.*
- 4.4. The Monitoring Officer will exercise ~~his/her~~ ~~their~~ discretion in relation to the decision as to whether a complaint should be investigated, ~~in terms of the potential seriousness of the matter, and the key consideration of whether it is in the public interest to refer a matter for investigation, having~~ with regard to the assessment criteria set out below, the time and expense involved in an investigation, ~~and~~ ~~the~~ potential sanctions and the views of the Independent Person. Where possible ~~he/she~~ ~~the~~ Monitoring Officer will seek a resolution to the complaint without a referral for investigation.
- 4.5. In particular, a complaint is unlikely to be referred for investigation if in the opinion of the Monitoring Officer it is or appears to be trivial, vexatious, politically motivated, irrelevant to the code of conduct, or substantially the same as a previously considered complaint, or a complaint currently under consideration.

Initial assessment criteria for code of conduct complaints	
Timeliness	If the events subject to the complaint took place more than 6 months prior to the complaint being submitted then they will not normally be investigated other than in exceptional circumstances e.g. where the conduct relates to a pattern of behaviour which has recently been repeated.
Adequate information	There needs to be sufficient and clear information provided in the complaint form to enable the subject member to respond and for the Monitoring Officer to decide whether or not the complaint should be referred for an investigation.
Official capacity	For the code of conduct to be engaged the member must

	<p>have been acting in their official capacity rather than in a private capacity when the conduct in question took place. Complaints will only be referred for an investigation where it is considered very likely that the member was acting in an official capacity when the conduct took place.</p>
<p>Seriousness</p>	<p>The conduct in question needs to be considered to be sufficiently serious for the complaint to be referred for an investigation. If the complaint is considered to be trivial, malicious, vexatious, or tit-for-tat it will not normally be investigated.</p> <p>Complaints that are considered to be politically motivated or relate to the “rough and tumble” of political debate will not normally be investigated. There is an accepted concept of politicians needing to have a “thicker skin” and more tolerance to comment and criticism than members of the public would be expected to have.</p> <p><u>Disrespect</u></p> <p>Councillors also have a qualified right to freedom of speech and a wide degree of tolerance is accorded to political expression. This enhanced protection applies to all levels of politics, including local government, and is not limited to expressions of political views but extends to all matters of public administration including comments about the performance of public duties by others. However, gratuitous personal comments do not fall within the definition of political expression.</p> <p>Allegations of disrespect will be considered against the following test:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> A. Were the comments objectively disrespectful/offensive? B. Was it political expression so therefore entitled to higher level of protection? Or simply abuse? C. If the member was entitled to enhanced protection does the public interest mean that a finding of breach is nevertheless a proportionate and necessary response? <p><u>Bullying</u></p> <p>Allegations of bullying will be considered against the “Williamson test”:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> A. Did the subject member’s conduct involve offensive, intimidating, malicious or insulting behaviour? B. If it was, was an abuse or misuse of power involved in that behaviour? C. Was the complainant left feeling vulnerable, upset, undermined, humiliated, denigrated or threatened? D. Was it reasonable for the complainant to have perceived the subject member’s behaviour as bullying?

Availability and strength of evidence	For complaints to be investigated effectively there needs to be evidence available which can be weighed up and tested. Consideration will be given to the availability of first-hand and documentary evidence. Complaints based on hearsay evidence are less likely to be referred for an investigation.
Public interest	<p>Consideration will be given as to whether the public interest would be served by referring the complaint for an investigation, or by other action (e.g. informal resolution).</p> <p>The public interest would not normally be served where the member has died, resigned from office or is seriously ill.</p> <p>If the complaint is subject to an investigation by the police or another regulatory body, it is unlikely to be referred for investigation unless it is evident that the public interest would be served by further action being taken.</p>
Multiple complaints	<p>If multiple complaints are received in relation to the same conduct, the Monitoring Officer will consider the complaints at the same time where possible.</p> <p>If an investigation is deemed appropriate, there will be a single investigation. The Monitoring Officer will decide which complaint will go forward for investigation, with the other complainants being treated as potential witnesses in that investigation.</p> <p>If a complaint is received which is substantially similar to a complaint that has already been considered, it will not be referred for an investigation unless substantial new evidence is provided which is considered likely to change the outcome of the complaint.</p>

4.6. In appropriate cases, the Monitoring Officer may seek to resolve the complaint informally, without the need for a formal investigation. Such informal resolution may, for example, involve the member accepting that ~~his/her~~their conduct was unacceptable and offering an apology, or other remedial action by the authority, or some form of mediation. Where the member or the authority makes a reasonable offer of local resolution, but ~~you are~~ the complainant is not willing to accept that offer, the Monitoring Officer will take account of this in deciding whether the complaint merits formal investigation.

4.7. If ~~ayour~~ complaint identifies criminal conduct or breach of other regulation by any person, the Monitoring Officer or any other officer will refer the complaint to the Police or other regulatory agency. If ~~you the~~ complainant considers there has been criminal conduct then ~~you they~~ may go directly to the Police or other regulatory agency.

5. HOW IS ANY INVESTIGATION CONDUCTED?

6. If the Monitoring Officer decides that a complaint merits formal investigation, they will appoint an Investigating Officer, who may be an officer of the Council or another council, or an external investigator. The Investigating Officer will decide whether they need to meet or speak to the complainant. If so, this will be to understand the nature of the complaint; and so that the complainant can explain their understanding of events, and

suggest what documents the Investigating Officer needs to see, and whether the Investigating Officer needs to interview anyone. ~~If the Monitoring Officer decides that a complaint merits formal investigation, he/she will appoint an Investigating Officer, who may be an officer of the council or another council, or an external investigator. The Investigating Officer will decide whether he/she needs to meet or speak to you. If so, this will be to understand the nature of~~

- ~~6.1. The Investigating Officer will usually write to the member against whom you have complained and ask for his/her explanation of events, and as part of the process of deciding what documents he/she needs to see and who he/she needs to interview.~~
- 6.2. At the end of ~~his/her~~ **their** investigation, the Investigating Officer will produce a draft report and will send copies of that draft report, in confidence, to **you the complainant** and to the member concerned, to give **you both** an opportunity to identify any matter in that draft report with which **you they** disagree or **which you** feel requires more consideration.
- 6.3. Having received and taken account of any comments which **you the complainant** and member may make on the draft report, the Investigating Officer will send ~~his/her~~ **their** final report to the Monitoring Officer.

7. WHAT HAPPENS IF THE INVESTIGATING OFFICER CONCLUDES THAT THERE IS NO EVIDENCE OF A FAILURE TO COMPLY WITH THE CODE OF CONDUCT?

- 7.1. The Monitoring Officer will review the Investigating Officer's report and, if ~~he/she~~ **they are** ~~is~~ satisfied that the Investigating Officer's report is sufficient, the Monitoring Officer will write to **you the complainant** and to the member concerned [*and to the Town or Parish Council, where ~~your~~ a complaint relates to a Town or Parish Councillor*], notifying **you** that **they are** ~~he/she~~ ~~is~~ satisfied that no further action is required, and give **you both** a copy of the Investigating Officer's final report.
- 7.2. If the Monitoring Officer is not satisfied with the investigation/report, ~~he/she~~ **they** may ask the Investigating Officer to reconsider the report. In considering the report, the Monitoring Officer may consult with an Independent Person(s) if ~~he/she~~ **they consider** ~~s~~ it appropriate to do so.

8. WHAT HAPPENS IF THE INVESTIGATING OFFICER CONCLUDES THAT THERE IS EVIDENCE OF A FAILURE TO COMPLY WITH THE CODE OF CONDUCT?

- 8.1. The Monitoring Officer will review the Investigating Officer's report and will then either send the matter for local hearing before the Standards Sub-Committee or, after consulting an Independent Person(s), seek local resolution.
- 8.2. Again, the Monitoring Officer will have the option of asking the Investigating Officer to reconsider the report, and of consulting with an Independent Person(s).

Local Resolution

- 8.3. The Monitoring Officer may consider that the matter can reasonably be resolved without the need for a hearing. In such a case, ~~he/she~~ **they** will consult with an Independent Person(s) and with **you as a the complainant** and seek to agree a fair resolution of the complaint which also helps to ensure higher standards of conduct for the future. Such resolution may include the member accepting that ~~his/her~~ **their** conduct was unacceptable and offering an apology, and/or other remedial action by the authority. If the member complies with the suggested resolution, the Monitoring Officer will report the matter to the Standards Sub-Committee [*and, where relevant, the Town or Parish Council*] for information, but will take no further action.

Local Hearing

- 8.4. If the Monitoring Officer considers that local resolution is not appropriate (which may be because ~~you are~~ the complainant is not satisfied by the proposed resolution) or the member concerned is not prepared to undertake any proposed remedial action, such as giving an apology, then the Monitoring Officer will report the Investigating Officer's report to the Standards Sub-Committee which will conduct a local hearing before deciding whether the member has failed to comply with the Code of Conduct and, if so, whether to take any action in respect of the member.

- 8.5. The Monitoring Officer will conduct a “pre-hearing process” requiring the member to give ~~his/her~~ ~~their~~ response to the Investigating Officer’s report, in order to identify what is likely to be agreed and what is likely to be in contention at the hearing. At the hearing, the Investigating Officer will present ~~his/her~~ ~~their~~ report, call such witnesses as ~~he/she~~ ~~they~~ considers necessary and make representations to substantiate their conclusion that the member has failed to comply with the Code of Conduct. For this purpose, the Investigating Officer may ask ~~you as the complainant~~ to attend and give evidence to the Standards Sub-Committee. The member will then have an opportunity to give ~~his/her~~ ~~their~~ evidence, to call witnesses and to make representations to the Sub-Committee as to why ~~he/she~~ ~~they~~ considers ~~that they~~ ~~he/she~~ did not fail to comply with the Code of Conduct.
- 8.6. The Sub-Committee, with the benefit of any advice from an Independent Person(s), may conclude that the member did not fail to comply with the Code of Conduct, and to dismiss the complaint.
- 8.7. If the Sub-Committee concludes that the member did fail to comply with the Code of Conduct, the Chair ~~man~~ will inform the member of this finding and the Sub-Committee will then consider what action, if any, it should take as a result of the member’s failure to comply with the Code of Conduct. In doing this, the Sub-Committee will give the member an opportunity to make representations and will consult an Independent Person(s).
- 8.8. Any detailed procedures for conducting hearings will be as approved by the Sub-Committee.
9. **WHAT ACTION CAN THE STANDARDS SUB-COMMITTEE TAKE WHERE A MEMBER HAS FAILED TO COMPLY WITH THE CODE OF CONDUCT?**
- 9.1. The Council has delegated to the Sub-Committee such of its powers to take action in respect of individual members as may be necessary to promote and maintain high standards of conduct. Accordingly, the Sub-Committee may –
- Censure or reprimand the member;
 - Publish its findings in respect of the member’s conduct;
 - Report its findings to Council or to the Town or Parish Council for information;
 - Recommend to the member’s Group Leader (or in the case of un-grouped members, recommend to Council or to Committees) that they be removed from any or all Committees or Sub-Committees of the Council;
 - Recommend to the Leader of the Council that the member be removed from the Cabinet, or removed from particular Portfolio responsibilities;
 - Recommend to Council that the member be replaced as Executive Leader;
 - Instruct the Monitoring Officer to arrange training for the member, *or recommend that to the Town or Parish Council.*
- 9.2. The Sub-Committee has no power to suspend or disqualify the member or to withdraw or suspend allowances or restrict access to or the use of Council facilities.

10. WHAT HAPPENS AT THE END OF THE HEARING?

- 10.1. At the end of the hearing, the Chair~~man~~ will state the decisions of the Sub-Committee as to whether the member failed to comply with the Code of Conduct and as to any actions which the Sub-Committee has decided on.
- 10.2. As soon as reasonably practicable after the hearing, the Monitoring Officer will prepare a formal decision notice in consultation with the Chairman of the Sub-Committee, and send a copy to ~~you~~ the complainant, to the member (*and to the Town or Parish Council if appropriate*), make that decision notice available for public inspection and, if so directed, report the decision to the next convenient meeting of the Council.
- 10.3. There is no right of appeal for ~~you as~~ the complainant, or for the member, against a decision of the Monitoring Officer or of the Sub-Committee.
- 10.4. If ~~you a~~ complainant feels the authority has failed to deal with a ~~your~~ complaint properly, ~~they you~~ may make a complaint to the ~~council~~ Council and, ultimately, to the Local Government Ombudsman.

11. WHAT IS THE STANDARDS SUB-COMMITTEE?

- 11.1. The Standards Sub-Committee is a Sub-Committee of the Council's Audit and ~~General Purposes~~ Governance Committee. It is comprised of five members of the ~~Council, including not more than one member of the authority's Executive and comprising members~~ Audit and Governance Committee drawn from at least two different political groups.
- 11.2. The Independent ~~Persons~~ Person acting as a consultee for the complaint ~~is are~~ invited to attend ~~all the~~ meetings of the Sub-Committee and their views are sought and taken into consideration before decisions are made on whether a member's conduct constitutes a failure to comply with the Code of Conduct, and as to any action to be taken following a finding of failure to comply with the Code of Conduct. The Independent Persons do not, however, have voting rights on the Sub-Committee - their role is an advisory one.

12. WHO ARE THE INDEPENDENT PERSONS?

- 12.1. The Independent Persons are persons who have applied for the post following advertisement of a vacancy for the post, and are appointed by a positive vote from a majority of all the members of Council. The Council has determined that there will be ~~two~~ no more than five Independent Persons appointed.
- 12.2. A person cannot be "independent" if ~~he/she they~~
 - ~~subject to transitional arrangements is~~ are, or ~~has~~ have been within the past five years, a member, co-opted member or officer of the authority;
 - ~~is are~~, or ~~has have been~~ within the past five years, a member, co-opted member or officer of a parish council within the authority's area, or;
 - ~~is are~~ a relative, or close friend, of such a person
- 12.3. For this purpose, "relative" means –
 - Spouse or civil partner;
 - Someone who lives with the other person as husband and wife or as if they were civil partners;
 - Grandparent of the other person;
 - A lineal descendent of a grandparent of the other person;
 - A parent, sibling or child of a person as above
 - A spouse or civil partner of a person as above; or

- Someone who lives with a person as above, as husband and wife or as if they were civil partners

13. REVISION OF THESE ARRANGEMENTS

- 13.1.** The Standards Sub-Committee may by resolution agree to amend these arrangements.
- 13.2.** The Sub-Committee, on the advice of the Monitoring Officer, may depart from these arrangements where it is necessary to do so in order to secure the effective and fair consideration of any matter.

Member Code of Conduct Complaint Handling Arrangements

CONTENTS

1.	Context	1
2.	The Code of Conduct.....	1
3.	Making a complaint.....	1
4.	Will your complaint be investigated?	2
5.	How is any investigation conducted?	2
6.	What happens if the Investigating Officer concludes that there is no evidence of a failure to comply with the Code of Conduct?.....	3
7.	What happens if the Investigating Officer concludes that there is evidence of a failure to comply with the Code of Conduct?.....	3
	Local Resolution	3
	Local Hearing	3
8.	What action can the Standards Sub-Committee take where a member has failed to comply with the Code of Conduct?.....	4
9.	What happens at the end of the Hearing?.....	5
10.	What is the Standards Sub-Committee?.....	5
11.	Who are the Independent Persons?	5
12.	Revision of these arrangements	6
	Annex A: The West Oxfordshire District Council code of conduct.....	7
	Annex B: Parish and Town Councils in West Oxfordshire.....	9

I. CONTEXT

- 1.1. West Oxfordshire District Council is required to have in place “arrangements” under which allegations that a member or co-opted member of the council or of a town or parish council within the district has failed to comply with their authority’s Code of Conduct can be made and investigated, and decisions made on such allegations.
- 1.2. This document sets out the arrangements adopted by the Council.
- 1.3. The arrangements must also provide for the Council to appoint at least one Independent Person, whose views must be sought before the Council takes a decision on an allegation which it has decided shall be investigated, and whose views can be sought by the Council at any other stage. An Independent Person may also be consulted by a member or a co-opted member of the district council or of a town or parish council in the district who is the subject of a complaint.

2. THE CODE OF CONDUCT

- 2.1. The District Council has adopted a Code of Conduct for members, which is attached as [Annex A](#) to these arrangements and which is also available from the Council’s website at www.westoxon.gov.uk/conduct and from its offices at Woodgreen, Witney.
- 2.2. *Each town and parish council in the District is also required to adopt a Code of Conduct. If you wish to inspect a town or parish council’s Code of Conduct, you may visit any website operated by that council and/or contact the town or parish clerk (see www.westoxon.gov.uk/parishes).*
- 2.3. A list of the relevant Town and Parish Councils is set out in [Annex B](#) to this document.

3. MAKING A COMPLAINT

- 3.1. If you wish to make a complaint, please write to –
The Monitoring Officer
West Oxfordshire District Council
Council Offices
Woodgreen
Witney
Oxon
OX28 1NB
or email democratic.services@westoxon.gov.uk, marking your email for the attention of the Monitoring Officer.
- 3.2. The Monitoring Officer is a senior officer of the authority who has responsibility for administering the system in respect of complaints of member misconduct, and for maintaining the register of members’ interests.
- 3.3. To ensure that we have all the information which we need to be able to consider the complaint, please complete and send us the Code of Conduct Complaint Form, which can be downloaded from the District Council’s website at www.westoxon.gov.uk/conduct, and is available on request from reception at the offices at Woodgreen, Witney.

- 3.4. A complaint must provide substantiated information and should outline an indication of the form of resolution the Complainant is seeking.
- 3.5. Please provide us with your name and a contact address or email address, so that we can acknowledge receipt of your complaint and keep you informed of its progress. If you want to keep your name and address confidential, please indicate this in the space provided on the complaint form. The Council will not normally consider anonymous complaints, unless there is a clear public interest in doing so.
- 3.6. The Monitoring Officer will acknowledge receipt of complaints within five working days of receiving it, and will keep the complainant informed of the progress of their complaint.

4. WILL A COMPLAINT BE INVESTIGATED?

- 4.1. The Monitoring Officer will review every complaint received and, after consultation with an Independent Person(s), take a decision as to whether it merits formal investigation. This decision will normally be taken within 28 days of receipt of the complaint. The Monitoring Officer will inform the complainant of the decision and the reasons for that decision.
- 4.2. If the Monitoring Officer requires additional information in order to come to a decision, the complainant may be asked for such information. The Monitoring Officer will usually advise the member of the complaint, and will also decide whether to request information or comment from them. In exceptional cases, where it is appropriate to keep the complainant’s identity confidential or disclosure of details of the complaint to the member might prejudice consideration of the complaint or any investigation, the Monitoring Officer can delete the complainants name and address from the papers given to the member, or delay notifying the member until matters have progressed sufficiently.
- 4.3. *Where a complaint relates to a Town or Parish Councillor, the Monitoring Officer may also inform the Town or Parish Council of the complaint and seek the views of the Town or Parish Council before deciding whether the complaint merits formal investigation.*
- 4.4. The Monitoring Officer will exercise their discretion in relation to the decision as to whether a complaint should be investigated, with regard to the assessment criteria set out below, the time and expense involved in an investigation, the potential sanctions and the views of the Independent Person. Where possible the Monitoring Officer will seek a resolution to the complaint without a referral for investigation.
- 4.5. In particular, a complaint is unlikely to be referred for investigation if in the opinion of the Monitoring Officer it is or appears to be trivial, vexatious, politically motivated, irrelevant to the code of conduct, or substantially the same as a previously considered complaint, or a complaint currently under consideration.

Initial assessment criteria for code of conduct complaints	
Timeliness	If the events subject to the complaint took place more than 6 months prior to the complaint being submitted then they will not normally be investigated other than in exceptional circumstances e.g. where the conduct relates to a pattern of behaviour which has recently been repeated.

Adequate information	There needs to be sufficient and clear information provided in the complaint form to enable the subject member to respond and for the Monitoring Officer to decide whether or not the complaint should be referred for an investigation.
Official capacity	For the code of conduct to be engaged the member must have been acting in their official capacity rather than in a private capacity when the conduct in question took place. Complaints will only be referred for an investigation where it is considered very likely that the member was acting in an official capacity when the conduct took place.
Seriousness	<p>The conduct in question needs to be considered to be sufficiently serious for the complaint to be referred for an investigation. If the complaint is considered to be trivial, malicious, vexatious, or tit-for-tat it will not normally be investigated.</p> <p>Complaints that are considered to be politically motivated or relate to the “rough and tumble” of political debate will not normally be investigated. There is an accepted concept of politicians needing to have a “thicker skin” and more tolerance to comment and criticism than members of the public would be expected to have.</p> <p><u>Disrespect</u></p> <p>Councillors also have a qualified right to freedom of speech and a wide degree of tolerance is accorded to political expression. This enhanced protection applies to all levels of politics, including local government, and is not limited to expressions of political views but extends to all matters of public administration including comments about the performance of public duties by others. However, gratuitous personal comments do not fall within the definition of political expression.</p> <p>Allegations of disrespect will be considered against the following test:</p> <p>A. Were the comments objectively disrespectful/offensive?</p> <p>B. Was it political expression so therefore entitled to higher level of protection? Or simply abuse?</p> <p>C. If the member was entitled to enhanced protection does the public interest mean that a finding of breach is nevertheless a proportionate and necessary response?</p> <p><u>Bullying</u></p>

	<p>Allegations of bullying will be considered against the “Williamson test”:</p> <p>A. Did the subject member’s conduct involve offensive, intimidating, malicious or insulting behaviour?</p> <p>B. If it was, was an abuse or misuse of power involved in that behaviour?</p> <p>C. Was the complainant left feeling vulnerable, upset, undermined, humiliated, denigrated or threatened?</p> <p>D. Was it reasonable for the complainant to have perceived the subject member’s behaviour as bullying?</p>
Availability and strength of evidence	<p>For complaints to be investigated effectively there needs to be evidence available which can be weighed up and tested. Consideration will be given to the availability of first-hand and documentary evidence. Complaints based on hearsay evidence are less likely to be referred for an investigation.</p>
Public interest	<p>Consideration will be given as to whether the public interest would be served by referring the complaint for an investigation, or by other action (e.g. informal resolution).</p> <p>The public interest would not normally be served where the member has died, resigned from office or is seriously ill.</p> <p>If the complaint is subject to an investigation by the police or another regulatory body, it is unlikely to be referred for investigation unless it is evident that the public interest would be served by further action being taken.</p>
Multiple complaints	<p>If multiple complaints are received in relation to the same conduct, the Monitoring Officer will consider the complaints at the same time where possible.</p> <p>If an investigation is deemed appropriate, there will be a single investigation. The Monitoring Officer will decide which complaint will go forward for investigation, with the other complainants being treated as potential witnesses in that investigation.</p> <p>If a complaint is received which is substantially similar to a complaint that has already been considered, it will not be referred for an investigation unless substantial new evidence is provided which is considered likely to change the outcome of the complaint.</p>

- 4.6. In appropriate cases, the Monitoring Officer may seek to resolve the complaint informally, without the need for a formal investigation. Such informal resolution may,

for example, involve the member accepting that their conduct was unacceptable and offering an apology, or other remedial action by the authority, or some form of mediation. Where the member or the authority makes a reasonable offer of local resolution, but the complainant is not willing to accept that offer, the Monitoring Officer will take account of this in deciding whether the complaint merits formal investigation.

- 4.7. If a complaint identifies criminal conduct or breach of other regulation by any person, the Monitoring Officer or any other officer will refer the complaint to the Police or other regulatory agency. If the complainant considers there has been criminal conduct then they may go directly to the Police or other regulatory agency.

5. HOW IS ANY INVESTIGATION CONDUCTED?

- 5.1. If the Monitoring Officer decides that a complaint merits formal investigation, they will appoint an Investigating Officer, who may be an officer of the Council or another council, or an external investigator. The Investigating Officer will decide whether they need to meet or speak to the complainant. If so, this will be to understand the nature of the complaint; and so that the complainant can explain their understanding of events, and suggest what documents the Investigating Officer needs to see, and whether the Investigating Officer needs to interview anyone.
- 5.2. The Investigating Officer will usually write to the member against whom a complaint has been made and ask for their explanation of events, and as part of the process of deciding what documents they need to see and who they need to interview.
- 5.3. At the end of their investigation, the Investigating Officer will produce a draft report and will send copies of that draft report, in confidence, to the complainant and to the member concerned, to give both an opportunity to identify any matter in that draft report with which they disagree or feel requires more consideration.
- 5.4. Having received and taken account of any comments which the complainant and member may make on the draft report, the Investigating Officer will send their final report to the Monitoring Officer.

6. WHAT HAPPENS IF THE INVESTIGATING OFFICER CONCLUDES THAT THERE IS NO EVIDENCE OF A FAILURE TO COMPLY WITH THE CODE OF CONDUCT?

- 6.1. The Monitoring Officer will review the Investigating Officer's report and, if they are satisfied that the Investigating Officer's report is sufficient, the Monitoring Officer will write to the complainant and to the member concerned [*and to the Town or Parish Council, where a complaint relates to a Town or Parish Councillor*], notifying that they are satisfied that no further action is required, and give both a copy of the Investigating Officer's final report.
- 6.2. If the Monitoring Officer is not satisfied with the investigation/report, they may ask the Investigating Officer to reconsider the report. In considering the report, the Monitoring Officer may consult with an Independent Person(s) if they consider it appropriate to do so.

7. WHAT HAPPENS IF THE INVESTIGATING OFFICER CONCLUDES THAT THERE IS EVIDENCE OF A FAILURE TO COMPLY WITH THE CODE OF CONDUCT?

- 7.1. The Monitoring Officer will review the Investigating Officer's report and will then either send the matter for local hearing before the Standards Sub-Committee or, after consulting an Independent Person(s), seek local resolution.
- 7.2. Again, the Monitoring Officer will have the option of asking the Investigating Officer to reconsider the report, and of consulting with an Independent Person(s).

Local Resolution

- 7.3. The Monitoring Officer may consider that the matter can reasonably be resolved without the need for a hearing. In such a case, they will consult with an Independent Person(s) and with the complainant and seek to agree a fair resolution of the complaint which also helps to ensure higher standards of conduct for the future. Such resolution may include the member accepting that their conduct was unacceptable and offering an apology, and/or other remedial action by the authority. If the member complies with the suggested resolution, the Monitoring Officer will report the matter to the Standards Sub-Committee [*and, where relevant, the Town or Parish Council*] for information, but will take no further action.

Local Hearing

- 7.4. If the Monitoring Officer considers that local resolution is not appropriate (which may be because the complainant is not satisfied by the proposed resolution) or the member concerned is not prepared to undertake any proposed remedial action, such as giving an apology, then the Monitoring Officer will report the Investigating Officer's report to the Standards Sub-Committee which will conduct a local hearing before deciding whether the member has failed to comply with the Code of Conduct and, if so, whether to take any action in respect of the member.
- 7.5. The Monitoring Officer will conduct a "pre-hearing process" requiring the member to give their response to the Investigating Officer's report, in order to identify what is likely to be agreed and what is likely to be in contention at the hearing. At the hearing, the Investigating Officer will present their report, call such witnesses as they consider necessary and make representations to substantiate their conclusion that the member has failed to comply with the Code of Conduct. For this purpose, the Investigating Officer may ask the complainant to attend and give evidence to the Standards Sub-Committee. The member will then have an opportunity to give their evidence, to call witnesses and to make representations to the Sub-Committee as to why they consider that they did not fail to comply with the Code of Conduct.
- 7.6. The Sub-Committee, with the benefit of any advice from an Independent Person(s), may conclude that the member did not fail to comply with the Code of Conduct, and to dismiss the complaint.
- 7.7. If the Sub-Committee concludes that the member did fail to comply with the Code of Conduct, the Chair will inform the member of this finding and the Sub-Committee will then consider what action, if any, it should take as a result of the member's failure to comply with the Code of Conduct. In doing this, the Sub-Committee will give the member an opportunity to make representations and will consult an Independent Person(s).
- 7.8. Any detailed procedures for conducting hearings will be as approved by the Sub-

Committee.

8. WHAT ACTION CAN THE STANDARDS SUB-COMMITTEE TAKE WHERE A MEMBER HAS FAILED TO COMPLY WITH THE CODE OF CONDUCT?

8.1. The Council has delegated to the Sub-Committee such of its powers to take action in respect of individual members as may be necessary to promote and maintain high standards of conduct. Accordingly, the Sub-Committee may –

- Censure or reprimand the member;
- Publish its findings in respect of the member's conduct;
- Report its findings to Council or to the Town or Parish Council for information;
- Recommend to the member's Group Leader (or in the case of un-grouped members, recommend to Council or to Committees) that they be removed from any or all Committees or Sub-Committees of the Council;
- Recommend to the Leader of the Council that the member be removed from the Cabinet, or removed from particular Portfolio responsibilities;
- Recommend to Council that the member be replaced as Executive Leader;
- Instruct the Monitoring Officer to arrange training for the member, *or recommend that to the Town or Parish Council.*

8.2. The Sub-Committee has no power to suspend or disqualify the member or to withdraw or suspend allowances or restrict access to or the use of Council facilities.

9. WHAT HAPPENS AT THE END OF THE HEARING?

- 9.1. At the end of the hearing, the Chair will state the decisions of the Sub-Committee as to whether the member failed to comply with the Code of Conduct and as to any actions which the Sub-Committee has decided on.
- 9.2. As soon as reasonably practicable after the hearing, the Monitoring Officer will prepare a formal decision notice in consultation with the Chairman of the Sub-Committee, and send a copy to the complainant, to the member (*and to the Town or Parish Council if appropriate*), make that decision notice available for public inspection and, if so directed, report the decision to the next convenient meeting of the Council.
- 9.3. There is no right of appeal for the complainant, or for the member, against a decision of the Monitoring Officer or of the Sub-Committee.
- 9.4. If a complainant feels the authority has failed to deal with a complaint properly, they may make a complaint to the Council and, ultimately, to the Local Government Ombudsman.

10. WHAT IS THE STANDARDS SUB-COMMITTEE?

- 10.1. The Standards Sub-Committee is a Sub-Committee of the Council's Audit and Governance Committee. It is comprised of five members of the Audit and Governance Committee drawn from at least two different political groups.
- 10.2. The Independent Person acting as a consultee for the complaint is invited to attend the meeting of the Sub-Committee and their views are sought and taken into consideration before decisions are made on whether a member's conduct constitutes a failure to comply with the Code of Conduct, and as to any action to be taken following a finding of failure to comply with the Code of Conduct. The Independent Persons do not, however, have voting rights on the Sub-Committee - their role is an advisory one.

11. WHO ARE THE INDEPENDENT PERSONS?

- 11.1. The Independent Persons are persons who have applied for the post following advertisement of a vacancy for the post, and are appointed by a positive vote from a majority of all the members of Council. The Council has determined that there will be no more than five Independent Persons appointed.
- 11.2. A person cannot be "independent" if they—
 - are, or have been within the past five years, a member, co-opted member or officer of the authority;
 - are, or have been within the past five years, a member, co-opted member or officer of a parish council within the authority's area, or;
 - are a relative, or close friend, of such a person
- 11.3. For this purpose, "relative" means –
 - Spouse or civil partner;
 - Someone who lives with the other person as husband and wife or as if they were civil partners;
 - Grandparent of the other person;
 - A lineal descendent of a grandparent of the other person;
 - A parent, sibling or child of a person as above
 - A spouse or civil partner of a person as above; or
 - Someone who lives with a person as above, as husband and wife or as if they were civil partners

12. REVISION OF THESE ARRANGEMENTS

- 12.1. The Standards Sub-Committee may by resolution agree to amend these arrangements.
- 12.2. The Sub-Committee, on the advice of the Monitoring Officer, may depart from these arrangements where it is necessary to do so in order to secure the effective and fair consideration of any matter.

This page is intentionally left blank

5E Standards Sub-Committee Procedure Rules

These procedure rules apply to meetings of the Standards Sub-Committee, or the Audit and Governance Committee, when sitting to hear and determine a member code of conduct complaint referred to it by the Monitoring Officer.

1.0 DEFINITIONS

Complainant(s)	The person/people making the complaint.
Subject Councillor Member	The Councillor, co-optee, or Town or Parish Councillor against whom an allegation has been made.
Appointed representative	The Subject Councillor may be represented or accompanied during the meeting by a Solicitor, Counsel or, with the permission of the Standards Sub-Committee Members, another person.
Standards Sub-Committee	<p>A Sub-Committee of the Audit and Governance Committee in accordance with the provisions of the <i>Local Government Act 1972</i>.</p> <p>A meeting of the Standards Sub-Committee will consider whether the Subject Councillor Subject Member has breached the Code of Conduct Code.</p> <p>A Sub-Committee of the Audit and Governance Committee, in accordance with the provisions of the Local Government Act 1972.</p> <p>Comprising 5 members of the Audit and Governance Committee, appointed by the Audit and Governance Committee.</p>
Independent Person	A person appointed by the Council under <i>section 28(7) of the Localism Act 2011</i> . An Independent Person will be invited by the Monitoring Officer to attend the Standards Sub-Committee meeting as a co-opted Member of the Sub-Committee . Their views are sought and taken into consideration before the Sub-Committee takes any decision on whether the Subject Councillor Subject Member's conduct constitutes a failure to comply with the Code of Conduct Code, in accordance with

	the provisions of the Localism Act 2011, and as to any action to be taken following a finding of failure to comply with the Code of Conduct Code.
Investigating Officer	The person appointed by the Monitoring Officer to undertake a formal investigation on behalf of the Monitoring Officer. This person may be another Officer of the Council, an Officer of another Council or an external third party investigator appointed for the purpose.
Investigating Investigation Officer's Report	The report of the Investigating Officer to the Monitoring Officer, setting out their findings and recommendations in respect of the allegation.
Legal Advisor	The Officer responsible for providing legal advice to the Standards Sub-Committee. This may be the Monitoring Officer, another legally qualified Officer, or an external third party legal advisor appointed for the purpose.
Chair	The Chair of the Standards Sub-Committee elected by that Sub-Committee to chair meetings for the municipal year.
Code	The Members' Code of Conduct for the relevant Authority formally adopted by it at the relevant time.
The Monitoring Officer	The Officer designated as such by West Oxfordshire District Council in accordance with <i>section 5 of the Local Government and Housing Act 1989</i> .
Town or Parish Council	Where the Subject Member is alleged to have breached the Code of a Town or Parish Council, the Town or Parish Council of which the Subject Member is a member.
Exempt Information	As defined in <i>Section 100A and Schedule 12A to the Local Government Act 1972</i> .

2.0 INTRODUCTION

- 2.1 Where the Monitoring Officer considers that it is in the public interest for a complaint to be considered by the Standards Sub-Committee, a Standards Sub-Committee meeting will be convened, to determine whether the ~~Subject Councillor~~ Subject Member has failed to comply with the ~~Code of Conduct~~ Code. Where there is more than one Subject Member in relation to a single complaint, the Monitoring Officer may agree that the complaint against each Subject Member can be determined at a single meeting. In such instances the Sub-Committee will stick to the

Determination Procedure (Section 5) as closely as possible while allowing for the complaint against each Subject Member to be heard together.

- 2.2 The Monitoring Officer will seek to convene the Standards Sub-Committee meeting within 25 working days of receipt of the final Investigator's report or as soon as practicably possible thereafter. The Standards Sub-Committee will comprise 5 members appointed to that Committee by the Audit and Governance Committee, plus an Independent Person allocated to each meeting on a case by case basis by the Monitoring Officer, to act as a co-opted member of that Sub-Committee. For a meeting of the Standards Sub-Committee to be quorate and proceed, a minimum of three elected members of the Standards Sub-Committee plus an Independent Person must be present. Substitute Members are allowed only from the membership of the Audit and Governance Committee. Members will only be able to sit on the Standards Sub-Committee if they have undertaken standards training.

3.0 PRE-HEARING MEETING PROCESS

- 3.1 The Monitoring Officer ~~may~~ shall invite the ~~Subject Councillor~~ Subject Member to give a response in writing to the ~~Investigator's~~ Investigating Officer's Report. ~~This is done to establish what is likely to be agreed and what is likely to be in dispute at the hearing.~~ If the Subject Member provides a written response to the Investigation Report (which may include written evidence), this should be provided to the Monitoring Officer only, no later than 7 clear days before the meeting to allow for its inclusion in the reports pack. The Subject Member should not otherwise engage with members of the Sub-Committee.
- 3.2 The ~~Subject Councillor~~ Subject Member may be represented or accompanied at the meeting, if they so choose. The Subject Member should notify the Monitoring Officer of the name of any person who will represent or accompany them in advance of the meeting.

~~The Standards Sub-Committee, taking account of the advice of the Monitoring Officer, may issue directions about the way in which a Determination Hearing will be conducted, for example agreeing the number and identity of witnesses. Such directions may be given either before or at the Sub-Committee meeting, and may be decided at a pre-meeting or by correspondence involving all members of the Standards Sub-Committee.~~

~~Any pre-meeting to deal with pre-hearing process issues will be held in private without the Complainant or the Subject Councillor present.~~

4.0 DOCUMENTATION

- 4.1 Standards Sub-Committee meetings are subject to the normal rules for publication of Council Agendas and Access to Information.
- 4.2 The Agenda papers for the Standards Sub-Committee will include:
- Complaint form and documentation
 - ~~Subject Councillor~~ Subject Member's written response
 - Investigating Officer's report
 - Monitoring Officer report

- For reference: Code of Conduct, ~~Standards Committee Local Hearing Panel~~ Standards Sub-Committee Procedure Rules

- 4.3 The Agenda and documents will be published under the Council's rules for exempt information. Prior to the Standards Sub-Committee meeting, any documentation issued or exchanged during the process must be treated by all recipients as confidential ~~unless and~~ until the Standards Sub-Committee ~~resolves-resolve whether or not that~~ the press and public should be excluded from the meeting at which the allegations are going to be heard.
- 4.4 If the Standards Sub-Committee agrees that the meeting should be held in ~~public~~public, the ~~Investigating Officer's~~ ~~Report~~ will be made available to the press and public in attendance at the meeting. The Chair may, at their discretion, allow a short adjournment of the meeting to enable them to read the report.

5.0 DETERMINATION PROCEDURE

- 5.1 The Standards Sub-Committee will follow usual Committee procedures for apologies, and declarations of interests. The meeting shall be chaired by the ~~Audit and Governance Committee~~-elected Chair of the Sub-Committee, or their ~~deputy~~ Vice-Chair in their absence (if there is one). In the absence of both the Chair and the ~~Deputy~~Vice-Chair, the Standards Sub-Committee will elect a Chair for that particular meeting.
- 5.2 ~~The quorum for a Sub-Committee meeting will be 3 elected Members. Substitute Members are allowed only from the membership of the Audit and Governance Committee Members will only be able to sit on the Standards Sub-Committee for a Determination Hearing if they have undertaken standards training.~~
- 5.2 The Standards Sub-Committee will be assisted on matters of law and procedure by the Legal Advisor. The Sub-Committee may take legal advice, in private if necessary, from the Legal Advisor at any time during the ~~hearing meeting~~ or while they are ~~considering deliberating on~~ the outcome. The substance of any legal advice given should be shared with the ~~Subject Councillor~~ Subject Member and the Investigating Officer.
- 5.3 The ~~hearing meeting~~ will normally be held in public. However, the Standards Sub-Committee may resolve to exclude the press and public from the meeting on the grounds set out in *Section 100A and Schedule 12A to the Local Government Act 1972*. In deciding whether to exclude the press and public, the Standards Sub-Committee ~~will consider, having~~ will have regard to any representations made by the Investigating Officer and/or by the ~~Subject Councillor~~ Subject Member and advice from the Legal Advisor as to the public interest., ~~whether to hear the matter, after the passing of a resolution to exclude the press and public from the meeting. Any such resolution may only be passed on the grounds set out in Section 100A and Schedule 12A to the Local Government Act 1972.~~
- 5.4 The meeting will proceed in the absence of the Subject Member unless this would be unfair. If the Subject Member is unable to attend, they are required to notify the Monitoring Officer in advance of the meeting with reasons for their non-attendance.

Constitution of West Oxfordshire District Council

- 5.5 The Standards Sub-Committee meeting is not a court of law. Therefore (save as provided for in paragraph 5.6 below) there will be no oral evidence heard at the meeting. The Standards Sub-Committee may take into account any evidence (including hearsay evidence) which it considers relevant to its determination of the complaint and may attach whatever weight it considers appropriate to that evidence.
- ~~5.5 The Subject Councillor may be represented or accompanied by Counsel or a Solicitor or, with the permission of the Sub-Committee, any other person.~~
- ~~5.6 Normal hearing rules will apply in terms of providing opportunities to question witnesses and test evidence, subject to the principles of natural justice and the Human Rights Act 1998.~~
- 5.6 In determining complaints, the Standards Sub-Committee will generally adopt the following procedure.
- 5.6.1 ~~If the Subject Councillor (or their appointed representative) is not present, then the Sub-Committee will consider whether to proceed and hear the case and make a decision in absence, or whether to adjourn the hearing to another time or date. If the Subject Councillor has indicated that the hearing should continue in the absence of the Subject Councillor, this will normally happen.~~
- 5.8 The Chair will introduce the Members of the Standards Sub-Committee, the Independent Person, the Legal Advisor, the Investigating Officer, the ~~Subject Councillor~~ Subject Member and any other persons present.
- 5.6.2 The Legal Advisor will give a brief outline of the allegation before the Sub-Committee, ~~namely that the Subject Member has failed to comply with the Code of Conduct,~~ and outline the procedure to be followed ~~and confirm that those present understand it.~~
- 5.6.3 The Investigating Officer will present the ~~report~~ Investigation Report ~~into the allegation against the Subject Councillor~~ including any findings of fact and make representations to substantiate the conclusion that the ~~Subject Councillor~~ Subject Member has failed to comply with the Code of Conduct. Save for exceptional circumstances, the Sub-Committee will not hear oral evidence from witnesses called by the Investigating Officer, as evidence of such witnesses will have been dealt with in the Investigation Report.
- 5.6.4 The ~~Subject Councillor~~ Subject Member ~~(or their representative)~~ may ask questions of the Investigating Officer through the Chair. The Chair will ensure that the questions are necessary and will assist the Sub-Committee in determining the complaint.
- 5.6.5 The Sub-Committee Members may question the Investigating Officer, followed by the Independent Person.
- ~~5.13 The Investigating Officer may call such witnesses as necessary (which may or may not include the Complainant).~~

~~5.14 The Subject Councillor (or their appointed representative) may question any witnesses called by the Investigating Officer.~~

~~5.15 The Sub-Committee Members may question any witnesses called by the Investigating Officer.~~

~~5.16 The Investigating Officer may ask further questions of any witnesses in order to clarify any point brought out in questioning of the witness by the Subject Councillor or the Sub-Committee.~~

5.6.6 The Subject Member will ~~present the case in relation to the Investigating Officer's findings and make representations about why the Subject Councillor considers that they did not fail to comply with the Code of Conduct~~ address the Sub-Committee. If the ~~Subject Councillor~~ Subject Member admits that they have breached the ~~Code of Conduct~~ Code the Sub-Committee may move to paragraph ~~5.32-6.12~~ below. Save for exceptional circumstances, the Sub-Committee will not hear oral evidence (including character evidence) from witnesses called by the Subject Member, as evidence of such witnesses should have been made available to the Investigating Officer and/or dealt with in the Subject Member's written response to the Investigation Report.

~~5.18 The Investigating Officer may question the Subject Councillor.~~

5.6.7 The Investigating Officer may ask questions of the Subject Member through the Chair. The Chair will ensure that the questions are necessary and will assist the Sub-Committee in determining the complaint.

5.6.8 The Standards Sub-Committee may question the ~~Subject Councillor~~ Subject Member, followed by the Independent Person.~~5.20 The Subject Councillor may call any witnesses.~~

~~5.21 The Investigating Officer may question any witness called by the Subject Councillor.~~

~~5.22 The Sub-Committee may question any witness called by the Subject Councillor.~~

~~5.23 The Subject Councillor may ask further questions of any witness in order to clarify any point brought out in questioning of the witness by the Investigating Officer or the Standards Sub-Committee.~~

~~6.9 The Independent Person may ask questions of the Investigating Officer, the Complainant(s), and the Subject Councillor and any witness called by either of them, after such persons have been questioned by the Standards Standards Sub-Committee.~~

5.6.9+025 The Investigating Officer and the ~~Subject Councillor~~ Subject Member (in that order) will ~~will~~ each briefly sum up ~~the case in relation to the findings in their report~~ their respective cases.

~~5.26 The Subject Councillor (or their appointed representative) will sum up the case in relation to the findings in the Investigating Officer's report of whether there has been a breach of the Code.~~

5.276.10+ The Independent Person will give their views to the Standards Sub-Committee as to whether or not the Code has been breached and these will be recorded in the Minutes of the meeting.

5.286.112 The Standards Sub-Committee will then retire with the Legal Advisor to deliberate in private. ~~If the hearing has been in public the Committee will need to pass a resolution under Section 100A of the Local Government Act 1972 to exclude the public from the meeting.~~ The Standards Sub-Committee must take into account the views of the Independent Person before reaching a decision as to whether the Code has been breached. Decisions will be determined by a simple majority of those Members present and voting; the Independent Person does not have a vote. Where there are equal numbers of votes for and against the Chair will have a second casting vote and there is no restriction on how the Chair~~man~~ chooses to exercise a casting vote.

5.296.12 The Standards Sub-Committee will announce ~~their~~its decision as to whether there has been a breach of the Code in the presence of all parties ~~and this will normally be after passing a resolution that the public should no longer be~~ (assuming that it had not earlier resolved to exclude the press and public from the meeting) in public. ~~excluded from the meeting. The Sub-Committee will~~ This shall include ~~provide~~ summary reasons for ~~their~~the decision ~~and will explain any reasons why any advice from the Independent Person has or has not been followed in giving its decision.~~

5.306.13 If the Standards Sub-Committee decide that the ~~Subject Councillor~~Subject Member has not breached the Code, ~~they~~it shall dismiss the complaint ~~and take no further action.~~ However, ~~they~~it may still make general recommendations to the Council, its Audit and Governance Committee, the Monitoring Officer, or (if relevant) the Town or Parish Council ~~on any remedial actions, if it considers necessary to address in light of the issues raised in the complaint.~~

5.316.14 If the Standards Sub-Committee decide that the Subject Member has breached the Code then it may move to ~~the following~~ paragraph 5.6.16 ~~will apply.~~

5.32- 6.156 If the Complainant is present at the meeting, the Standards Sub-Committee will invite them to give a statement as to the effect on them of the Subject Member's conduct which has been found to have breached the Code. The Complainant is not obliged to give such a statement. If the Complainant does make a statement, they may only be questioned by the Standards Sub-Committee. Alternatively, the Complainant may provide a written statement to the Monitoring Officer in advance of the meeting which the Legal Adviser will read out at this stage of the meeting.

~~The Sub-Committee may request, or allow, the Complainant, whether or not called as a witness, to make a statement in relation to the effect on the Complainant of any conduct of the Subject Councillor which is the subject of the breach. Such a statement may be made in person to the Sub-Committee or may be submitted in writing, but if submitted in writing, will be shown to both the Investigating Officer, the Subject Councillor and the Independent Person. A Complainant who makes such a statement may be questioned by the Sub-Committee, but may not be questioned in relation to the statement by the Investigating Officer or the Subject Councillor without the consent of the Sub-Committee.~~5.6.167

- ~~5.33~~ The Investigating Officer may make representations as to whether the Standards Sub-Committee should impose a sanction and what form any sanction should take.
- ~~5.34~~ ~~The Sub-Committee may question the Investigating Officer in relation to any such representations.~~
- ~~5.35~~~~6.17~~~~8~~The ~~Subject Councillor~~Subject Member ~~(or their appointed representative)~~ may make representations as to whether the Standards Sub-Committee should impose a sanction and what form any sanction should take. ~~and This may make representations as to mitigation~~include an apology or other form of mitigation.
- ~~5.36~~ ~~The Sub-Committee may question the Subject Councillor in relation to any such representations.~~
- ~~5.37~~ ~~The Legal Advisor will then raise any points that need to be addressed before the matter is determined~~~~5.38~~~~6.18~~ The Independent Person will then give their views on the appropriate sanction, if any, to be imposed and their views will be recorded in the Minutes of the meeting.
- ~~5.39~~~~6.19~~~~20~~The Standards Sub-Committee will ~~then retire with the Legal Advisor. If the hearing has been in public the Sub-Committee will need to pass a resolution under Section 100A of the Local Government Act 1972 to exclude the public from the meeting.~~deliberate and announce its decision as to sanctions adopting the same procedure as in paragraphs 5.6.12-5.6.13 above.
- ~~5.40~~~~6.20~~~~The Sub-Committee will come to a decision as to sanctions.~~ Any sanction imposed must be reasonable and proportionate to the breach found~~and the Legal Advisor may advise the Sub-Committee in this regard.~~ The Standards Sub-Committee has no power to suspend or disqualify the member or to withdraw or suspend allowances. Subject to those limitations, the Standards Sub-Committee may impose any sanction it considers appropriate (including but not limited to):
- Formal censure or reprimand of the ~~Subject Councillor~~Subject Member (or a recommendation to Council or the Town or Parish Council that it issues a formal censure or reprimand);
 - Recommend that the Subject Member apologise;
 - A direction to publicise its decision (e.g. in a press release published on the Council's website);
 - ~~+~~Recommend to the ~~Subject Councillor~~Subject Member's Group Leader (or in the case of un-grouped members, recommend to Council or to Committees) or to the Town or Parish Council that ~~he/she~~ the Subject Member be removed from any or all Committees or Sub-Committees of the Council/Town or Parish Council;
 - Recommend to the Leader of the Council that the ~~Subject Councillor~~ Subject Member be removed from the Executive or removed from particular Executive Portfolio responsibilities;
 - ~~+~~Recommend to Council that the Subject ~~Councillor~~Member be replaced as ~~Executive~~Leader of the Council;

- Recommend to Council or the Town or Parish Council that the Member be removed from outside appointments to which they have been nominated by the Council/Town or Parish Council;
- Instruct the Monitoring Officer to arrange, or recommend that the Town or Parish Council, arrange appropriate training for the ~~Subject Councillor~~ Subject Member;
- ~~Publish its findings in respect of the Subject Councillor's conduct;~~
- ~~Report its findings to Council, or to a Town or Parish Council, for information.~~
- Recommend to Council, or to the Town or Parish Council, that it withdraws access to Council facilities and resources (provided this does not unreasonably interfere with the Subject Member's ability to perform their role as a councillor). This may include access to premises.

~~The above is not exhaustive.~~

~~5.41 — The Sub-Committee will announce its decision in the presence of all parties, and this will normally be after passing a resolution that the public should no longer be excluded from the meeting. The Sub-Committee will give reasons for its decision and will explain the reasons why any advice from the Independent Person has or has not been followed in giving its decision.~~

5.427 A Town or Parish Council which receives recommendations as to sanctions from the Standards Sub-Committee may only implement the recommended sanctions and has no legal power to impose any other sanctions.

5.8 The Monitoring Officer will, within 10 working days of the Standards Sub-Committee meeting prepare a formal Decision Notice, and send a copy to the Complainant, to the Investigating Officer and to the ~~Subject Councillor~~ Subject Member (and to the Town or Parish Council if appropriate). The Decision Notice will be published as part of the Minutes of the Standards Sub-Committee meeting and will be placed on the Council's website ~~regardless of whether the~~. ~~If Sub-Committee excluded the press and public for were excluded from the meeting or not, unless the Monitoring Officer determines that it should remain confidential~~ aversion of the Decision Notice that does not disclose any exempt information will be published.

5.439 The ~~findings and recommendations~~ decision of the Standards Sub-Committee ~~are~~ is final and there is no right of appeal ~~against the decision of the Standards Sub-Committee.~~

5.4410 The Chair of the Standards Sub-Committee has the right to depart from this procedure, ~~in consultation with the Monitoring Officer, or having taken advice from the~~ Legal Advisor, ~~at any determination hearing~~ where it is considered it is ~~sensible~~ appropriate to do so, to deal with the case fairly, effectively and in the public interest, provided that the principles of ~~natural justice~~ fairness are upheld.

This page is intentionally left blank

5E Standards Sub-Committee Procedure Rules

These procedure rules apply to meetings of the Standards Sub-Committee, or the Audit and Governance Committee, when sitting to hear and determine a member code of conduct complaint referred to it by the Monitoring Officer.

1.0 DEFINITIONS

Complainant(s)	The person/people making the complaint.
Subject Member	The Councillor, co-optee, or Town or Parish Councillor against whom an allegation has been made.
Standards Sub-Committee	<p>A Sub-Committee of the Audit and Governance Committee in accordance with the provisions of the <i>Local Government Act 1972</i>.</p> <p>A meeting of the Standards Sub-Committee will consider whether the Subject Member has breached the Code.</p> <p>A Sub-Committee of the Audit and Governance Committee, in accordance with the provisions of the Local Government Act 1972.</p> <p>Comprising 5 members of the Audit and Governance Committee, appointed by the Audit and Governance Committee.</p>
Independent Person	A person appointed by the Council under <i>section 28(7) of the Localism Act 2011</i> . An Independent Person will be invited by the Monitoring Officer to attend the Standards Sub-Committee meeting as a co-opted Member. Their views are sought and taken into consideration before the Sub-Committee takes any decision on whether the Subject Member's conduct constitutes a failure to comply with the Code, and as to any action to be taken following a finding of failure to comply with the Code.
Investigating Officer	The person appointed by the Monitoring Officer to undertake a formal investigation on behalf of the Monitoring Officer. This person may be another Officer of the Council, an Officer of

	another Council or an external third party investigator appointed for the purpose.
Investigation Report	The report of the Investigating Officer to the Monitoring Officer, setting out their findings and recommendations in respect of the allegation.
Legal Advisor	The Officer responsible for providing legal advice to the Standards Sub-Committee. This may be the Monitoring Officer, another legally qualified Officer, or an external third party legal advisor appointed for the purpose.
Chair	The Chair of the Standards Sub-Committee elected by that Sub-Committee to chair meetings for the municipal year.
Code	The Members' Code of Conduct for the relevant Authority formally adopted by it at the relevant time.
The Monitoring Officer	The Officer designated as such by West Oxfordshire District Council in accordance with <i>section 5 of the Local Government and Housing Act 1989</i> .
Town or Parish Council	Where the Subject Member is alleged to have breached the Code of a Town or Parish Council, the Town or Parish Council of which the Subject Member is a member.
Exempt Information	As defined in <i>Section 100A and Schedule 12A to the Local Government Act 1972</i> .

2.0 INTRODUCTION

- 2.1 Where the Monitoring Officer considers that it is in the public interest for a complaint to be considered by the Standards Sub-Committee, a Standards Sub-Committee meeting will be convened, to determine whether the Subject Member has failed to comply with the Code. Where there is more than one Subject Member in relation to a single complaint, the Monitoring Officer may agree that the complaint against each Subject Member can be determined at a single meeting. In such instances the Sub-Committee will stick to the Determination Procedure (Section 5) as closely as possible while allowing for the complaint against each Subject Member to be heard together.
- 2.2 The Monitoring Officer will seek to convene the Standards Sub-Committee meeting within 25 working days of receipt of the final Investigator's report or as soon as practicably possible thereafter. The Standards Sub-Committee will comprise 5 members appointed to that Committee by the Audit and Governance Committee,

plus an Independent Person allocated to each meeting on a case by case basis by the Monitoring Officer, to act as a co-opted member of that Sub-Committee. For a meeting of the Standards Sub-Committee to be quorate and proceed, a minimum of three elected members of the Standards Sub-Committee plus an Independent Person must be present. Substitute Members are allowed only from the membership of the Audit and Governance Committee. Members will only be able to sit on the Standards Sub-Committee if they have undertaken standards training.

3.0 PRE-MEETING PROCESS

- 3.1 The Monitoring Officer shall invite the Subject Member to give a response in writing to the Investigation Report. If the Subject Member provides a written response to the Investigation Report (which may include written evidence), this should be provided to the Monitoring Officer only, no later than 7 clear days before the meeting to allow for its inclusion in the reports pack. The Subject Member should not otherwise engage with members of the Sub-Committee.
- 3.2 The Subject Member may be represented or accompanied at the meeting, if they so choose. The Subject Member should notify the Monitoring Officer of the name of any person who will represent or accompany them in advance of the meeting.

4.0 DOCUMENTATION

- 4.1 Standards Sub-Committee meetings are subject to the normal rules for publication of Council Agendas and Access to Information.
- 4.2 The Agenda papers for the Standards Sub-Committee will include:
- Complaint form and documentation
 - Subject Member's written response
 - Investigating Officer's report
 - Monitoring Officer report
 - For reference: Code of Conduct, Standards Sub-Committee Procedure Rules
- 4.3 The Agenda and documents will be published under the Council's rules for exempt information. Prior to the Standards Sub-Committee meeting, any documentation issued or exchanged during the process must be treated by all recipients as confidential until the Standards Sub-Committee resolve whether or not the press and public should be excluded from the meeting at which the allegations are going to be heard.
- 4.4 If the Standards Sub-Committee agrees that the meeting should be held in public, the Investigation Report will be made available to the press and public in attendance at the meeting. The Chair may, at their discretion, allow a short adjournment of the meeting to enable them to read the report.

5.0 DETERMINATION PROCEDURE

- 5.1 The Standards Sub-Committee will follow usual Committee procedures for apologies, and declarations of interests. The meeting shall be chaired by the elected Chair of the Sub-Committee, or the Vice-Chair in their absence (if there is one). In

the absence of both the Chair and Vice-Chair, the Standards Sub-Committee will elect a Chair for that particular meeting.

- 5.2 The Standards Sub-Committee will be assisted on matters of law and procedure by the Legal Advisor. The Sub-Committee may take legal advice, in private if necessary, from the Legal Advisor at any time during the meeting or while they are deliberating on the outcome. The substance of any legal advice given should be shared with the Subject Member and the Investigating Officer.
- 5.3 The meeting will normally be held in public. However, the Standards Sub-Committee may resolve to exclude the press and public from the meeting on the grounds set out in *Section 100A and Schedule 12A to the Local Government Act 1972*. In deciding whether to exclude the press and public, the Standards Sub-Committee will have regard to any representations made by the Investigating Officer and/or by the Subject Member and advice from the Legal Advisor as to the public interest.
- 5.4 The meeting will proceed in the absence of the Subject Member unless this would be unfair. If the Subject Member is unable to attend, they are required to notify the Monitoring Officer in advance of the meeting with reasons for their non-attendance.
- 5.5 The Standards Sub-Committee meeting is not a court of law. Therefore (save as provided for in paragraph 5.6 below) there will be no oral evidence heard at the meeting. The Standards Sub-Committee may take into account any evidence (including hearsay evidence) which it considers relevant to its determination of the complaint and may attach whatever weight it considers appropriate to that evidence.
- 5.6 In determining complaints, the Standards Sub-Committee will generally adopt the following procedure.
 - 5.6.1 The Chair will introduce the Members of the Standards Sub-Committee, the Independent Person, the Legal Advisor, the Investigating Officer, the Subject Member and any other persons present.
 - 5.6.2 The Legal Advisor will give a brief outline of the allegation before the Sub-Committee and outline the procedure to be followed.
 - 5.6.3 The Investigating Officer will present the Investigation Report including any findings of fact and make representations to substantiate the conclusion that the Subject Member has failed to comply with the Code of Conduct. Save for exceptional circumstances, the Sub-Committee will not hear oral evidence from witnesses called by the Investigating Officer, as evidence of such witnesses will have been dealt with in the Investigation Report.
 - 5.6.4 The Subject Member may ask questions of the Investigating Officer through the Chair. The Chair will ensure that the questions are necessary and will assist the Sub-Committee in determining the complaint.
 - 5.6.5 The Sub-Committee Members may question the Investigating Officer, followed by the Independent Person.


- 5.6.6 The Subject Member will address the Sub-Committee. If the Subject Member admits that they have breached the Code the Sub-Committee may move to paragraph 5.6.12 below. Save for exceptional circumstances, the Sub-Committee will not hear oral evidence (including character evidence) from witnesses called by the Subject Member, as evidence of such witnesses should have been made available to the Investigating Officer and/or dealt with in the Subject Member's written response to the Investigation Report.
- 5.6.7 The Investigating Officer may ask questions of the Subject Member through the Chair. The Chair will ensure that the questions are necessary and will assist the Sub-Committee in determining the complaint.
- 5.6.8 The Standards Sub-Committee may question the Subject Member, followed by the Independent Person.
- 5.6.9 The Investigating Officer and the Subject Member (in that order) will each briefly sum up their respective cases.
- 5.6.10 The Independent Person will give their views to the Standards Sub-Committee as to whether or not the Code has been breached and these will be recorded in the Minutes of the meeting.
- 5.6.11 The Standards Sub-Committee will then retire with the Legal Advisor to deliberate in private. The Standards Sub-Committee must take into account the views of the Independent Person before reaching a decision as to whether the Code has been breached. Decisions will be determined by a simple majority of those Members present and voting; the Independent Person does not have a vote. Where there are equal numbers of votes for and against the Chair will have a second casting vote and there is no restriction on how the Chair chooses to exercise a casting vote.
- 5.6.12 The Standards Sub-Committee will announce its decision as to whether there has been a breach of the Code in the presence of all parties and (assuming that it had not earlier resolved to exclude the press and public from the meeting) in public. This shall include summary reasons for the decision.
- 5.6.13 If the Standards Sub-Committee decide that the Subject Member has not breached the Code, it shall dismiss the complaint. However, it may still make general recommendations to the Council, its Audit and Governance Committee, the Monitoring Officer, or (if relevant) the Town or Parish Council in light of the issues raised in the complaint.
- 5.6.14 If the Standards Sub-Committee decide that the Subject Member has breached the Code then it may move to paragraph 5.6.16.
- 5.6.15 If the Complainant is present at the meeting, the Standards Sub-Committee will invite them to give a statement as to the effect on them of the Subject Member's conduct which has been found to have breached the Code. The Complainant is not obliged to give such a statement. If the Complainant does make a statement, they may only be questioned by the Standards Sub-Committee. Alternatively, the Complainant may provide a written statement to the Monitoring Officer in advance of the meeting which the Legal Adviser will read out at this stage of the meeting.

- 5.6.16 The Investigating Officer may make representations as to whether the Standards Sub-Committee should impose a sanction and what form any sanction should take.
- 5.6.17 The Subject Member may make representations as to whether the Standards Sub-Committee should impose a sanction and what form any sanction should take. This may include an apology or other form of mitigation.
- 5.6.18 The Independent Person will then give their views on the appropriate sanction, if any, to be imposed and their views will be recorded in the Minutes of the meeting.
- 5.6.19 The Standards Sub-Committee will deliberate and announce its decision as to sanctions adopting the same procedure as in paragraphs 5.6.12-5.6.13 above.
- 5.6.20 Any sanction imposed must be reasonable and proportionate to the breach found. The Standards Sub-Committee has no power to suspend or disqualify the member or to withdraw or suspend allowances. Subject to those limitations, Standards Sub-Committee may impose any sanction it considers appropriate (including but not limited to):
- Formal censure or reprimand of the Subject Member (or a recommendation to Council or the Town or Parish Council that it issues a formal censure or reprimand);
 - Recommend that the Subject Member apologise;
 - A direction to publicise its decision (e.g. in a press release published on the Council's website);
 - Recommend to the Subject Member's Group Leader (or in the case of ungrouped members, recommend to Council or to Committees) or to the Town or Parish Council that the Subject Member be removed from any or all Committees or Sub-Committees of the Council/Town or Parish Council;
 - Recommend to the Leader of the Council that the Subject Member be removed from the Executive or removed from particular Executive Portfolio responsibilities;
 - Recommend to Council that the Subject Member be replaced as Leader of the Council;
 - Recommend to Council or the Town or Parish Council that the Subject Member be removed from outside appointments to which they have been nominated by the Council/Town or Parish Council;
 - Instruct the Monitoring Officer to arrange, or recommend that the Town or Parish Council arrange, appropriate training for the Subject Member; Recommend to Council, or to the Town or Parish Council, that it withdraws access to Council facilities and resources (provided this does not unreasonably interfere with the Subject Member's ability to perform their role as a councillor). This may include access to premises.
- 5.7 A Town or Parish Council which receives recommendations as to sanctions from the Standards Sub-Committee may only implement the recommended sanctions and has no legal power to impose any other sanctions.
- 5.8 The Monitoring Officer will, within 10 working days of the Standards Sub-Committee meeting prepare a formal Decision Notice, and send a copy to the Complainant, to

the Investigating Officer and to the Subject Member (and to the Town or Parish Council if appropriate). The Decision Notice will be published as part of the Minutes of the Standards Sub-Committee meeting and will be placed on the Council's website. If the press and public were excluded from the meeting, a version of the Decision Notice that does not disclose any exempt information will be published.

- 5.9 The decision of the Standards Sub-Committee is final and there is no right of appeal.
- 5.10 The Chair of the Standards Sub-Committee has the right to depart from this procedure, having taken advice from the Legal Advisor, where it is considered it is appropriate to do so, to deal with the case fairly, effectively and in the public interest, provided that the principles of fairness are upheld.

This page is intentionally left blank

 WEST OXFORDSHIRE DISTRICT COUNCIL	WEST OXFORDSHIRE DISTRICT COUNCIL
Name and Date of Committee	COUNCIL – 27 NOVEMBER 2024
Subject	REVIEW OF POLITICAL PROPORTIONALITIES
Wards Affected	None
Accountable Member	N/A
Accountable Officer	Andrea McCaskie, Director of Governance Email: democratic.services@westoxon.gov.uk
Report Author	Andrew Brown, Democratic Services Business Manager Email: democratic.services@westoxon.gov.uk
Summary/Purpose	To review the political proportionalities on committees following receipt of a notice that a member has joined a group.
Annexes	Annex A – Political proportionalities on committees
Recommendation(s)	That Council resolves to: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Agree the political proportionalities as set out in Annex A. 2. Appoint to any vacant seats on committees in accordance with the wishes of the political group to which the seat has been allocated, as expressed at the meeting. 3. Note that any remaining vacancies on committees shall be appointed to by the Monitoring Officer in accordance with the wishes of the political group to which the vacant seat has been allocated and that Council will be asked to ratify and note any such appointments at the next ordinary Council meeting.
Corporate priorities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Working Together for West Oxfordshire
Key Decision	NO
Exempt	NO
Consultees/ Consultation	Leader of affected political groups

1. BACKGROUND

- 1.1 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.
- 1.2 Under Section 17 of The Local Government (Committees and Political Groups) Regulations 1990, the Council has a duty to review the allocation seats on committees as soon as practicable after a notice is received by the Proper Officer confirming that a member has joined a political group and that a review of the allocation of seats is requested, provided the notice is received at least one month after the previous review.

2. CHANGE OF GROUP MEMBERSHIP

- 2.1 On Friday 15 November 2024 a notice was received by the Proper Officer confirming that Councillor Michael Baggaley had joined the Liberal Democrat Group on the Council and that a review of the political proportionalities on committees was requested. Councillor Baggaley was elected at the Chipping Norton by-election held on 14 November 2024.

3. ALLOCATION OF SEATS ON COMMITTEES

- 3.1 Annex A shows the proportionalities on committees with changes since the previous review of political proportionalities, at the 22 May 2024 Annual Meeting of Council given in brackets.
- 3.2 The Liberal Democrat Group has gained one seat on the Development Control Committee and one seat on the Overview and Scrutiny Committee, both from the Labour Group. The Labour Group had a vacant seat on the Overview and Scrutiny Committee and has been asked to confirm which Member will come of off Development Control Committee.
- 3.3 Where there are changes to be made to the membership of committees, the relevant group leaders are asked to announce the nominated Members at the 27 November 2024 full Council meeting for appointment by full Council or alternative notify the Monitoring Officer for appointment under delegated authority.
- 3.4 If required, the Monitoring Officer will use their delegated authority to appoint to vacancies on committees in accordance with the wishes of political groups (Constitution Part 5A, rule 2.4). Such appointments will be reported to the next meeting of Council for noting and ratification.

4. ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS

- 4.1 The Council has a duty to review the allocation of seats on committees when a review is triggered, and to appoint to committees based on political proportionality.

5. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

- 5.1 There are no financial implications.

6. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

6.1 The legal issues are set out in the body of the report.

7. RISK ASSESSMENT

7.1 There is a risk that if committees 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.

8. EQUALITIES IMPACT

8.1 There are no impacts on equalities.

9. CLIMATE AND ECOLOGICAL EMERGENCIES IMPLICATIONS

9.1 There are no climate or ecological implications.

10. BACKGROUND PAPERS

10.1 None.

(END)

This page is intentionally left blank

Annex A:

Political Proportionalities on Committees 27 November 2024

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 the Chipping Norton by-election held on 14 November 2024. The figures in brackets are the changes since the committee allocations were last reviewed at the 22 May 2024 full Council meeting:

- Liberal Democrat: 22 (+1)
- Conservative: 13
- Labour and Co-Operative: 10 (-1)
- Green: 4

Table A: 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	11 (+1)	6	5 (-1)	2	24	0
Licensing Committee	11	5	3	2	1	11	0
Overview and Scrutiny Committee	24	11 (+1)	6	5 (-1)	2	24	0
Performance and Appointments Committee	5	2	2	1	0	5	0
Total seats allocated (real entitlement) (rounded entitlement)	75	34 33.67 (34)	20 19.90 (20)	15 15.31 (15)	6 6.12 (6)	72	0

This page is intentionally left blank

 <p>WEST OXFORDSHIRE DISTRICT COUNCIL</p>	<p>WEST OXFORDSHIRE DISTRICT COUNCIL</p>
<p>Name and date of Committee</p>	<p>COUNCIL – 27 NOVEMBER 2024</p>
<p>Subject</p>	<p>COUNCIL SIZE PROPOSAL (PHASE I OF THE ELECTORAL REVIEW OF WEST OXFORDSHIRE)</p>
<p>Wards affected</p>	<p>All</p>
<p>Accountable member</p>	<p>Councillor Alaric Smith, Chair of the Constitution Working Group Email: alaric.smith@westoxfordshire.gov.uk</p>
<p>Accountable officer</p>	<p>Andrea McCaskie, Director of Governance Email: democratic.services@westoxon.gov.uk</p>
<p>Report author</p>	<p>Andrew Brown. Head of Democratic and Electoral Services Email: democratic.services@westoxon.gov.uk</p>
<p>Summary/Purpose</p>	<p>To consider the submission of a Council Size Proposal to the Local Government Boundary Commission for England as part of the electoral review of West Oxfordshire, and any associated change to the electoral cycle for the district council and town and parish councils within the West Oxfordshire district area.</p>
<p>Annexes</p>	<p>Annex A – Draft Council Size Proposal Appendix 1 – Summary of survey responses Appendix 2 – Detailed survey responses Annex B – Electoral Review Timetable</p>
<p>Recommendation(s)</p>	<p>That Council resolves to:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Approve the Draft Council Size Proposal (Annex A) for submission to the Local Government Boundary Commission for England. 2. Delegate authority to the Head of Democratic and Electoral Services, in consultation with the Chair of the Constitution Working Group, to make any minor amendments required to finalise the document to reflect the discussion at full Council, correct typographical errors or otherwise strengthen and improve the proposal document.

	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 3. Note that whole-Council elections will be held on new ward boundaries in May 2027 in any scenario. 4. Agree in principle to move to whole-Council elections every four years from May 2027. 5. Agree to convene a special meeting of full Council on 29 January 2025 at 4.00pm for the purpose of formally deciding whether to change the electoral cycle to whole-Council elections every four years from May 2027 (which will require a 2/3 majority at the specially convened meeting). 6. Authorise the Chief Executive Officer to seek the views of town and parish councils on whether to harmonise ordinary elections of all town and parish councils within the district area with district council elections from May 2027, in the event that the District Council does decide to move to whole-Council elections from May 2027.
Corporate priorities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Putting Residents First • Working Together for West Oxfordshire
Key Decision	NO
Exempt	NO
Consultees/ Consultation	Constitution Working Group Boundary Review Project Group

1. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

- 1.1 West Oxfordshire District Council is subject to an electoral review by The Local Government Boundary Commission for England (“the Commission”). The review is primarily aimed at addressing variances in the numbers of electors in wards across the district, with 12 of 27 wards outside a variance of +/-10%, and Witney West ward at +31%. The Commission has a duty set out in law to review every local authority “from time to time” and West Oxfordshire was last reviewed in 2001.
- 1.2 Phase I of the review is to consider the future size of the Council i.e. the number of Councillors, also known as Members, on West Oxfordshire District Council. The Council is invited to submit a Council Size Proposal to the Commission by mid-February 2025.
- 1.3 The future size of the Council is ultimately a decision for the Commission. On the current timeline for the electoral review (Annex B), the Council can expect to be informally notified of the Commission’s decision in March/April 2025.
- 1.4 Regardless of what the future size of West Oxfordshire District Council is, the Council will be required to hold whole-Council elections on new ward boundaries in May 2027. Councillors elected at the local elections in May 2026 will serve a one-year term.
- 1.5 At its meeting on 13 March 2024, full Council resolved to amend the terms of reference of the Constitution Working Group to include the following responsibilities within its remit:

The Constitution Working Group will also formulate draft recommendations to the Local Government Boundary Commission for England for consideration by the Council including:

- a) the total number of Councillors of the Council;*
- b) the number and boundaries of electoral wards for the purposes of the election of Councillors;*
- c) the name of any electoral ward area.*

The Constitution Working Group will also make recommendations to the Council on its future electoral cycle, if considered appropriate.

The Constitution Working Group will also consider any review of polling districts and polling places.

- 1.6 As such, the development of a Council size proposal has been overseen by the Constitution Working Group. The Members of the Working Group are Councillor A Smith (Chair), Aitman (Vice-Chair), Ashby, Coles, Goodwin, Graham, Mead, Melvin and Pearson.
- 1.7 The Draft Council Size Proposal at Annex A has been informed by an analysis of the workloads associated with Member meetings and a survey which was circulated to all Members to which 26 of the Council’s 49 Members responded (53%). The survey responses are appended to the draft Council Size Proposal document.
- 1.8 The Working Group, having taken advice from officers and considered the issues, recommend that maintaining a size of 49 Councillors with a mix of 1, 2 and 3-Member

wards would be appropriate for the district to ensure effective representation for communities and sufficient Member-capacity on the Council into the future.

- 1.9 To enable the Council to continue with a mix of 1, 2, 3-Member wards, full Council would need to resolve by a two-thirds majority at a specially convened meeting to amend the electoral cycle from elections by thirds (three years out of every four) to whole-Council elections every four years from 2027. Should the Council decide to move to whole-Council elections it would have the power to align the electoral cycles of the town and parish councils within the district area with its own whole-Council elections.
- 1.10 The alternative to whole-Council elections would be to retain elections by thirds but with a uniform pattern of 3-Member wards across the whole of the district area. This would necessitate the creation of some very large 3-Member wards in sparsely populated rural areas which the Working Group do not believe would be conducive to effective representation. This option would also require a council size which is divisible by 3 e.g. 48 or 51 Members but not 49 Members.
- 1.11 Phase 2 of the electoral review will be to consider the warding arrangements after the size of the Council has been determined and that stage will involve public consultation. The Commission require that any decision to change the Council's electoral cycle is taken prior to the public consultation on warding arrangements, which is currently expected to start following the county council elections in May 2025.

2. BACKGROUND

- 2.1 The Council currently has 49 Members representing 27 wards, with a mix of 1, 2 and 3-Member wards. Maintaining the status quo of elections by thirds with a mix of 1, 2 and 3-Member wards is not an option that is open to the Council under current legislation.
- 2.2 The Commission does not have a policy on the size of the Council or the number of electors per councillor but will assess proposals against the Council's 15 "Nearest Neighbours". Where a Council's proposed elector ratio is significantly above or below the average of the Council's statistical neighbours, the Council will need to ensure that its case is particularly strong.
- 2.3 The size of the Council is relatively large at 49 Members but is within the Commission's expected range based on comparator councils. The Council's elector ratio (i.e. the number of electors per councillor) is relatively low at 1,811. The elector ratio is based on the electoral register published in December 2023. This doesn't account for the c. 3,000 electors who joined the electoral register ahead of the parliamentary general election held in July 2024. This would put the electorate ratio at c. 1,878, which is still relatively low.

3. COUNCIL SIZE PROPOSAL

- 3.1 In making its judgement on council size the Commission will consider three board areas:
 - the governance arrangements of the Council and how it takes decisions across the broad range of its responsibilities.

- the Council's scrutiny functions relating to its own decision making and the Council's responsibilities to outside bodies.
 - the representational role of councillors in the local community and how they engage with people, conduct casework and represent the Council on local partner organisations.
- 3.2** The Commission's decision on council size will enable the review to progress to phase 2, i.e. the drafting of ward boundaries. At this stage, the council size is a 'minded to' intention because the final number of councillors may be adjusted slightly (generally ± 1) where this would achieve a pattern that best reflects the three statutory criteria set out above.
- 3.3** The Commission expects the Council and/or its political groups to present the Commission with a case for a council size that they believe is right for their authority.
- 3.4** The draft Council Size Proposal document at Annex A uses the template provided by the Commission and is recommended for approval subject to any amendments consequent to the discussion at Full Council and any corrections or minor amendments that are considered necessary to improve the final document.
- 3.5** The Working Group found that evidence from the Member survey and the analysis of workloads associated with Member meetings demonstrate that the workload of Members has increased and become less comfortable for Members over recent years. This has been driven by a number of factors, notably case work, special responsibilities and the number and complexity of reports.
- 3.6** The Working Group noted that the response to a survey question showed that a majority of Members believed that the current size of 49 Members remains appropriate, with only two Members favouring a decrease and one Member favouring an increase.
- 3.7** With population growth expected to be concentrated in and around the main settlements, to provide for electoral equality into the future the rural wards in the district would need to increase in size and cover more parish areas on average than they do at present. The Working Group was concerned that this would exacerbate the particular pressures faced by Members representing the sparsely populated rural areas of the district and would not provide for effective representation in those areas.
- 3.8** Having considered the available evidence and discussed the issues, the Working Group consider that there is a strong rationale for maintaining a size of 49 Members and a mix of 1, 2 and 3-Member wards.
- 3.9** A Council size of significantly more than 49 Members is not considered necessary. This would reduce the elector ratio and risk providing for more Members than the Council needs to operate effectively, diluting the responsibilities and influence of individual Members and adding unnecessary costs to the Council (e.g. in the form of additional allowance payments).
- 3.10** A Council size of significantly fewer than 49 Members would increase the workloads of individual Members, many of whom work and/or have caring responsibilities in addition to their duties as a Councillor. The survey results show that a further increase in workload of

10% would result in Members becoming less comfortable with their workload on average, with some Members becoming very uncomfortable with their workload.

4. ELECTORAL CYCLE

- 4.1** Retaining a mix of 1, 2 and 3-Member wards, as opposed to a uniform pattern of 3-Member wards, is only possible if the Council passes a resolution to hold whole-Council elections every four years. Such a resolution must be passed at a specially convened meeting of full Council by a two thirds majority.
- 4.2** The survey results show that 42% of respondents favoured whole-Council elections and 19% favoured maintaining elections by thirds. However, nearly a third of Members responded that they would need more information to form a view.
- 4.3** The Commission requires that any such resolution be passed prior to public consultation on the warding arrangements, which on the current electoral review timetable is expected to start after the County Council elections in May 2025.
- 4.4** Any change to the electoral cycle would be effective from May 2027. This means that Members elected at the local elections in May 2026 would serve a 1-year term.
- 4.5** Should Council approve the Council Size Proposal based on 49 Members then it will be necessary to convene a special meeting of full Council. It is recommended that a special meeting be held on the same day as the next ordinary meeting of full Council, 29 January 2025.
- 4.6** Should the Council resolve at a special meeting to move to whole-Council elections every four years from May 2027 then the Council would have the power to align the electoral cycles of the town and parish councils within the district area with its own whole-Council elections. Currently the town and parish councils are on different electoral cycles, with elections to some town and parish councils held in three years out of every four. This report seeks an authorisation to the Chief Executive to consult with town and parish councils on the option of aligning electoral cycles in the event that the District Council moves to whole-Council elections every four years.

5. ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS

- 5.1** Full Council could choose not to submit a proposal to the Commission. However, this would be more likely to result in an outcome that is not desirable for the Council or the district and is not recommended.
- 5.2** Political groups could choose to submit their own Council Size Proposals to the Commission, but a single proposal approved by full Council is likely to be more impactful.
- 5.3** Full Council may consider that the Council Size Proposal should be based on a different Council size. This is not recommended for the reasons set out in section 3. However, if Council did wish to propose a significantly different Council size from 49 then an alternative proposal would need to be brought to full Council at a later date before mid-February 2025.

- 5.4 Full Council may consider that retaining elections by thirds with a uniform pattern of 3-Member wards across the whole of the district area would be preferable to holding all out elections with a mix of 1, 2 and 3-Member wards. The Working Group has not recommended this option for the reasons set out in section 3. Again, if this is the will of Council then an alternative proposal would need to be brought to a future meeting of Council before mid-February 2025.
- 5.5 Council could decide to convene a special meeting to change the electoral cycle on an alternative date prior to 25 February 2025.

6. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

- 6.1 Maintaining a size of 49 Councillors would be cost-neutral to the Council in terms of the cost of allowance payments.
- 6.2 Moving from holding district, town and parish elections three years out of every four to once every four years would result in some savings in the cost of administering elections. The detail of any such savings would need to be worked through and factored into the Council's medium term financial plan from 2027 onwards if this proposal is agreed by full Council. However, the primary consideration for full Council is to ensure appropriate governance and electoral arrangements for the district into the future.

7. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

- 7.1 The size of the Council is a decision for the Commission. The Council is not required to submit a Council size proposal to the Commission but doing so is more likely to result in an outcome that will meet the needs of the Council and the district area.
- 7.2 The electoral cycle is a decision for the Council and any change to the current arrangement of elections by thirds requires a 2/3 majority vote at a specially convened meeting of full Council under Section 33 of the Local Government and Public Involvement in Health Act 2007.
- 7.3 There are statutory arrangements that must be met should the Council resolve to move to whole-Council elections, including a requirement to publicise the fact that a resolution has been passed and produce an explanatory document; and to notify the Commission of the resolution.

8. RISK ASSESSMENT

- 8.1 There is a risk that if the Council does not submit a Council Size Proposal to the Commission, then the outcome of the electoral review will be less likely to meet the needs of the Council and the wider district.
- 8.2 There is a risk that full Council approves the Draft Council Size Proposal, which requires a simple majority, but does not approve a consequential change to the electoral cycle, which requires a two thirds majority. This would serve to negate the Draft Council Size Proposal, which is based on whole-Council elections rather than elections by thirds.

9. EQUALITIES IMPACT

9.1 There are no equalities implications arising directly from this report.

10. CLIMATE AND ECOLOGICAL EMERGENCIES IMPLICATIONS

10.1 There are no climate and ecological emergencies implications arising directly from this report.

11. BACKGROUND PAPERS

11.1 None.

(END)

[Insert name of submission organisation/group/individual here]

Council Size Submission: Template

[Insert Local Authority Name Here]

Contents

How to Make a Submission	2
About You	2
Reason for Review (Request Reviews Only)	3
Local Authority Profile	9
Council Size	10
Other Issues	31

How to Make a Submission

It is recommended that submissions on future governance arrangements and council size follow the guidance provided and use the format below as a template. Submissions should be treated as an opportunity to focus on the future needs of the council and not simply describe the current arrangements. **Submissions should also demonstrate that alternative council sizes have been considered in drawing up the proposal and why you have discounted them.**

The template allows respondents to enter comments directly under each heading. It is not recommended that responses be unduly long; as a guide, it is anticipated that a 15 to 20-page document using this template should suffice. Individual section length may vary depending on the issues to be explained. Where internal documents are referred to URLs should be provided, rather than the document itself. It is also recommended that a table is included that highlights the key paragraphs for the Commission's attention.

'Good' submissions, i.e. those that are considered to be most robust and persuasive, combine the following *key success components* (as set out in the guidance that accompanies this template):

- Clarity on objectives
- A straightforward and evidence-led style
- An understanding of local place and communities
- An understanding of councillors' roles and responsibilities

About You

The respondent should use this space to provide the Commission with a little detail about who is making the submission, whether it is the full Council, Officers on behalf of the Council, a political party or group, a resident group, or an individual.

[This submission is made on behalf of West Oxfordshire District Council, following its approval by full Council on 27 November 2024.](#)

Electoral and boundary matters are a non-executive function which fall within the responsibilities of full Council. On 13 March 2024 full Council approved a change to the terms of reference of the Constitution Working Group to include responsibility for oversight of electoral matters including the District Boundary Review.

The Constitution Working Group held a series of meetings from July to October 2024 to consider advice from officers based on data and the local application of guidance on boundary reviews and to oversee and shape the development of this Council Size Proposal.

The Council is proposing an unchanged Council size of 49 Councillors. Based on the electoral register in December 2023, this provides an elector ratio of 1,876 in 2031, an increase of 65 electors (3.6%) per Councillor from 1,811 in 2024. However, since December 2023, c. 3,000 electors have been added to the electoral register as a consequence of the parliamentary general election held in July 2024. As such the electorate ratio in 2024 is closer to 1,878, rising to c. 1,919 in 2031 under this proposal.

While it is to be noted that the electorate ratio in 2024 is higher than the latest published electoral register suggests, the Council recognises that the elector ratio in the district remains relatively low compared to other district councils. The Council considers that this is appropriate in a largely rural and sparsely populated district (the second most sparsely populated district in the South East England region).

The Council wishes to retain a mix of 1, 2 and 3-Member wards to ensure effective representation across the district area, which includes large sparsely populated rural areas as well as market towns and rural service centres of varying sizes. As such the Council **has decided** to change its electoral cycle from elections by thirds three years out of every four to all out elections every fourth year starting in 2027. The Council considers that a uniform pattern of 3-Member wards would not provide for optimum representation as it would necessitate some extremely large rural wards, potentially covering over 20 parish areas, which would be excessively challenging for elected Members to represent effectively.

Reason for Review (Request Reviews Only)

Please explain the authority's reasons for requesting this electoral review; it is useful for the Commission to have context. *NB/ If the Commission has identified the authority for review under one of its published criteria, then you are not required to answer this question.*

West Oxfordshire District Council meets the Commission's criteria for electoral inequality with 12 of 27 wards outside a variance of 10%, with Witney West ward at +31%. The Commission has a duty set out in law to review every local authority "from time to time." The Commission has interpreted this to be around 12-14 years. West Oxfordshire was last reviewed in 2001, 23 years ago.

The review will seek to deliver electoral equality for electors in local elections.

The Context for your proposal

Your submission gives you the opportunity to examine how you wish to organise and run the council for the next 15 - 20 years. **The consideration of future governance arrangements and council size should be set in the wider local and national policy context.** The Commission expects you to challenge your current arrangements and determine the most appropriate arrangements going forward. In providing context for your submission below, please demonstrate that you have considered the following issues.

- When did your Council last change/reorganise its internal governance arrangements and what impact on effectiveness did that activity have?
- To what extent has transference of strategic and/or service functions impacted on the effectiveness of service delivery and the ability of the Council to focus on its remaining functions?
- Have any governance or capacity issues been raised by any Inspectorate or similar?
- What influence will local and national policy trends likely have on the Council as an institution?
- What impact on the Council's effectiveness will your council size proposal have?

When did your Council last change/reorganise its internal governance arrangements and what impact on effectiveness did that activity have?

The Council has operated the Leader and Cabinet model of governance since executive arrangements were first introduced following the Local Government Act 2000. The Executive takes most of the Council's strategic decisions and in doing so must act within the parameters of the budget and policy framework set by full Council. This model provides for openness and transparency, clear public accountability and effective democratic checks and balances on behalf of the local community, for example through the role and powers of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee.

The Council's Constitution sets out the Council's arrangements for taking executive and non-executive decisions. The Constitution is kept under regular review by the Constitution Working Group, which is appointed by full Council and has an annual work programme. Any changes to the Constitution that are considered by the Working Group to be necessary to reflect the law, good practice or the governance needs of the Council, are recommended to full Council for approval.

The Council undertook a review of its overview and scrutiny function in 2023 and decided to replace its three themed overview and scrutiny committees (Finance and Management, Economic and Social, and Climate and Environment) with a single new Overview and Scrutiny Committee. The rationale for this change, which was implemented in November 2023, was 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.

The new Overview and Scrutiny Committee meets in the week prior to each meeting of the Executive to consider items on the scrutiny work plan, which is set annually and may be adjusted by the Committee as priorities change during the year. This system enables non-members to subject selected Executive reports to pre-decision scrutiny and to make recommendations to the Executive in public, which the Executive is obliged to respond to in writing. The Committee is also empowered to commission reports directly from officers on matters of interest and to commission task and finish reviews whereby high priority issues affecting the district are subject to consideration over a series of focused meetings.

The impact of the change on the effectiveness of the overview and scrutiny function will be reviewed by the Constitution Working Group 12 months after the change was implemented. The early indications are that the change has delivered on its rationale and improved the effectiveness and standing of the function, resulting in more effective meetings and a significant increase in number of recommendations made to the Executive. Further improvements to the Overview and Scrutiny function will be identified through the review process.

The Council has also recently implemented changes to its Audit and Governance Committee. This followed a self-assessment exercise based on the CIPFA Toolkit aimed at identifying knowledge gaps and training needs. Consideration was also given to the size

and structure of the Committee. As a result of the self-assessment exercise the Council agreed to reduce the size of the Committee from 17 Members to 11 Members and to recruit two Independent Members (non-Councillors) to supplement and enhance the Committee's skills and knowledge. It was further agreed that Executive Members would no longer be able to sit on the Committee and that a programme of training would be delivered to Members. The impact of these changes will be reviewed after 12 months.

To what extent has transference of strategic and/or service functions impacted on the effectiveness of service delivery and the ability of the Council to focus on its remaining functions?

Local councils have had to increase efficiency and become increasingly financially self-sufficient as the Revenue Support Grant from government has reduced. The Council's [Productivity Plan 2024](#) articulates how the Council has transformed services, taken advantage of technology and data, and improved efficiency.

Funding is regularly made available to district councils by central government but the bid process and administration of fundings can be extremely resource intensive and timelines are frequently tight. The provision of UKSPF and REPF funding is welcomed but it is extremely resource intensive to devise schemes, call for interest, evaluate and award, put grant agreements in place and then monitor and report progress. This also requires agile and responsive executive decision making, which the Leader and Cabinet model can provide.

There have been some changes to the demands on local authorities against this financial backdrop. The Council played an active role in supporting communities in new and different ways during the Covid-19 pandemic. This included the redeployment of a large number of staff into community facing roles, with significant resources allocated to ensure vulnerable people had access to food and medicines. Once this network of support was established and being sustained through an active network of Voluntary agencies and Charities, the focus switched to business support. Members played an active role in identifying local resources and needs throughout this period.

Members of the public increasingly expect councils to utilise modern forms of technology and to be more responsive than ever before, for example on social media. The Council has been introducing new digital channels and improving those that already existed. This activity coincided with the Covid pandemic, where people accepted the use of alternative service access channels as a result of national restrictions. This resulted in a significant percentage of service requests coming through digital channels, which presented an opportunity for the Council to trial a reduction in the hours of opening for its customer contact centre. Making this change permanent can be expected to save the Council £125,000 per annum.

The new Biodiversity Net Gain requirements placed on authorities are having a notable impact on limited ecology resources and on the demands for large numbers of S.106 agreements which need to be administered through the legal team.

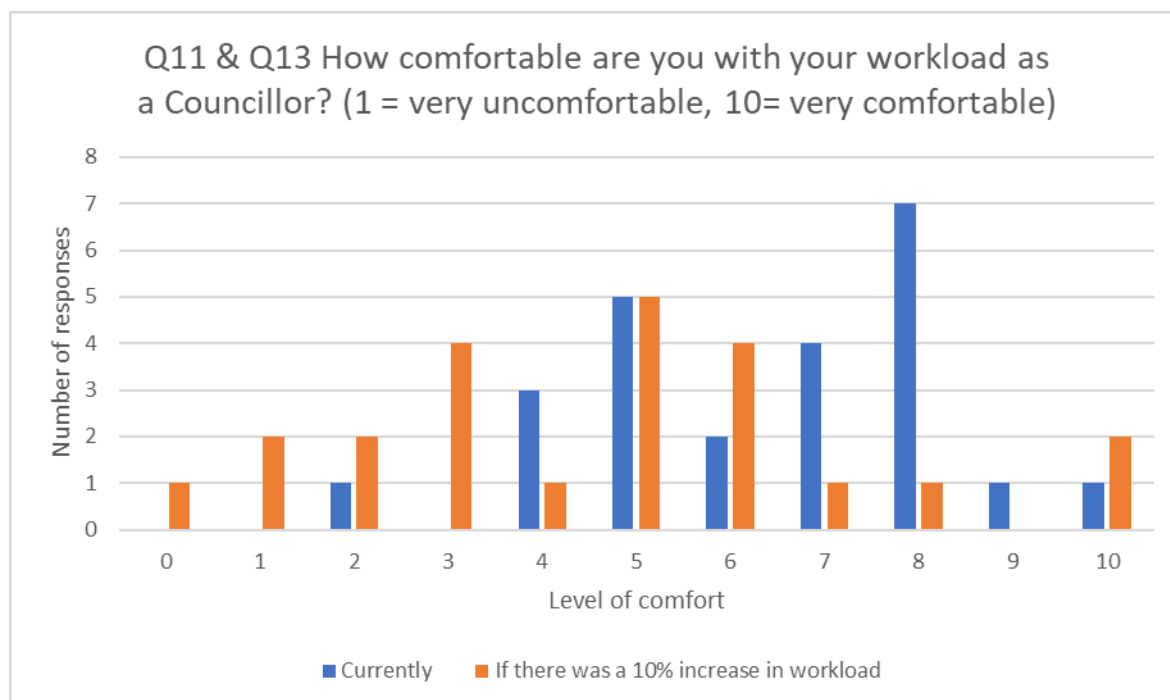
Have any governance or capacity issues been raised by any Inspectorate or similar?

The Council jointly owns the shared services Teckal company Publica Group. One of the Council's partners, Cotswold District Council, was subject to a peer challenge exercise in 2022. Their Corporate Peer Challenge Feedback Report discussed the Council's "capacity for improvement", noting that the vast majority of Council staff were employed by the Teckal company Publica and that it was clear from their discussions with staff at various levels of the organisations that capacity pressures were increasingly being felt and were impacting on both the delivery of council priorities and the wellbeing of staff. West Oxfordshire District Council, together with its partners, subsequently started the process of insourcing the majority of services from Publica back to the councils.

This repatriation of services is taking place in a phased approach with phase 1 being implemented on 1 November 2024, affecting the employment of 270 staff across the partnership; most of whom work exclusively for a single council. A second phase of the transition comprising services and staffing posts that are currently shared is due to be implemented in Spring 2025. This represents a major change programme for the Council which will require significant Member-oversight and the involvement of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee and the Executive.

In terms of councillor capacity, the survey results showed that the majority of Members (16 out of 26 survey respondents) believed that the workload of a councillor had increased since they were first elected (whenever that was). The primary drivers for this increase in workload were identified as being "ward member work including casework" (selected by 11 of the 16 Members), "Reading reports" (selected by 9 of the 15 Members) and "work associated with special responsibilities" (selected by 9 of the 15 Members). Only one member out of 24 felt that the workload had decreased (due to changes in their responsibilities and political campaigning).

The survey also asked Members to rank how comfortable they are with their workload from 1 (very uncomfortable) to 10 (very comfortable). The chart below presents Members' responses to this question and a follow up question about how comfortable they would be if the workload was to increase by 10%.



The chart shows that while most members are quite comfortable with their workload on average, this would change if the workload was to increase by 10% (which would equate to a small reduction in the size of the Council allowing for growth in the electorate). In this scenario, members provide a range of responses, but a small number would become very uncomfortable with their workload. In commenting on their workload Members have stated the following:

"Difficult to do while balancing family commitments and a full-time job."

"It is a huge workload, but there is a lot to do."

"It's a challenge having a full time job as well as being a Councillor so its sometimes difficult to attend all meetings especially during the day."

If the number of councillors was to reduce the workload of individual councillors would continue to increase significantly on average and there is a risk that certain councillor roles could not be performed effectively in future, which would be detrimental to the work of the Council and the communities it serves (including town and parish councils and the outside bodies the Council appoints to). This would place particular pressure on councillors who work full time or have caring responsibilities in addition to their duties as a councillor.

Members who represent large rural wards covering numerous of parish council areas will continue to face particular demands, including spending significant amounts of time travelling to and attending parish council meetings. These demands are likely to increase given that population growth has been centred around existing settlement meaning rural wards would likely need to increase in size on average even with 49 councillors. A decrease in the number of councillors would exacerbate these demands.

What influence will local and national policy trends likely have on the Council as an institution?

Whilst the current Labour government has only been in power for a small number of months, it is evident that the rapidly changing national policy landscape will have significant implications for the Council as an institution. The Council has long been committed to partnership working with the other Oxfordshire Authorities and a recent joint Expression of Interest to the Deputy Prime Minister's national devolution offer restates this commitment. The Council looks forward to working with government and its neighbours to establish the most impactful geographies and agree clear and accountable governance arrangements so that it can play it's part in driving forward the government's ambition for sustained economic growth. Work is under way to review the Future Oxfordshire Partnership, a joint committee of the six councils of Oxfordshire together with key strategic partners to ensure that it is ready for coming changes, and as an institution the Council is mindful to ensure that its internal make up enables it to fulfil its role within this to maximum effect.

Alongside the Council's role within the Future Oxfordshire Partnership, it must be in a position to make an equally impactful contribution to a range of other partnerships which will deliver on national policy. These will include, but are not limited to, the Oxford-Cambridge Pan Regional Partnership and the Cotswolds National Landscape. Central to the Council's

success in this will be the ability to engage with other organisations around the Council and this will require a strong cohort of Councillors to represent the local electorate.

The Council is also mindful of the specific impact of the recent proposed changes to the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) on its function as the Local Planning Authority for West Oxfordshire, specifically the implications of the newly proposed standard method for estimating the minimum number of new homes required. This sees a 62% increase in the number of new homes required, rising from 549 to 889 per annum. The requirement for a review of the Oxford green belt within the Council's geography and buffer of 5% to the 5-year housing land supply is anticipated to generate an increase in speculative applications and planning by appeal. It is likely that the NPPF changes will also, therefore, have an impact on the timetable for the West Oxfordshire Local Plan 2041. The acceleration of housing delivery will impact on the population size of West Oxfordshire and present a range of challenges and opportunities for the Council as an institution to contribute to the national policy ambition of sustained economic growth, amongst others, as well as delivering on its own vision for the District:

“Shaping West Oxfordshire as a District which offers a fulfilling and meaningful quality of life for our residents with opportunities for all to flourish. A thriving and prosperous place for entrepreneurs and businesses, where local people and visitors can enjoy the beauty and heritage of our landscape, built, farmed and natural environment.”

What impact on the Council's effectiveness will your council size proposal have?

The proposal to maintain the size of the Council at 49 councillors representing a mix of 1, 2 and 3-Member wards will have a positive impact on the effectiveness of the Council:

- There will be an opportunity to alter ward boundaries where this is considered appropriate to deal with electoral variances or provide for more effective representation.
- There will be an opportunity to provide for effective governance in areas where there will be significant housing developments in and around the main settlements.
- Members will be likely to continue to have sufficient capacity to deal with increasingly complex casework on behalf of local residents and businesses, including the most vulnerable members of the community.
- Members will be likely to continue to have sufficient capacity to attend meetings of outside bodies (where applicable), in addition to their duties as members of Full Council, the Executive, committees, sub-committees and working groups.
- Non-executive members will be likely to continue to have sufficient capacity to participate in an active scrutiny function (including task and finish groups).
- Councillor workloads are unlikely to be off-putting to prospective councillors, particularly those in employment or with caring responsibilities (19 of 26 survey respondents described their employment status as being employed, either full time or part time; 10 of 26 had caring responsibilities).
- Members representing rural wards will be likely to serve a manageable number of communities within a reasonable travelling distance.
- Members will be likely to continue to have sufficient capacity to attend meetings of town and parish councils within their wards.
- All communities within the district will be likely to be effectively represented by their local ward member.

- All members will continue to have reasonable and manageable volumes of planning applications within their ward to engage with.

Local Authority Profile

Please provide a short description of the authority and its setting, in particular the local geography, demographics and community characteristics. This should set the scene for the Commission and give it a greater understanding of any current issues. The description should cover all of the following:

- Brief outline of area - are there any notable geographic constraints for example that may affect the review?
- Rural or urban - what are the characteristics of the authority?
- Demographic pressures - such as distinctive age profiles, migrant or transient populations, is there any large growth anticipated?
- Community characteristics – is there presence of “hidden” or otherwise complex deprivation?
- Are there any other constraints, challenges, issues or changes ahead?

Further to providing a description, the Commission will be looking for a submission that demonstrates an understanding of place and communities by putting forth arguments on council size based upon local evidence and insight. For example, how does local geography, demographics and community characteristics impact on councillor casework, workload and community engagement?

West Oxfordshire is the second most sparsely populated District in the South East of England. A predominantly rural area with a population density of 1.6 people per hectare, its 116,300 (2023) residents live in one of three towns, Witney (28,977), Carterton (16,600) and Chipping Norton (6,918), six rural service centres or one of the approximately 120 separate villages or hamlets scattered across the district. Communities are represented by 48 parish councils, 6 town councils and 27 parish meetings and 60% of the parishes contain fewer than 500 residents.

There are 48,000 households in total (an increase of 4,800 since the 2011 Census), the spatial distribution of these see the population predominantly concentrated along the A40 corridor and within parishes that have relative proximity to Oxford, leaving the rest of the district relatively sparsely occupied. An exception to this is Chipping Norton, the third main town, which whilst some 20 miles from Oxford is connected to the city by a direct bus service along the A44.

West Oxfordshire’s population is lower than other Oxfordshire authorities reflecting the more rural character of the district. The rurality of the district presents unique challenges. Whilst deprivation is lower than average, the dispersed nature of the district means that despite a general level of affluence, some areas are classed as being within the most deprived in the country in terms of access to housing and services. This is of particular relevance for those living in relative poverty and in the district the majority claiming pension credit live in rural areas.

Notable demographic changes between the 2011-21 Census’s include:

- Population growth was higher in West Oxfordshire than the South East at 9% and 7.5% respectively. Nationally the population increased by 6.6%;
- The average median age has increased from 42 to 44;

- The number of people aged 50-64 rose by 3,700 (an increase of 18.3%) while those between 35-49 fell by just over 2000 (a decrease of 8.7%). The over 65 age group increased most at 28.2% in contrast to an increase in the under 15's of 5.6%
- In 2021, 95.2% of people identified their ethnic group within the 'white' category; (down from 96.8 in 2011), 1.9% identified within the 'Mixed or Multiple' category (up from 1.2% in 2011) and 0.6% identified within the 'other' category ('Arab' or 'Any other ethnic group'), an increase from 0.2% in 2011.

Housing affordability is a particular challenge for the district with house prices well above the national average, a reflection of its location in a relatively prosperous County. The 2023 housing affordability ratio at 10.6 times average earnings indicates that local house prices in relation to income are considerably higher than the England average of 8.3, although lower than neighbouring Oxford at 12.1. This means that even the cheapest properties in West Oxfordshire are over 10 times the lowest incomes, and that there is pressure on the West Oxfordshire housing market from people working in Oxford.

In contrast to national and regional trends, the period 2011-21 saw an increase in the percentage of households in the social and private rented sector, possibly a consequence of high house prices. As of June 2024 there are 2110 households on the Council's waiting list for affordable housing.

There is therefore an ongoing and urgent need for the district to enable delivery of more homes. This is a challenge in a rural District of landscape sensitivity (notably, approximately one third of the district sits within the Cotswold National Landscape) where there are relatively limited available opportunities for brownfield redevelopment, and where access to services and facilities are impeded by that rurality. Whilst the Council continues to secure funding through development for new infrastructure, there remains a significant funding gap to deliver necessary infrastructure improvements in the district. This was raised as a particular concern by Town and Parish Councils and Parish Meetings, and the wider resident population, in a recent Local Plan consultation where responses emphasised that failure to deliver adequate supporting infrastructure for recent and future housing is likely to have a detrimental impact on quality of life of those living in the District. Transport accessibility is a particular concern. Whilst the Cotswold Line runs across the district it is not accessed from the three main towns, stopping instead at two rural service centres (Long Hanborough and Charlbury) and the village of Kingham in the north of the district.

Council Size

The Commission believes that councillors have three broad aspects to their role.

These are categorised as: **Strategic Leadership, Accountability (Scrutiny, Regulatory and Partnerships), and Community Leadership**. Submissions should address each of these in turn and provide supporting evidence. Prompts in the boxes below should help shape responses.

Strategic Leadership

Respondents should provide the Commission with details as to how elected members will provide strategic leadership for the authority. Responses should also indicate how many members will be required for this role and why this is justified. **Responses should demonstrate that alternative council sizes have been explored.**

Topic	
--------------	--

Governance Model	<i>Key lines of explanation</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ <i>What governance model will your authority operate? e.g. Committee System, Executive or other?</i> ➤ <i>The Cabinet model, for example, usually requires 6 to 10 members. How many members will you require?</i> ➤ <i>If the authority runs a Committee system, we want to understand why the number and size of the committees you propose represents the most appropriate for the authority.</i> ➤ <i>By what process does the council aim to formulate strategic and operational policies? How will members in executive, executive support and/or scrutiny positions be involved? What particular demands will this make of them?</i> ➤ <i>Whichever governance model you currently operate, a simple assertion that you want to keep the current structure does not in itself, provide an explanation of why that structure best meets the needs of the council and your communities.</i>
	Analysis	<p><u>Leader and Cabinet model</u> The Council operates the Leader and Cabinet model. The Leader of the Council is elected for a 4-year term following all out elections (most recently in May 2022). The Leader appoints Executive Members and allocates portfolio responsibilities to them.</p> <p>Since May 2022 when the current 3-party Alliance Administration took control of the Council, the Leader has appointed an Executive of 9 Members, including the Leader and Deputy Leader. Prior to May 2022 when the Council was controlled by a single party the Executive comprised 7 Members. The size of the Executive is a matter for the Leader, who may appoint 3-10 Members to the Executive as they deem appropriate.</p> <p>The Executive takes strategic decisions collectively and provides political leadership and oversight of the Council as a whole, including at weekly informal Cabinet meetings. Individual Executive Members also have certain decision-making responsibilities and provide political leadership and public accountability for the specific services and activities within the remit of their portfolio. Executive Members, both individually and collectively, play a key role in overseeing the development of strategic policies and strategy documents. Executive Members also act as the Accountable Member for reports within their portfolio</p>

	<p>responsibilities, which includes presenting reports at meetings of the Executive, Council and the Overview and Scrutiny Committee. Executive Members hold senior officers to account for the implementation of decisions and the delivery of the Council’s agreed policies and strategies.</p> <p>In 2023/24 the Executive held 10 meetings lasting a total duration of 11.4 hours. The meeting packs totalled 2314 pages. A number of Executive meetings were held "on tour" in different locations across the district, providing an opportunity for residents to engage with Executive Members.</p> <p><u>Committee structure</u></p> <p>The Council’s committee structure is defined in the Constitution. In total in 2024/25 there are 75 seats on Committees, 35 seats on Sub-Committees and 19 seats on working groups. The Council also appoints Members to a couple of external committees; the Future Oxfordshire Partnership Scrutiny Panel (3 seats) and the Oxfordshire Joint Health Overview and Scrutiny Committee (1 seat). That makes a total of 133 seats which are appointed annually by full Council, an average of 2.7 seats on non-Executive bodies per Member. This is in addition to being a member of full Council and holding any Executive responsibilities.</p> <p>While this remains a large number of seats it represents a reduction on previous years when the Council appointed to three 15-Member overview and scrutiny committees (since replaced by a single 24-seat committee), as well as a larger Audit and Governance Committee (now 11 seats but previously 17 seats).</p> <p><u>Overview and Scrutiny Committee</u></p> <p>The Council has a 24-Member Overview and Scrutiny Committee which meets 10-12 times per year. The Committee has a key role in scrutinising executive decisions and holding the Executive to account. It is also empowered to examine any issues that affect the district or its people and to make recommendations to Cabinet or Council. The role of the Committee and recent improvements to the function are discussed elsewhere in this proposal.</p> <p><u>Regulatory and administrative committees</u></p>
--	--

	<p>The Council operates the following regulatory and administrative committees and sub-committees which are detailed elsewhere in this proposal and have delegated responsibility for certain non-executive functions:</p> <p>Development Control Committee: 25 Members</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lowlands Area Planning Sub-Committee: 15 Members • Uplands Area Planning Sub-Committee: 10 Members <p>Licensing Committee: 11 Members</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Licensing Sub-Committee (Licensing Act 2003 Matters): 3 Members • Licensing Sub-Committee (Taxis, Private Hire and Street Trading Consent Matters): 5 Members <p>Audit and Governance Committee: 11 Members</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Standards Sub-Committee: 5 Members <p>Performance and Appointments Committee: 7 Members</p> <p><u>Working Groups</u></p> <p>The Council has appointed two working groups which have significant workloads.</p> <p>The Constitution Working Group has 9 Members and makes recommendations to full Council about changes to the Council’s Constitution. It also has responsibility for overseeing electoral matters such as the electoral review of the district and the review of polling districts and polling places. The Working Group met 5 times in 2023/24 and 4 times in the first half of 2024/25.</p> <p>The Local Plan Working Group comprises 10 Members and meets to discuss the emerging Local Plan as it takes shape. This includes the consideration of technical supporting evidence as it is produced and the development of plan content and policies. This working group also met 5 times in 2023/24 and 4 times in the first half of 2024/25.</p> <p><u>Conclusion</u></p> <p>Following a change of administration in 2022 and the appointment of the current Director of Governance in 2023 the Council has been reviewing and making improvements to its governance arrangements, in particular its non-executive functions such as the Audit</p>
--	--

		<p>and Governance Committee and the Overview and Scrutiny Committee.</p> <p>It is expected that the Council will continue to operate the Leader and Executive governance model while further strengthening and improving the effectiveness of its non-executive functions. This may include, for example, reducing the size of its Overview and Scrutiny Committee, which is very large at 24 Members. However, the Council also wishes to enhance the role of Scrutiny "Task and Finish Groups", in addition to Member working groups, and will wish to retain sufficient non-executive Member-capacity to enable this.</p> <p>At present the size of the Executive is 9 Members, as it has been for the last two years, and it is not expected that this will increase or decrease in size in the short term. An Executive of 9 Members is considered appropriate for a Council with 49 Members. However, the size of the Executive is entirely a matter for the Leader of the Council and could range from 3-10 Members.</p> <p>Decreasing the number of councillors would add to the average workload of Members which is undesirable and may constrain the ability of the Council to operate effectively and further strengthen its non-executive functions. Increasing the number of councillors would dilute the influence of individual Members and is not recommended.</p> <p>Retaining the existing Council size of 49 councillors is considered appropriate for ensuring that Member roles can be distributed effectively and help to optimise the functioning of the Council's governance arrangements by maintaining strong executive and non-executive functions.</p>
Portfolios	<i>Key lines of explanation</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ <i>How many portfolios will there be?</i> ➤ <i>What will the role of a portfolio holder be?</i> ➤ <i>Will this be a full-time position?</i> ➤ <i>Will decisions be delegated to portfolio holders? Or will the executive/mayor take decisions?</i>
	Analysis	<p>There are currently nine Executive portfolios which are allocated by the Leader and cover the Council Plan priorities agreed by Council, strategic responsibilities and statutory services. The Executive portfolios have remained broadly stable since the change of administration in May 2022.</p>

		<p>The current portfolios are:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Leader of the Council (includes strategic partnerships and Council Plan) • Deputy Leader and Economic Development • Finance (includes asset management) • Planning • Stronger, Healthy Communities • Housing and Social Care • Environment • Climate Action and Nature Recovery • Leisure and Major Projects <p>The services that fall within each portfolio are listed on the Council's website and will change from time to time, with changes normally announced at an Annual Council meeting.</p> <p>Executive Members agree the strategic direction and provide political oversight of the services and Council activities within their portfolio remits. They act as the Accountable Member for reports that come forward for decision within their areas of responsibility and provide public accountability for performance and decisions. Some Executive Members take delegated decisions as required under the Constitution.</p> <p>Executive Members report that they typically spend "More than 10 hours per week" on their special responsibility. The survey results also suggest that the workload associated with the role of Executive Member may have increased in recent years, with 9 out of 16 members who believe that Member workloads have increased citing work associated with special responsibilities as driving an overall increase in workloads. In commenting on their workload as a councillor a Member has said:</p> <p><i>"It was reasonable as a Ward Councillor, but I am still coming to terms with the workload on the Executive"</i></p> <p><u>Conclusion</u> The role of an Executive Member is not considered to be a full-time position, but it does demand considerable time given that the role is carried out in addition to the normal duties of a councillor, such as case work, representing communities on the Council and representing the Council in communities. Some Executive Members have outside body appointments linked to their portfolio responsibilities. For example, the Executive Member for Stronger, Healthy</p>
--	--	--

		<p>Communities will serve on the Oxfordshire Health and Wellbeing Board and the Oxfordshire Health Improvement Board. Some Executive Members also serve on the Future Oxfordshire Partnership (in the case of the Leader) and its Advisory Sub-Groups for Infrastructure, Planning, Housing and Environment.</p> <p>The number of Executive portfolios has remained unchanged under the current leadership. The Leader may make adjustments to the portfolios as they see fit but no significant changes are expected that would affect the size of the Executive or the size of the Council in the short term to medium term.</p>
<p>Delegated Responsibilities</p>	<p><i>Key lines of explanation</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ <i>What responsibilities will be delegated to officers or committees?</i> ➤ <i>How many councillors will be involved in taking major decisions?</i>
	<p>Analysis</p>	<p>The Council's Constitution (Parts 3 and 4) contains schemes of delegation for executive and non-executive functions, setting out which decisions are matters for full Council or the Executive, and which functions are delegated to committees, individual Executive Members and officers.</p> <p>Responsibility for setting the Council's "budget and policy framework" rests with full Council. The budget and policy framework sets the parameters within which the Council's decision makers (whether decision making bodies or individuals) must operate, providing strategic direction without being overly restrictive. The budget and policy framework comprises the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Council Plan • Community Safety Plan • Development Plan (including the Local Plan) • Pay Policy • Licensing Policy Statements • Budget (including the medium term financial strategy, capital programme, Council Tax and capital, treasury management and investment strategies). <p>If the Executive wished to take a decision that was contrary to the policy framework or the budget set by full Council, that decision could only be taken by full Council. The only exception is where the decision was a matter of urgency and it was impracticable to convene a meeting of full Council, in which case the decision would be reported to full Council</p>

	<p>retrospectively with an explanation of the decision and the urgency.</p> <p>Full Council sets the budget and policy framework and takes decisions in relation to certain non-executive functions that are not delegated to committees, such as electoral matters, the Members’ Allowances Scheme, the Members’ Code of Conduct, and the Council’s Constitution.</p> <p>Executive functions are the responsibility of the Leader who has in summary delegated as follows:</p> <p>The Executive is collectively responsible for:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Proposing plans and strategies, including the budget and policy framework to full Council. • Representing the Council locally, nationally and internationally. • Taking certain executive decisions including all key decisions (unless the Executive chooses to delegate these). • Agreeing land and property acquisitions and disposals up to set financial thresholds or recommending them to full Council above the set financial thresholds. <p>Individual Executive Members are responsible for certain decisions set out in Part 3D of the Constitution. For example, the Executive Member for Finance will decide on granting certain rate reliefs and debt write-offs and the Executive Member for Stronger, Healthy Communities will decide on certain grant awards.</p> <p>Senior officers are responsible for the operational management, control and supervision of executive functions, as well as any decisions delegated to them by the Executive.</p> <p>Non-executive decisions, such as the determination of planning and licensing applications, are delegated to committees, sub-committees and officers. Generally, the larger and/or more contentious decisions (e.g. where there are objections or proposals are contrary to adopted policies) are taken by Members at committee and sub-committee meetings and smaller, routine decisions are taken by officers.</p> <p><u>Conclusion</u></p>
--	---

		The Council’s decision-making arrangements are well established and functioning effectively. The Council’s Constitution sets out how the Council operates, how decisions are taken and the procedures which are followed to ensure that decision-making is efficient, transparent and accountable to local people. The Council has a cross-party Constitution Working Group, which has an annual work plan, meets regularly and makes recommendations to Council regarding amendments to the Constitution, keeping it up to date with changes to legislation, governance practice and the needs of the Council. The Council’s delegated arrangements are kept under regular review but no changes to delegation thresholds are expected that would impact the size of the Council.
--	--	--

Accountability

Give the Commission details as to how the authority and its decision makers and partners will be held to account. The Commission is interested in both the internal and external dimensions of this role. **Responses should demonstrate that alternative council sizes have been explored.**

Topic	
Internal Scrutiny	The scrutiny function of authorities has changed considerably. Some use theme or task-and-finish groups, for example, and others have a committee system. Scrutiny arrangements may also be affected by the officer support available.
<i>Key lines of explanation</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ <i>How will decision makers be held to account?</i> ➤ <i>How many committees will be required? And what will their functions be?</i> ➤ <i>How many task and finish groups will there be? And what will their functions be? What time commitment will be involved for members? And how often will meetings take place?</i> ➤ <i>How many members will be required to fulfil these positions?</i> ➤ <i>Explain why you have increased, decreased, or not changed the number of scrutiny committees in the authority.</i> ➤ <i>Explain the reasoning behind the number of members per committee in terms of adding value.</i>
Analysis	The Council has a 24-Member Overview and Scrutiny Committee which meets 10-12 times per year and is chaired by an opposition Member. The Overview and Scrutiny function has been on an improvement journey over the last year or so which will continue. Three committees were replaced by a single committee in November 2023 and the work of Overview and Scrutiny has been refocused on holding the Executive to

account and contributing to policy development on behalf of local communities.

Meetings of the new Overview and Scrutiny Committee are scheduled to take place in the week prior to each meeting of the Executive. This enables effective pre-decision scrutiny of selected executive decisions and provides the Committee with the opportunity to hold Executive Members and senior officers to account in public and make any recommendations to the Executive in a timely and transparent fashion. This system helps to ensure that non-executive members can influence decisions on behalf of the local community and that any Member concerns can be raised and issues explained, clarified or reconsidered in advance of decisions being taken. There is also the opportunity for other elected Members or public speakers to make representations in public to the Overview and Scrutiny Committee and to raise issues related to forthcoming Executive decisions.

In addition to focusing on Executive reports, the Committee is empowered to examine any issues that affect the district or its people. Recent examples include focuses on mobile network coverage within the district, waste services, and the Council's development management and planning enforcement functions.

The Overview and Scrutiny Committee may establish task and finish groups to focus in on key areas of policy development. An example is the Leisure and Wellbeing Strategy Task and Finish Group which has held regular meetings in 2024 and undertaken sight visits to the Council's main leisure facilities.

Members of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee are expected to read papers in advance and to attend meetings and to contribute to discussions or ask questions.

In 2023/24 Overview and Scrutiny held 13 meetings, including 7 meetings of the new single Overview and Scrutiny Committee from November 2023. Since that date the 10 meetings of the new Committee (including the first quarter of 2024/25) lasted a total duration of 20.2 hours (just over 2 hours per meeting on average) and the agenda packs totalled 1162 pages (just over 110 pages per meeting on average).

Since the start of 2023/24 up to end September 2024, Overview and Scrutiny made 13 recommendations to the Executive, 11 of which were agreed and 2 were not agreed by the Executive.

A review of the effectiveness of the Council's Overview and Scrutiny function is due to take place in autumn 2024, one

	<p>year on from the implementation of the new committee structure. From the feedback received from Committee Members and others prior to the review commencing it is expected that the Council will wish to retain a single Overview and Scrutiny Committee as the preferred model going forwards but will wish to revisit the size of the Committee, which is very large at 24 Members (nearly half of all Members and more than half of all non-executive Members). While the large Committee enables many non-executive Members to oversee the work of the Executive and make contributions, it is considered that a smaller Committee size would have benefits in terms of the efficiency and focus of meetings. There is also a willingness to refer more issues for consideration by smaller task and finish groups as opposed to being dealt with collectively by the Committee. The changes, if implemented, would further improve the function and ensure better quality outcomes.</p> <p><u>Conclusion</u></p> <p>The Council currently operates a single, very large Overview and Scrutiny Committee which is considered to have broadly fulfilled its purpose and to be operating more effectively than the three committees it replaced.</p> <p>A review of the effectiveness of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee may result in a smaller committee size going forwards but this will likely be accompanied by an increased role for task and finish groups. In any event, the recently enhanced role of the Overview and Scrutiny function in the governance and decision-making arrangements of the Council will require significant non-Executive Member capacity going forwards.</p> <p>Task and finish groups can be expected to play a more prominent role in contributing to policy development going forwards and the Council has invested in its Democratic Services team to support this. The frequency and length of task and finish group meetings will depend on the nature of the matter but a review will typically take place over 3-6 meetings.</p> <p>An increased Council size is not considered necessary for supporting an improved Overview and Scrutiny function but a reduced Council size may be detrimental to this aim.</p>
<p>Statutory Function</p>	<p>This includes planning, licencing and any other regulatory responsibilities. Consider under each of the headings the extent to which decisions will be delegated to officers. How many members will be required to fulfil the statutory requirements of the council?</p>

Planning	<i>Key lines of explanation</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ <i>What proportion of planning applications will be determined by members?</i> ➤ <i>Has this changed in the last few years? And are further changes anticipated?</i> ➤ <i>Will there be area planning committees? Or a single council-wide committee?</i> ➤ <i>Will executive members serve on the planning committees?</i> ➤ <i>What will be the time commitment to the planning committee for members?</i>
	Analysis	<p>The Council typically receives a total of 3000-4000 planning applications per year and approximately 93% of applications that are determined are done so by officers under delegated authority, with the remaining 7% being determined by Members.</p> <p>The wards with the highest and lowest numbers of planning applications in 2023/24 are listed below. The wards with the highest numbers of planning applications tend to be among the larger rural wards whereas the wards with the fewest planning applications tend to be located in the main settlements. This pattern is consistent with previous years.</p> <p><u>Highest</u> Kingham, Rollright and Enstone (2 Member ward) - 299 Stonesfield and Tackley (2 Members) - 210 Standlake, Aston and Stanton Harcourt (2 Members) - 207 Charlbury and Finstock (2 Members) - 180 Eynsham and Cassington (3 Members) - 187</p> <p><u>Lowest</u> Carterton North East (2 Members) - 29 Carterton South (2 Members) - 38 Carterton North West (2 Members) - 59 Witney East (3 Members) - 67 Milton Under Wychwood (1 Member) - 69</p> <p>The Council has a single 24-Member Development Control Committee which has two area sub-committees; the Lowlands Area Planning Sub-Committee and the Uplands Area Planning Sub-Committee. All Members of the Development Control Committee are appointed to a sub-committee based on the ward area they represent, and the Chair of the Development Control Committee sits on both sub-committees.</p> <p>The Development Control Committee is responsible for matters including the consideration of planning applications that are of strategic significance to the district. The Committee meets after the Annual Council meeting to appoint sub-committees and thereafter meets infrequently when there is business to consider. The Committee held one such meeting</p>

in 2023/24, which lasted 2.25 hours, having held two such meetings in 2022/23 (which lasted 2.5 and 3 hours).

The two area sub-committees meet monthly to determine planning applications that are neither of strategic significance to the district, nor delegated to officers. The sub-committees also have oversight of decisions taken by officers under delegated authority, the outcome of appeal decisions and regular updates on planning enforcement activities.

Members are expected to read papers in advance, attend site visits and attend meetings to hear presentations and representations, ask questions and determine applications.

In 2023/24 the Uplands Sub-Committee held 11 meetings lasting on average 1.6 hours and agenda packs totalled 1223 pages (111 pages on average).

The Lowlands Sub-Committee held 13 meetings lasting on average 1.75 hours and agenda packs totalled 1245 pages (96 pages on average).

All Members of the Development Control Committee (and by extension, the area planning sub-committees) are required to undertake planning training prior to determining planning applications. Members are also offered training and briefings to enhance their wider knowledge of planning functions. Recent examples include training on planning enforcement, sports lighting and modern design. In September 2024 the Council adopted a Members' Planning Code of Good Practice as part of its Constitution.

In commenting on their workload as a councillor, one Member stated that:

"Weeks vary in time spent on Council work: e.g. before planning meetings involves a lot of reading and site visits."

All Members of Council will engage in the planning system in some form, including by:

- Attending meetings of the Development Control Committee as a substitute Member.
- Attending meetings as a Ward Member.
- Reviewing applications within their Ward and requesting that applications be referred to the Committee/Sub-Committee with planning reasons within 28 days of the date of registration (recently increased from 21 days).

Conclusion

		<p>Planning can be a significant challenge in an area with many parts of the district subject to constraints (much of the Uplands area is located within the Cotswolds National Landscape).</p> <p>The district has to provide for part of Oxford City's unmet housing need as well as catering for its own housing needs and there are significant recent and planned major developments along the A40 corridor including Salt Cross Garden Village, as well as urban extensions to Witney.</p> <p>The Council has suitable arrangements in place for discharging its planning responsibilities. There is a large pool of Members who have received training and can determine planning applications.</p> <p>Changes to the timescale within which Members may request that applications be referred to the Committee/Sub-Committee for determination could result in an increase in the number of applications referred to the Committee but that remains to be seen.</p> <p>The Labour government elected on 4 July 2024 has announced plans to accelerate house building to provide more homes and support economic growth, which could have an impact on the number of major applications that come forward for determination in the coming years, which would directly impact the workload of the Committee and its sub-committees.</p> <p>While the Council itself has no immediate plans that would warrant a review of the size or responsibilities of Development Control Committee and its sub-committees, the government has announced plans to legislate for the introduction of a national scheme of delegation. The Council will keep the workload of the Committee and sub-committees under review over the coming period.</p> <p>In this context, a reduction in the size of the Council would not be recommended and instead the Council would prefer to maintain the current number of 49 councillors.</p>
Licensing	<i>Key lines of explanation</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ <i>How many licencing panels will the council have in the average year?</i> ➤ <i>And what will be the time commitment for members?</i> ➤ <i>Will there be standing licencing panels, or will they be ad-hoc?</i> ➤ <i>Will there be core members and regular attendees, or will different members serve on them?</i>
	Analysis	<p>The Council has an 11-Member Licensing Committee which is principally responsible for dealing with licensing policies. Licensing applications are determined by the relevant sub-</p>

		<p>committee depending on which legislation the application is governed by:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Miscellaneous Licensing Sub-Committee (5 Members appointed annually) - for all functions relating to licensing and registration including taxi, gaming and food licensing except functions under the Licensing Act 2003 Licensing Panel (3 Members drawn from the Licensing Committee on a rota basis) - for all the functions of the Council under the Licensing Act 2003 and the Gambling Act 2005 in relation to the holding of hearings and the determination of applications which are not delegated to the Chief Executive <p>Members are required to undertake licensing training prior to sitting on a sub-committee to determine a licensing application.</p> <p>The Licensing Committee held two short meetings in 2023/24. One meeting was held immediately after Annual Council to elect a chair and appoint sub-committees and a further meeting was held to consider an extension to the pavement licencing regime.</p> <p>There was no business for the Miscellaneous Licensing Sub-Committee in 2023/24. The Licensing Panel held two meetings to determine licensing applications, with both meetings lasting between one and two hours and the packs averaged 74 pages.</p> <p><u>Conclusion</u> The Council has suitable arrangements in place for discharging licensing functions. The demands of the licensing sub-committee functions on Member workloads and capacity are relatively minor compared to the Executive, Overview and Scrutiny Committee and Development Control. The split of responsibilities between the main committee and the sub-committees works well and there is an adequate pool of Members who can be called on to determine licensing applications. There are no plans to make changes to the the licensing functions that would impact on Member workloads or the size of the Council.</p>
<p>Other Regulatory Bodies</p>	<p>Key lines of explanation</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ What will they be, and how many members will they require? ➤ Explain the number and membership of your Regulatory Committees with respect to greater delegation to officers.
	<p>Analysis</p>	<p>Council appoints the following other regulatory or administrative committees and sub-committees.</p>

Performance and Appointments Committee

This Committee has 5 Members including at least one Executive Member and meets ad hoc as required to consider the appointment and terms and conditions of the Council's Statutory Officers and any grievance or disciplinary matter in relation to those officers. The Committee is also responsible for conducting the appraisal of the Chief Executive and has delegated responsibilities relating to the Council's suite of employment policies.

The Committee held 4 meetings during 2023/24. Two of these related to the recruitment and selection of a new Director of Finance, one was for the Chief Executive's annual appraisal and the fourth meeting was to consider proposed changes to the Council's employment policies. The meetings totalled just over 4 hours in duration.

Audit and Governance Committee

This Committee has 11 Members plus 2 Independent Members and meets 5 times per year to monitor the adequacy and effectiveness of the Council's governance, risk and control arrangements, consider reports from the Council's internal and external auditors and to promote and maintain high ethical standards by Members.

As mentioned above, the Committee recently undertook a self-assessment exercise based on the CIPFA Toolkit. As a consequence of this exercise the following changes were implemented:

- Size reduced from 17 to 11 Members.
- Addition of two non-voting co-opted Independent Members.
- No Executive Members on the Committee.
- A programme of Member training.

Members of the Committee are expected to read papers in advance and to attend Committee meetings and undertake any associated training.

In 2023/24 the 5 meetings totalled 6 hours in duration and agenda packs ran to 999 pages (200 pages per meeting on average).

Standards Sub-Committee

The Audit and Governance Committee appoints a 5-Member Standards Sub-Committee. The Sub-Committee meets on an ad hoc basis to determine allegations that a Member of the district council or a town or parish council within the district area, has breached their Council's Code of Conduct. Meetings are also attended by one of the Council's Independent

		<p>Persons whose views must be considered as part of the hearing.</p> <p>The Standards Sub-Committee averages one meeting per year. In 2023/24 there was one meeting which lasted 7 hours and the agenda pack contained 182 pages.</p> <p>Following that hearing, which was well-conducted, the Council has considered making changes to its complaint handling arrangements and its Standards Sub-Committee procedure rules, informed in part by external legal advice about the role of witnesses and the treatment of hearsay evidence at a hearing.</p> <p><u>Conclusion</u> The Council's regulatory committees are functioning effectively, and recent improvements have been positive. No further changes are currently proposed to the size of the Audit and Governance Committee, the Standards Sub-Committee or the Performance and Appointments Committee.</p> <p>The new government elected on 4 July 2024 may decide to make changes to the standards regime at a national level (for example the introduction of more meaningful sanctions). This would raise the profile of the complaints process and could be expected to result in more complaints being submitted and/or reaching the hearing stage. However, the Council has robust arrangements in place and sufficient Member-capacity to mitigate any such pressure and maintaining the current number of 49 Councillors is considered to be appropriate.</p>
External Partnerships	<p>Service delivery has changed for councils over time, and many authorities now have a range of delivery partners to work with and hold to account.</p>	
<i>Key lines of explanation</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ <i>Will council members serve on decision-making partnerships, sub-regional, regional or national bodies? In doing so, are they able to take decisions/make commitments on behalf of the council?</i> ➤ <i>How many councillors will be involved in this activity? And what is their expected workload? What proportion of this work is undertaken by portfolio holders?</i> ➤ <i>What other external bodies will members be involved in? And what is the anticipated workload?</i> 	
Analysis	<p>The Council appoints Members to external Oxfordshire-wide committees and to a range of outside bodies.</p> <p><u>External Committees</u> The Council appoints Members to the following non-Executive committees:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Oxfordshire Joint Health Overview and Scrutiny Committee (1 seat) 	

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Future Oxfordshire Partnership (FOP) Scrutiny Panel (3 seats) <p>The FOP Scrutiny Panel meets 6 times per year. It is fairly unique to Oxfordshire and is responsible for scrutinising the business of the FOP; a joint committee of the six councils of Oxfordshire together with key strategic partners.</p> <p><u>Outside bodies</u></p> <p>The Executive appoints members to a range of outside bodies. In July 2024, 41 appointments were made to a total of 33 outside bodies (some bodies have more than one Council appointee). Some of these appointments are linked to Executive portfolios and some appointments are based on ward or other reasons. 22 Members (45%) have been appointed to one or more outside bodies. These Members have been provided with guidance to ensure that they understand their roles and responsibilities.</p> <p>Most Members who responded to the survey reported that they spend less than one hour per week attending meetings of outside bodies but for a significant minority the time commitment is higher, up to 7-9 hours per week in some cases.</p> <p><u>Conclusion</u></p> <p>The Council appoints Members to a total of 44 seats on external committees and outside bodies, nearly one seat per Member although they are not necessarily distributed evenly. This high number reflects the nature of the district and the unique partnership working arrangements that exist in Oxfordshire. Any reduction in the size of the Council would be detrimental to ensuring that the Council can be adequately represented on external partnerships. This supports maintaining the current number of 49 councillors.</p>
--	--

Community Leadership

The Commission understands that there is no single approach to community leadership and that members represent, and provide leadership to, their communities in different ways. The Commission wants to know how members are required to provide effective community leadership and what support the council offers them in this role. For example, does the authority have a defined role and performance system for its elected members? And what support networks are available within the council to help members in their duties? The Commission also wants to see a consideration of **how the use of technology and social media by the council as a whole, and by councillors individually, will affect casework, community engagement and local democratic representation. Responses should demonstrate that alternative council sizes have been explored.**

Topic	Description
-------	-------------

Community Leadership	<i>Key lines of explanation</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ <i>In general terms how do councillors carry out their representational role with electors?</i> ➤ <i>Does the council have area committees and what are their powers?</i> ➤ <i>How do councillors seek to engage with their constituents? Do they hold surgeries, send newsletters, hold public meetings or maintain blogs?</i> ➤ <i>Are there any mechanisms in place that help councillors interact with young people, those not on the electoral register, and/or other minority groups and their representative bodies?</i> ➤ <i>Are councillors expected to attend community meetings, such as parish or resident's association meetings? If so, what is their level of involvement and what roles do they play?</i> ➤ <i>Explain your approach to the Area Governance structure. Is your Area Governance a decision-making forum or an advisory board? What is their relationship with locally elected members and Community bodies such as Town and Parish Councils? Looking forward how could they be improved to enhance decision-making?</i>
	Analysis	<p>West Oxfordshire district councillors perform a variety of roles both within the Council and in playing an active role in the communities they represent, providing a two-way link between the Council and communities.</p> <p>Some councillors have multiple representative roles as they may also serve as county councillors and/or town or parish councillors. Currently 8 District Councillors serve as county councillors (including the Leader of the District Council and the Leader of the County Council) and 19 District Councillors serve as town or parish councillors in the district area.</p> <p>There are a number of ways in which councillors will engage with communities, including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Being the voice of the community at District Council meetings. • Attending town or parish council meetings. • Engaging with, supporting and serving on community organisations, residents' associations, charities or business groups. • Holding surgeries. • Dealing with casework by email, telephone or letter. • Engaging in social media platforms. <p>In response to the survey members reported regularly engaging with up to 5 town or parish meetings, although some wards cover as many as 11 parish areas. Members also point out that the work associated with town councils tends to be more involved than for parish councils or parish meetings.</p>

		<p>The Council does not have any area committees in the district (other than the area planning sub-committees) and there is no budget allocated to Ward Members.</p> <p><u>Conclusion</u> The growth in the population and the size of the electorate will place additional demands on the representative roles of elected members. A reduction in the size of the Council would not support effective representation and would place particular pressure on Members representing rural areas as the rural wards, which already cover large geographies, would increase in size. An increase in the size of the Council is not considered necessary to cope with future demands and would serve to dilute the influence of individual Members.</p> <p>The Council is of the view the maintaining a size of 49 Councillors would provide for optimum representation into the future. The survey showed that nearly three quarters of Members favoured retaining a Council size of 49 councillors whereas only 2 favoured a decrease and 1 favoured an increase.</p>
Casework	<i>Key lines of explanation</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ <i>How do councillors deal with their casework? Do they pass it on to council officers? Or do they take a more in-depth approach to resolving issues?</i> ➤ <i>What support do members receive?</i> ➤ <i>How has technology influenced the way in which councillors work? And interact with their electorate?</i> ➤ <i>In what ways does the council promote service users' engagement/dispute resolution with service providers and managers rather than through councillors?</i>
	Analysis	<p>Councillors are responsible for dealing with their own casework correspondence. The Council does not have a casework management system. All Councillors are provided with a welcome pack and corporate induction programme upon their election. Councillors are also provided with points of contact for each Council service. These contact points are listed on the Councillor Portal (intranet), which also includes a link to the planning portal and e-forms for councillors to report issues such as missed bin collections and fly tipping. The Democratic Services Team will act as the first point of contact for newly elected members and will signpost members to other officers where Members are unsure who to contact for particular issues.</p> <p>The nature of casework has changed in recent years. More Members are active on social media and will be contacted by residents using social media channels. Councillors are also contacted regularly by email, telephone or, increasingly</p>

		<p>rarely, letter. Councillors' preferred methods of contact are reflected on their pages on the Council's website. All councillors are provided with a Council email account for managing their Council correspondence, which they access using their own device.</p> <p>Some queries which would have previously been directed to councillors are now solved through direct contact with the Council, which is done by phone, email or social media. Contact with councillors now often involves more complex matters such as planning or other complex casework which may involve multiple agencies, for example where there are mental health issues. This is particularly the case for members representing the main settlements within the district area. Such complex casework can involve research and co-ordination with multiple partner organisations, rather than simply referring the resident to the relevant officer or department. For members representing rural areas, the planning casework and issues can be particularly complex.</p> <p>The majority of Members who responded to the survey spend 1-3 hours per week dealing with case work however the range is quite wide, with a small number of Members spending less than one hour per week on casework and others spending more than 10 hours per week on it. Members stated:</p> <p><i>"Responding to every constituent is unpredictable, time consuming on a case by case basis."</i></p> <p><i>"I spend a lot of time on email and social media into resident issues."</i></p> <p><i>"The needs of residents is varied. Understand the policies both national and local means that time spent reading and being informed is crucial."</i></p> <p>11 of 26 Members who responded to the survey believed that ward member work including casework had driven an increase in the workload of councillors since they were first elected.</p> <p>6 Members reported that their workload was broadly unchanged compared to when they were first elected and one Member believed it had decreased (with the driver for the decrease being the time spent on special responsibilities, outside bodies and political campaigning).</p>
--	--	--

		<p>The survey also showed that all 26 Members who responded deal with casework over email, with the next popular methods of communication being telephone (23) and face to face (22). Some Members also use social media/blogs (9), public meetings (8), instant messaging (6), surgeries (6) and letter (4). Eight members also selected "Other" methods of engagement.</p> <p>The survey showed that with a 10% increase in workload the average level of Members' comfort with their workload (with 10 being very comfortable) would fall from 6.4 to 4.25, with some Members scoring as low as 0 or 1 out of 10 in this scenario.</p> <p><u>Conclusion</u> The growth in the population and the size of the electorate will place additional demands on the time Members spend dealing with casework. A reduction in the size of the Council would exacerbate these demands and result in Members being less comfortable with their workload. This would potentially deter people from standing for election.</p>
--	--	---

Other Issues

Respondent may use this space to bring any other issues of relevance to the attention of the Commission.

Working Group to advise of any other issues to be raised.

Summary

In following this template respondents should have been able to provide the Commission with a robust and well-evidenced case for their proposed council size; one which gives a clear explanation as to the governance arrangements and number of councillors required to represent the authority in the future.

Use this space to summarise the proposals and indicate other options considered. Explain why these alternatives were not appropriate in terms of their ability to deliver effective Strategic Leadership, Accountability (Scrutiny, Regulation and Partnerships), and Community Leadership.

The Council has considered its size and concluded that a size of 49 Councillors remains appropriate for the district into the future. Due to population growth this will increase the electorate ratio and may be expected to moderately increase the workload of individual councillors. The Council recognises that the electorate ratio is currently relatively low in the district compared to other local authorities but believes that a relatively low electorate ratio is necessary in order to provide for effective representation of all communities in a district with a mix of towns, villages and large sparsely populated rural areas.

A larger council size than 49 councillors could arguably provide for enhanced representation but would dilute the responsibilities of individual councillors and add cost to the Council

without providing significant additional benefits to the governance of the Council. As such this option is not considered to be necessary.

A council size smaller than 49 councillors is also not recommended. With population growth being centred around existing settlements, the rural wards would need to increase in size and cover more parish areas on average. This would exacerbate the existing pressures faced by Members representing rural communities and would not support effective representation. It would also further increase the workloads of individual Members on average which may have negative impacts in terms of both representation and the governance of the Council.

The Council has a strong preference for retaining a mix of 1, 2 and 3-Member wards across the district and as such **has decided** to change its electoral cycle from elections by thirds to all out elections every 4 years from 2027 onwards.

This page is intentionally left blank

Responses Overview Active

Responses

26



Average Time

13:00



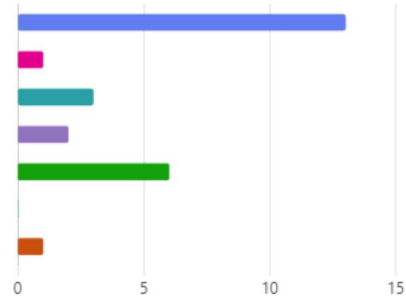
Duration

96 Days



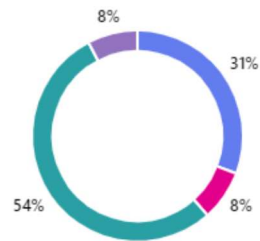
1. How would you describe your employment status?

● Employed - Full time	13
● Employed - Part time	1
● Self-employed - Full time	3
● Self-employed - Part time	2
● Retired	6
● Other	0
● Prefer not to say	1



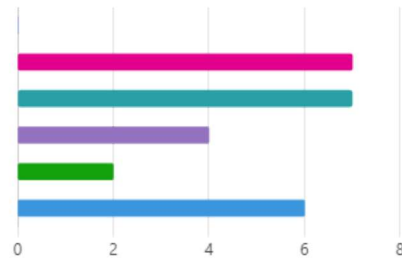
2. Do you have any caring responsibilities?

● Yes - Childcare	8
● Yes - Caring for one or more adults	2
● No	14
● Prefer not to say	2



3. Overall, how many hours do you estimate that you spend in your role as a District Councillor, on average, per week? (including District meetings, Town/ Parish meetings, case work, etc.)

● Less than an hour	0
● 1-5 hours	7
● 6-10 hours	7
● 11-15 hours	4
● 16-20 hours	2
● More than 20	6



4. How many hours per week do you estimate that you spend on the following responsibilities?

- N/A
- Less than an hour
- 1-3 hours
- 4-6 hours
- 7-9 hours
- 10 or more hours

Ward member work including case work, correspondence, engaging Town or Parish Councils, responding to planning...

Special responsibilities e.g. Executive Member, Chair, Group Leader

Attending formal and informal District Council meetings

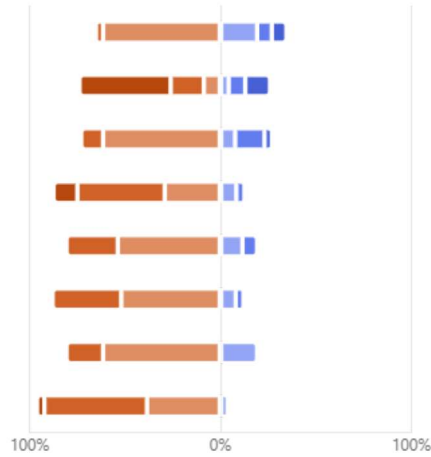
Attending meeting of outside bodies

Reading reports

Political work, including campaigning and group/ party meetings

General correspondence e.g. through email

Travelling



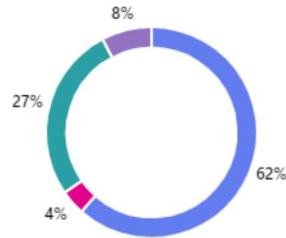
5. When were you first elected as a District Councillor? If you've had a break, please enter the date you were elected for the first time.

22
Responses

Latest Responses
"2012-05-03"
"2024-05-02"
...

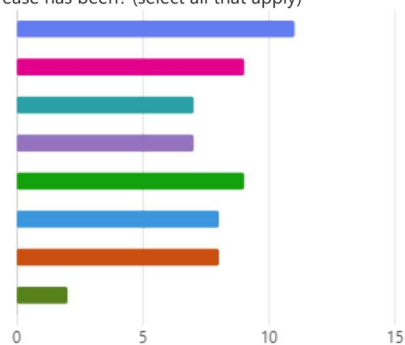
6. Since you first became a Councillor, would you say that the workload has increased, decreased or broadly stayed the same?

- Increased 16
- Decreased 1
- Broadly stayed the same 7
- Unsure 2



7. If your workload has increased, what would you say that the driver behind this increase has been? (select all that apply)

- Ward member work including case work, correspondence, engaging Town or Parish Councils,... 11
- Work associated with special responsibilities, e.g. Executive Member, Chair, Group Leader 9
- Attending formal and informal District Council meetings 7
- Attending meeting of outside bodies 7
- Reading reports 9
- Political work, including campaigning and group/ party meetings 8
- General correspondence e.g. through email 8
- Travelling 2



8. If your workload has decreased, what would you say that the driver behind this decrease has been? (select all that apply)

- Ward member work including case work, correspondence, engaging Town or Parish Councils,... 0
- Work associated with special responsibilities e.g. Executive Member, Chair, Group Leader 1
- Attending formal and informal District Council meetings 0
- Attending meeting of outside bodies 1
- Reading reports 0
- Political work, including campaigning and group/party meetings 1
- General correspondence e.g. through email 0
- Travelling 0



9. Is there anything you would like to say about your workload as a councillor?

18
Responses

Latest Responses
 "Reduced scrutiny has reduced accountability"
 "I expected it, but it must be a barrier to some good people"
 ...

9 respondents (50%) answered time for this question.



10. How many town / parish or community meetings do you regularly engage with?

25
Responses

Latest Responses
 "4"
 "One - but a big one with multiple meetings"
 "2"
 ...

4 respondents (16%) answered 4 for this question.



11. How comfortable are you with your workload as a Councillor?

Promoters	2
Passives	11
Detractors	13



12. What are the challenges (if any) you face in managing your workload?

20
Responses

Latest Responses

"Meeting that clash with other authority meetings...because nobody checks at sta..."
 "Paying the bills. It is a full-time job with part-time remuneration. I work over hour..."
 "Not particularly relevant to this, but since you asked - The IT system! Constantly b..."

...

6 respondents (30%) answered work for this question.



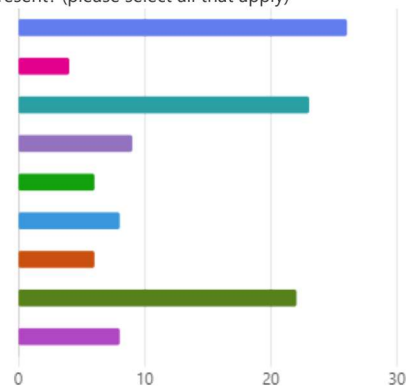
13. How comfortable would you be with your workload as a councillor if your workload was to increase by 10%?

Promoters	2
Passives	2
Detractors	20



14. In which ways do you engage with residents and the communities you represent? (please select all that apply)

Email	26
Letter	4
Telephone	23
Social media/ blogs	9
Surgeries	6
Holding public meetings	8
Instant messaging	6
Doorstep/ face to face	22
Other	8



15. How comfortable are you with the size of the ward you represent?

Promoters	11
Passives	9
Detractors	6



16. Please tell us about any issues related to the size of your ward.

15
Responses

Latest Responses

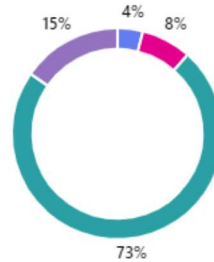
"It is a sensible and coherent handful of communities, and it makes sense to those..."
...

6 respondents (40%) answered ward for this question.



17. Thinking about the responsibilities and workload of a Councillor and the functions of the Council, do you think the size of West Oxfordshire District Council (49 Councillors) should be increased, decreased or stay the same?

● More Councillors	1
● Fewer Councillors	2
● The same numbers of Councillors (49)	19
● Not sure	4



18. Is there anything else you would like to say about your workload as a Councillor or the size of the Council?

13
Responses

Latest Responses

"Paperwork arriving too near meetings doesn't allow for quality reading and rese..."
"It feels about right, though I question the 3,2,1 member ward thing. I recommend..."
...

4 respondents (31%) answered Councillor for this question.



19. Linked to the district boundary review, the Council will need to decide whether to continue to hold elections by thirds but with a uniform pattern of 3-Member wards across the whole district (with some very large rural wards), or all-out elections every four years with a mix of 1, 2 and 3-Member wards. The status quo is not an option that is available to the Council. Do you have a preference at this stage as to what electoral cycle the Council should operate from 2027 onwards?



20. Please provide details of any other issues you are aware of related to the ward boundaries within the district which you would like to see addressed as part of the boundary review.

14
Responses

Latest Responses

"Need to be careful that we don't draw the lines on political catchment"
 "Wherever possible, natural communities should be the basis for wards. This might..."
 ...

10 respondents (67%) answered wards for this question.

Update



Detailed survey responses

Q9. Is there anything you would like to say about your workload as a councillor?

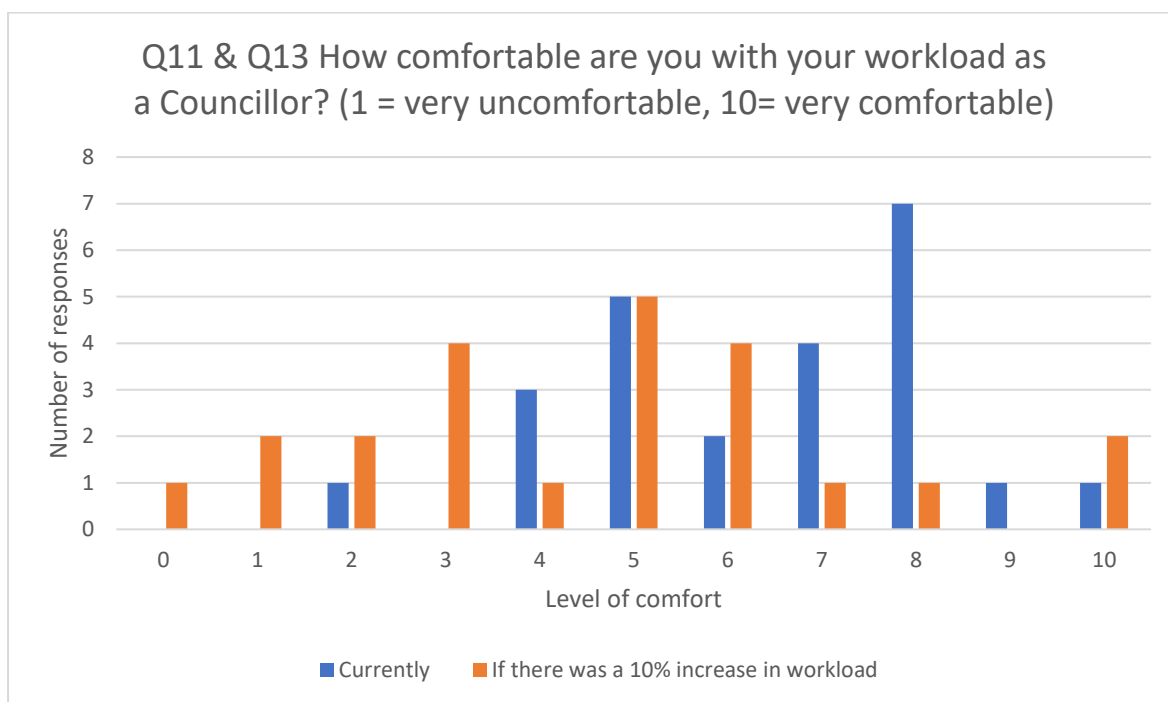
1	Inevitably it goes up as you become more embedded in the role. Hopefully you find strategies and collaborations to help, but at the same time the complexity of the problems - climate crisis, cost of living, increasing inequality which affects local development - adds to workload.
2	Difficult to do while balancing family commitments and a full-time job
3	I feel as though I could do with case management tool.
4	Weeks vary in time spent on Council work: e.g. before planning meetings involves a lot of reading and site visits
5	I have significantly reduced the amount of time I spend as a district councillor since I became Leader of OCC
6	There is a big increase in workload when campaigning on specific issues or during election times
7	responding to every constituent is unpredictable, time consuming on a case by case basis
8	Only elected in May and then there was the Gen Election. Not sure what a 'usual' workload is yet
9	Political work varies depending on upcoming elections, planning applications have vastly increased
10	No
11	it is a huge workload, but there is a lot to do
12	I spend a lot of time on email and social media into resident issues.
13	It was reasonable as a Ward Councillor, but I am still coming to terms with the workload on the Executive
14	The needs of residents is varied. Understand the policies both national and local means that time spent reading and being informed is crucial.
15	Its a challenge having a full time job as well as being a Councillor so its sometimes difficult to attend all meetings especially during the day
16	no
17	I expected it, but it must be a barrier to some good people
18	Reduced scrutiny has reduced accountability

Q10. How many town / parish or community meetings do you regularly engage with?

1	4
2	1
3	3
4	Two parish Councils
5	3
6	3
7	Now only occasional parish/community meetings since no longer a town councillor
8	2/3 per month
9	5
10	2
11	4
12	2
13	1
14	None as not required in my ward
15	2, but there are other occasional meetings
16	2/3 a week usually and it can be a lot being town and district councillor.
17	3
18	Three
19	4
20	3
21	every month
22	1
23	2

24	One – but a big one with multiple meetings
25	4

Q11 & Q13. How comfortable are you with your workload as a Councillor? / How comfortable would you be with your workload as a councillor if your workload was to increase by 10%?

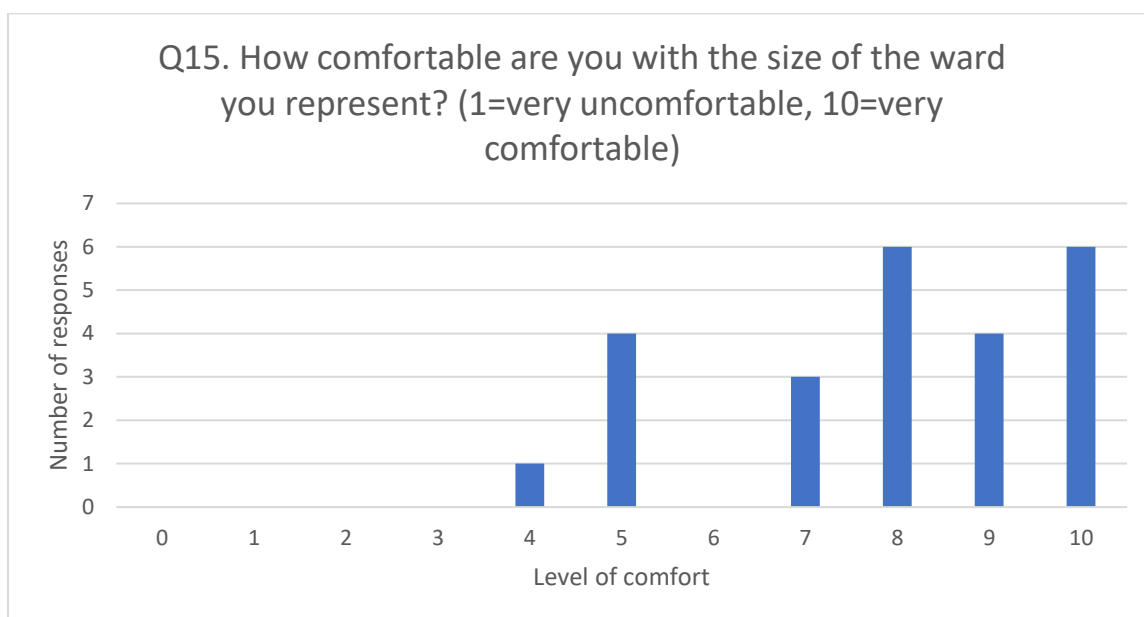


Q12. What are the challenges (if any) you face in managing your workload?

1	The unpredictable and extremely diverse nature of the work. Lack of strong relationships with a wide range of officers, and lack of guidance about the relationship between councillors and officers. This should be in the induction process.
2	Council moving towards evening meetings is making it much harder for my employer to give me the facility time I need.
3	Being new and not always knowing (yet) how to translate a case into action.
4	Fitting everything in: Town Councillor as well as involved in other volunteers activities as well as District Cllr
5	Competing with job.
6	Balancing council work during busy work periods and campaigns

7	not enough time in a week and holiday periods create a back up of work.
8	Co-incident meetings
9	Looking after grandchildren, especially during school holidays
10	none
11	My main employment and childcare
12	the reports are often lengthy, it would be helpful to have summaries, also some executive reports come late
13	<p>Firstly I've had canvas every year since 2022 and this takes so much time away from the job! It doesn't look like to change either with 2026 my end date, re-standing and again 2027 due to boundary change and that's just very time consuming, overwhelming and at times as well as tiring. I've also had lots of development in my wards which has had lots of planning issues with little to none support from WODC officers to resolve which makes me look poor at the job and has been time consuming with emails and conversations with residents trying to get work done. I like the job, but I've had a tough ward from day 1 and I do t always get support from the other councillors sharing the work load so it feels I'm doing it all in own rather than sharing it which is awkward and also can become overwhelming at times. I'd be happy to have a other councillor within the ward if that's what it needs, or just more training for councillors so we know how to help and share our wards work loads better.</p>
14	Balancing with my wish to support my extended family, members of which live abroad and therefore I have to spend extended periods outside the UK
15	Working full time
16	time, with a full time job and childcare commitments
17	None except balancing my full time Job
18	Not particularly relevant to this, but since you asked - The IT system! Constantly being logged out and the fact that the calendar doesn't allow syncing with my phone makes me constantly anxious I'll miss something!
19	Paying the bills. It is a full-time job with part-time remuneration. I work over hours and have other jobs to make ends meet.
20	Meeting that clash with other authority meetings....because nobody checks at start of year

Q15. How comfortable are you with the size of the ward you represent?



16. Please tell us about any issues related to the size of your ward.

1	I like the variety in my ward. There is Brize Norton, with most of the population, regular and active parish council, reasonably diverse population, lots going on, semi-town as on the edge of Carterton. Then there are the historic villages of Shilton (which includes the much more modern Bradwell Village) and the affluent villages in Asthall and Swinbrook parishes, north of the A40 and within the Cotswolds National Landscape. I get the feeling that "community cohesion" arguments would say that these two kinds of parishes should not be in the same ward, but actually I think that wards should all have a chunk of town plus a wedge of its hinterland, if possible.
2	Noting specific at the moment but the number of residents will increase markedly over the next few years
3	No significant issues
4	current size doable and makes geographical sense and size

5	There are 5 separate parishes, which have very different situations, so not necessarily a size issue. i.e. One parish with more overall people would be easier than 5 parishes with less overall people.
6	Colwell Green has little in common with the rest of the ward and would be better as part of Witney
7	Rural ward, issues specific to the ward, size is manageable for 1 councillor. The ward is also the parish.
8	I have no issues
9	I think my ward is geographically, economically and socially cohesive. The issues seem to be more or less the same or similar across it.
10	Planning issues and officers don't seem to be other regarding the issues once planning is passed.
11	The size of the ward works well with common themes and issues
12	The disconnect between different parishes and the time driving between an outlying parish which is some distance away from the other 3.
13	Chipping Norton has three councillors and we all cover the whole town rather than being ward based. This arrangement works well
14	None
15	It is a sensible and coherent handful of communities, and it makes sense to those who live in it.

Q18. Is there anything else you would like to say about your workload as a Councillor or the size of the Council?

1	Councillor numbers: either stay the same or a very few more. Obviously if it was 3 per ward it couldn't be 49. But I don't think it should be fewer.
2	I believe that pretty much every layer of government could do with fewer representatives. We are anomalous in the UK. We should, however, receive more recompense.
3	48 or 49 seems fine but population is increasing so that might change
4	Workload is fine at the moment. Key question is the purpose of the District Council and then a District Councillor. E.G. Size of council is too many councillors. It means the majority of the work is done by the executive and the majority of the councillors are less in touch with key activities and decisions. Less councillors with more of them involved in majority of work, issues and decisions would be better, i.e. the majority of

	the work moves to "Full Council" involvement. However this would increase the workload of the councillors and in-effect make it a full time job. This question and discussion makes no sense without also discussing the "roles and responsibilities" of the District Council. Feels a bit like re-arranging the deck chairs on the Titanic. First lets discuss whether we should be on a ship or not and why are we in a position to be running into an iceberg.
5	The system seems to be working fairly well as it is with a mix of 1, 2 and 3 Member wards.
6	No
7	I think the number of councillors should reflect the size of population; perhaps the numbers of Councillors in wards that undergo more growth should be adjusted accordingly.
8	I feel more training for councillors on how to do the job, better working relationships with councillors and officers. I do believe that whatever happens we need to stop staggered elections for a number of reasons.
9	I have no strong views on this, except that I don't think it should become bigger, unless there was a strong reason
10	I would like to commit more time, unfortunately having a full time job alongside precludes this
11	No
12	It feels about right, though I question the 3,2,1 member ward thing. I recommend a team covering a larger geography, in other words 3 per ward with populations of around 7,000 voters.
13	Paperwork arriving too near meetings doesn't allow for quality reading and research

20. Please provide details of any other issues you are aware of related to the ward boundaries within the district which you would like to see addressed as part of the boundary review.

1	In answer to Q19 above, I have put "would need more information" although I do already have quite a bit of information. But what I am not sure of is just how difficult it would be to manage the geographically large wards that would result if we were to have 3 members per ward. I imagine that, where all 3 councillors were from the same or allied political parties, they might share the load of the parish councils. But I know that if, say, I was the only Green of the 3, I would often feel obliged to go to all of the parish council meetings, and if my party was in opposition, that would be even more the case. And that would be too much, if there were 6 or 7 parishes. It's the number of parishes that matters, rather than the geographical area. Also, I will say again here
---	--

	that I think that there is some advantage to wards having a chunk of town plus a wedge of rural hinterland.
2	Matching with county council and town council ward boundaries would obviously be preferable
3	Some of our wards already seem very stretched out involving a lot of small villages around larger communities which have other Cllrs: It seems re-organisation may be important if we are to develop three Cllrs for all wards as geographical arrangements currently seem sometimes rather odd and resulting in a lot of parish meetings for some Cllrs
4	Ward boundaries need to be adjusted to reflect the urban continuity and focus of settlements and not be based on irrelevant historic parish boundaries
5	travel expenses would need to be considered if boundaries were made bigger
6	
7	North Leigh ward covers a specific village and the parish is the same as the ward so it fits well as it is. It does not make sense to merge us into a larger rural ward as our neighbours are Freeland, Hanborough etc and these are much more urban with different issues, there is currently not much contact between North Leigh and those villages. It does not make sense to have a 3 member ward as the other 2 members would not know about North Leigh or be known to residents here and it would be confusing for residents to have to contact the 3 councillors (2 in Hanborough/Freeland who would not know about their issues). Why fix what's not broken? It makes more sense for North Leigh to stay as a single ward/parish. In larger areas such as Witney it makes sense to have 2 or 3 councillors covering the same patch but in a rural area it makes more sense for 1 councillor to cover 1 ward as the villages are all different.
8	Some wards are extremely varied in constituent numbers, this needs to be addressed to balance out workload.
9	I think that having local elections early is disruptive and interferes with continuity in the Members work. Although I have indicated that my political work takes 1-3hrs/week in re-election time, 3 months it is more like 30 hrs a week or more (every year).
10	I strongly favour the retention of single member wards in the rural area. There is direct accountability and a limited number of parish meetings to attend. Furthermore, the canvassing requirements at election time would become very onerous if they were combined into 3-member wards, partly the number of doors, but also the geographical spread. I am not in favour of combining rural and urban areas in a single ward as the issues faced are completely different.
11	I think it is important to retain the ability to have multi member wards as well as single member wards, because it better reflects the diverse nature of the District and

	the way that different places are connected to each other. This means that I would endorse All-out elections every four years. It would also be cheaper, less disruptive to the efficient running of the Council, and would make for better decision-making, where long-term benefits can be balanced against short term costs
12	There needs to realign of parish councils in wards which have parishes spread over a large geographical area. There needs to be a realignment of parishes whose boundaries are closest to others.
13	Concerned of major Housing Development and i feel a boundaries commission is needed for Carterton
14	Wherever possible, natural communities should be the basis for wards. This might include "outer" wards ringing towns. They have as much in common as any town ward might.
15	Need to be careful that we don't draw the lines on political catchment

This page is intentionally left blank

Annex B: Electoral Review Timetable

Preliminary Period

Briefings	Attendees		Key Dates
	Council	LGBCE	
Preliminary Meeting	Council Leader Chief Executive	Chair Chief Executive	1 March 2024
Officer Briefing	Council Officers involved in review	Review Manager Review Officer	13 March 2024
Group Leader Briefing	Council Group Leaders	Lead Commissioner Review Manager Review Officer	4 March 2024
Full Council Briefing	All Councillors	Lead Commissioner Review Manager Review Officer	13 March 2024
Parish/Town Council & Local Groups Briefing	Not required	Review Manager Review Officer	TBC

Council Size


Activity	Involvement		Key Dates
	Council	LGBCE	
Develop council size proposal	Council Political Groups	Officers will be available to answer any technical queries on making a submission.	Now until December 2024
Submission of council size proposals	Council Political Groups	Officers will acknowledge receipt of submissions.	Mid-February 2025
Commission Meeting: Council Size	Not required	Commission	February 2025

Warding Patterns

Activity	Involvement		Key Dates
	Council	LGBCE	
Consultation on warding patterns	Council Political Groups General Public	Run consultation, collate & analyse responses.	5 May 2025 - June 2025
Commission Meeting: Draft Recommendations	Not required	Commission	September 2025
Consultation on Draft Recommendations	Council Political Groups General Public	Publish draft recommendations. Run consultation, collate & analyse responses.	30 September 2025 - 8 December 2025
Commission Meeting: Final Recommendations	Not required	Commission	January 2026
Final Recommendations Published	Not required	Commission publish final recommendations report and mapping	10 March 2026

Order

Activity	Involvement		Key Dates
	Council	LGBCE	
Order laid	Not required	Commission	Spring/Summer 2026
Order made	Not required	Commission	Summer 2026
Implementation	Council	Not required	2027

 <p>WEST OXFORDSHIRE DISTRICT COUNCIL</p>	<p>WEST OXFORDSHIRE DISTRICT COUNCIL</p>
<p>Name and Date of Committee</p>	<p>COUNCIL – 27 NOVEMBER 2024</p>
<p>Subject</p>	<p>REVIEW OF PARLIAMENTARY POLLING DISTRICT AND POLLING PLACES</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 and (Acting) Returning Officer. Email: giles.hughes@westoxon.gov.uk</p>
<p>Report Author</p>	<p>Sharon Ellison – Electoral Services Manager. Email: sharon.ellison@westoxon.gov.uk</p> <p>Andrew Brown – Head of Democratic and Electoral Services Email: democratic.services@westoxon.gov.uk</p>
<p>Purpose</p>	<p>To update Members on the review of the Parliamentary Polling Districts and Polling Places within West Oxfordshire, following the public consultation which was in place from 24 September to 4 November 2024.</p>
<p>Annexes</p>	<p>Annex A – Consultation responses and recommendations Annex B – Schedule of polling districts and polling places</p>
<p>Recommendations</p>	<p>That Council Resolves to:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Note the consultation feedback as set out in Annex A. 2. Approve the recommended changes to polling districts and polling places as set out in Annex A. 3. Approve the full schedule of polling districts and polling places set out in Annex B. 4. Note that the Council will undertake a further review of polling districts and polling places following the Local Government Boundary Commission for England’s electoral review of West Oxfordshire District Council.
<p>Corporate Priorities</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Deliver the highest standard of service; • Working Together for West Oxfordshire
<p>Key Decision</p>	<p>NO</p>

Exempt	NO
Consultees/ Consultation	Constitution Working Group.

I. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

- 1.1 A review of parliamentary polling districts and polling places within the West Oxfordshire District Council area has been undertaken. This process has involved inviting representations from such persons thought to have particular expertise in relation to access to premises or facilities for persons with varying disabilities. Representations were also sought from political parties within the district, the various political groups on the Council and from Town & Parish Councils and Parish Meetings.
- 1.2 The representations have been considered by the Constitution Working Group which has endorsed the recommended changes arising from the review which are set out in Annex A and summarised in section 3 below.

2. BACKGROUND

- 2.1. A polling district is a geographical area and in England each parish is to be a separate polling district. This means that a parish must not be in a polling district which has a part of a different parish within it unless special circumstances apply. Those special circumstances could arise if, for example, the parish has only a small number of electors and it is not practicable for the parish to be its own polling district.
- 2.2. A polling place is the building or area in which polling stations will be located. A polling place within a polling district must be designated so that polling stations are within easy reach of all electors from across the polling district. It is considered that polling places should always be defined more specifically than simply the polling district - for example, by designating the name of the polling place (normally a particular building or area and its environs).
- 2.3. The Council is required to review polling districts and polling places within its area every 5 years and West Oxfordshire District Council is due to complete a review by the end of January 2025.
- 2.4. Full Council on 13 March 2024 resolved to carry out the statutorily required review of Parliamentary Polling Districts and Polling Places within West Oxfordshire and agreed that the consultation responses and representations would be considered at the 25 September 2024 or the 27 November 2024 meeting of full Council.
- 2.5. The review has been overseen by the Constitution Working Group which has responsibility within its terms of reference for considering any review of polling districts and polling places.
- 2.6. The aims of the review were to ensure that:
 - All electors have such reasonable facilities for voting as are practicable.
 - Every polling station is accessible to voters with additional needs.
- 2.7. The review did not consider Parliamentary Constituency, County Division, District Ward or Town/Parish Council boundaries. It did consider the polling districts which make up these areas.

3. PROPOSED CHANGES

- 3.1. The current polling districts were found to be generally fit for purpose as in the main they follow parish and parish ward boundaries. The Council consulted on possible changes in 14 locations across the district and received over 60 responses which have been carefully considered.

- 3.2. The proposed change/action for each of the 14 locations are set out in in Annex A and are summarised in a table at the end of Annex A. For some of the locations the outcome of the review is that there is no change proposed.
- 3.3. Additional polling districts are recommended for the Windrush Leys town ward (Witney South) and the Windrush Quay town ward (Witney East). It is also proposed that Witney Central is divided into two polling districts and that an additional polling district is created within Witney West. The changes are intended to enable electors to vote within a more local vicinity.
- 3.4. Changes are proposed to polling places as follows:
- Use of Asthal Village Hall for electors in Swinbrook for 2025 only while works take place at Swinbrook Village Hall.
 - Polling place to be sought for new polling district in Witney Central.
 - Polling place to be sought for new Witney Leys polling district.
 - Polling place to be sought for new polling district in Witney West.

4. ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS

- 4.1. The review is statutorily required, so there is no option other than to complete the review by the end of January 2025.

5. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

- 5.1 The additional costs and savings arising from the proposed changes are set out in Annex A and will be contained within existing budgets.

6. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

- 6.1. Sections 18A and 18B of the Representation of the People Act 1983 require that the Council must (i) divide its area into polling districts for UK Parliamentary elections; (ii) designate a polling place for every polling district; and (iii) keep the polling districts and polling places under review.
- 6.2. The Electoral Registration and Administration Act 2013 amended the 1983 Act to require that local authorities must complete a review within the period of 16 months from 1 October 2023 and undertake and complete subsequent reviews within the period of 16 months beginning on 1 October of every fifth year after that. The review must therefore be completed by 31 January 2025.

7. EQUALITIES IMPACT

- 7.1 The changes to polling districts and polling places are not expected to have any adverse impacts on any groups with protected characteristics.
- 7.2 Polling places are inspected regularly to ensure they meet accessibility requirements for voters.

8. CLIMATE AND ECOLOGICAL EMERGENCIES IMPLICATIONS

- 8.1 The changes to polling districts and polling places are not expected to have any significant climate or ecological impacts.

9. RISK ASSESSMENT

9.1 There are no significant risks in relation to this report.

10. BACKGROUND PAPERS

9.1 None.

(END)

This page is intentionally left blank

Parliamentary Polling District & Polling Places Review 2024

This report was considered with the Constitution Working Group on Thursday 27 November ahead of submission to Full Council for approval.

The Acting Returning Officer received over 60 responses to the consultation, both via email and through a web-based survey. The consultation was open from 24 September to 4 November 2024.

Polling Premise Location

1. Black Bourton Church
 2. Shilton – Old School and Bradwell Village
 3. Swerford Village Hall
 4. Swinbrook Village Hall
 5. Taynton Village Hall
 6. Westwell, 5 Mitford Cottages
Witney Summary and Plan of Polling Districts
 7. Witney – Davenport Road Methodist Church
 8. Witney – Methodist Church, High Street
 9. Witney – Burwell Hall, Thorney Leys
 10. Witney – Joint Army Cadet Centre and Windrush CE School Building
 11. Witney – ATP Centre, Gordon Way
 12. Witney – Windrush Quay (town ward)
 13. Woodstock – Blenheim Estate Office/Town Hall
 14. Woodstock – Bowls and Tennis Club
- Summary of Polling District Review Changes

1) Black Bourton Church

Bampton and Clanfield Ward (Councillors – Alaric Smith and Alistair Wray)

Polling District FF-Black Bourton (Current Electorate 230)

Consultation Comments:

Black Bourton church has recently been refurbished with a toilet and kitchen, making it more of a community space. A sense of unity and tradition for the village to be able to vote locally. No buses available for Clanfield and the road is dangerous for walking or cycling. Alvescot has been mentioned as closer although the same reasons apply with no transport links. A fair proportion of elderly folk who would not be able to travel out of the village. To reiterate that the new facilities makes' this an ideal venue as a polling station

Recommendation:

Further to the views and responses of the consultation, and the recent refurbishment of the Church to create a Community space, it would be recommended to retain the Church as a polling place for future elections.

2) Shilton – Old School and Bradwell Village

Brize Norton and Shilton Ward (Councillor – Rosie Pearson)

Polling District HP-Shilton (Current Electorate 510) HP-Shilton 323 properties

Shilton village – 176 properties / Bradwell Grove – 147 properties

Consultation Comments:

Mentioned that Shilton, Old School building is an excellent facility for a polling station venue, although it is someway from Bradwell Grove which is within Shilton polling district although a couple of miles away from the central village. Bradwell Grove has its own village hall with good amenities and parking.

Recommendation:

Consideration was made with creating a further polling district to accommodate voters in Bradwell Grove. However, due to the ongoing consultation Local Government Boundary Review, it is recommended that the Old School, Shilton village remains the primary voting location and a further review is implemented following the conclusion of the LGBC.

3) Swerford Village Hall

Kingham, Rollright and Enstone Ward (Councillors Andrew Beaney and Alex Wilson)

HX 127 voters

Consultation Comments:

This will have a significant impact on the local population of Swerford. Great Tew is two miles away, busy main roads, impossible to walk and no transport links. Many residents are elderly and will potentially disenfranchise the community preventing the democratic process being available to all. Dangerous road, pressured into having a postal vote, disincentive to voting.

Recommendation:

The response to the survey determined that Swerford Village Hall should remain as a polling place for future elections at this time.

4) Swinbrook Village Hall

Brize Norton and Shilton Ward (Councillor – Rosie Pearson)

HY Number of electors 128 (Asthal 224)

Consultation Comments:

None

Recommendation:

Swinbrook Village Hall is scheduled to have works carried out during the 2025. It is recommended that Asthal Village Hall is used as a dual polling premise for 2025 election owing to both parishes being within the same District ward.

Although these are small villages' they both have strong community uses for their respective village halls and would not recommend that they are merged for voting in one premises for future polls.

5) Taynton Village Hall

Burford Ward (Councillor Hugo Ashton)

JA Number of electors 82

Consultation Comments:

No parking available at the village hall, very few voters in the village. Many residents have postal votes in place

Recommendation:

There were no objections received to moving Taynton voters (JA) to vote at the polling premise in Burford, Warwick Hall. It is recommended to make this change for 2025 onwards.

6) Westwell, 5 Mitford Cottages

Alvescot and Filkins Ward (Councillor Edward James)

46 voters for Westwell (JC); 35 voters for Holwell (GS)

Consultation Comments:

Westwell is a short walk from Holwell, or a shorter drive. Many of our residents are elderly and could not get to Filkins.

Recommendation:

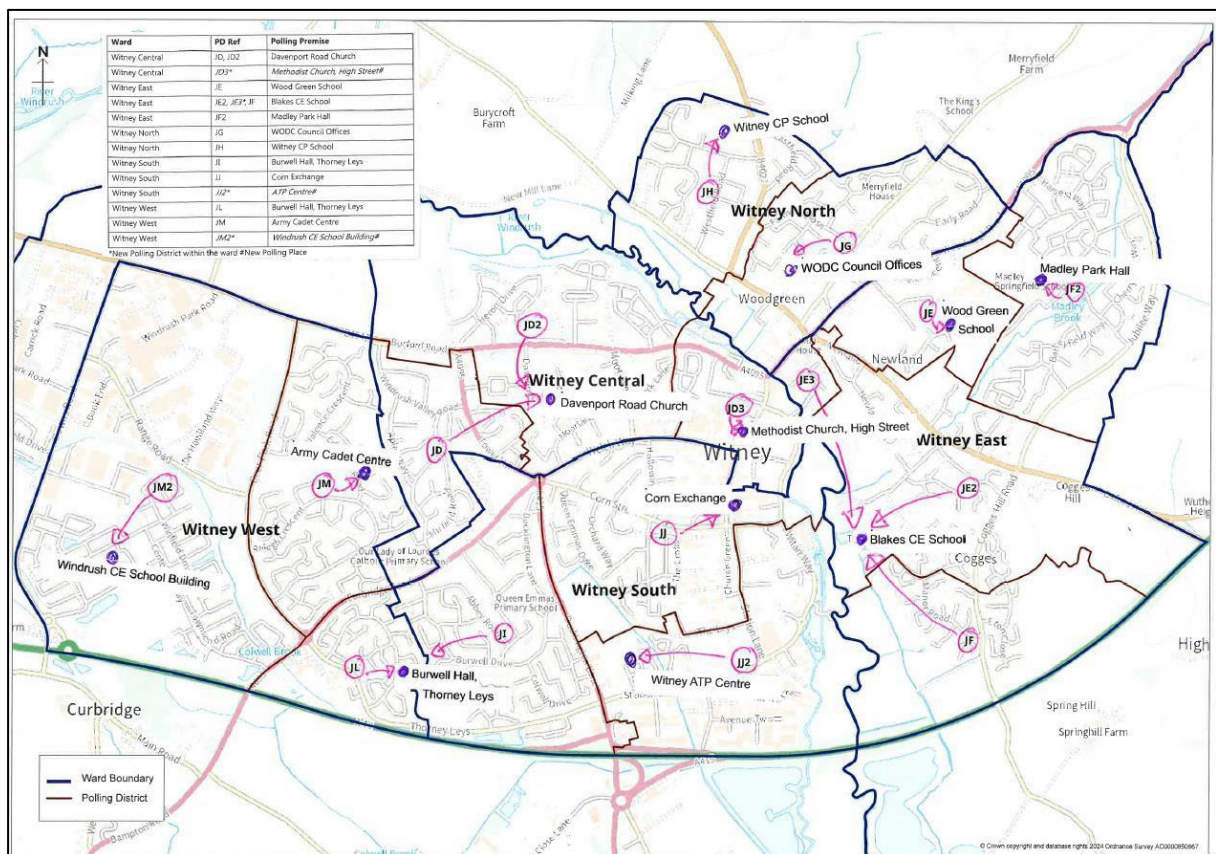
The current polling premise is a residential dwelling which is no longer be available. Alternative accommodation within the village were unable to be sourced. It is recommended to move voters for Westwell and Holwell (JC/GS) to the Filkins Carter Institute as the host polling place.

It is recommended that a further review is implemented following the conclusion of the Local Government Boundary Commission consultation.

Witney

Ward	PD Ref	Polling Premise
Witney Central	JD, JD2	Davenport Road Church
Witney Central	<i>JD3*</i>	<i>Methodist Church, High Street#</i>
Witney East	JE	Wood Green School
Witney East	JE2, <i>JE3*</i> , JF	Blakes CE School
Witney East	JF2	Madley Park Hall
Witney North	JG	WODC Council Offices
Witney North	JH	Witney CP School
Witney South	JL	Burwell Hall, Thorney Leys
Witney South	JJ	Corn Exchange
Witney South	<i>JJ2*</i>	<i>ATP Centre, Gorgon Way#</i>
Witney West	JL	Burwell Hall, Thorney Leys
Witney West	JM	Army Cadet Centre
Witney West	<i>JM2*</i>	<i>Windrush CE School Building#</i>

*New Polling District within the ward #New Polling Place TBC



7) Witney - Davenport Road Methodist Church

Witney Central Ward (Councillors Andrew Coles and Andrew Lyon)

Current JD 1384 electors and JD2 3189 electors

Consultation Comments:

It is difficult to park both at Tower Hill School and the Church. Further to walk for those with mobility problems. Agree with the proposal to move from the School to the Church.

An additional polling station made available for voters in JD2. For residents, this polling district is more central to the town centre, the Corn Exchange would be easier and closer for JD2 voters.

Recommendation:

To retain the use of the Davenport Road Methodist Church as a polling station which is welcomed by the Tower Hill School and community. This will also help with parking issues around the Church if a new polling district is created as explained below.

8) Witney Methodist Church Meeting Room

Witney Central ward (new JD3) (Councillors Andrew Coles and Andrew Lyon)

Consultation Comments:

I would very much welcome this proposal as it would make life significantly easier for people living in the immediate vicinity who currently have to travel all the way up to the Davenport Road Methodist Church to cast their vote.

Recommendation:

To divide the polling district JD2 creating a new polling district within the Witney Central Ward. This would allow for electors who live closer to the High Street to be within a more local vicinity to vote. Contact has been made with the Church with the view of using their adjacent meeting room as a polling station in the future.

9) Witney - Burwell Hall

Witney South (JI) and Witney West (JL) (Councillors Michael Brooker; Rachel Crouch; Stuart McCarroll and Councillors Thomas Ashby and Jane Doughty)

Consultation Comments:

None

Recommendations:

Following the Oxfordshire County Council LGBC review, the JK (Burwell Meadow) has been amalgamated back into the polling district JI. This administratively removes the complications of voting for Burwell Hall, although they are still two different wards, and two different electoral divisions, there will no longer be the additional separate Burwell town ward.

There are no local viable alternative polling places at this time, no comments or suggested alternatives have been received during the consultation.

It is recommended that the current polling premise and polling districts remains unchanged.

10) Witney – Joint Army Cadet Centre, Edington Road and new polling premise Windrush CE School Building

Witney West ward (JM and new JM2) (Councillors Thomas Ashby and Jane Doughty)

Current JM voter numbers 4000

Consultation Comments:

Edington Road Hall never seems to be full, it is quite a trek from Windrush Place.

The only building in the area is Windrush Place/Spring Meadow is the School. Unless a community hall is built.

Windrush Primary School on the Windrush Estate would serve this development and also Colwell Green (Ducklington ward), and the proposed housing development to the south of the golf course.

Recommendation:

It is recommended to create a new polling district to accommodate the electors of 'Spring Meadow' to the west of Deer Park estate.

It is expected that a new Sports pavilion will be constructed and will potentially be available as a polling premise in the future. In the interim the new Windrush CE School has been approached requesting that electors within this new polling district can vote at the school.

With regard to the Colwell Green development in Curbridge (Ducklington ward), this will need to be reviewed again after the Local Government Boundary Commission consultation is complete.

11) Witney ATP Centre, Gordon Way

Witney South ward/Town Council Witney Leys ward (new JJ2) (Councillors Michael Brooker; Rachel Crouch; Stuart McCarroll)

Consultation Comments:

There is an opportunity to add further stations for the Windrush Quay and Leys wards, for example the ATP in Gordon Way for the latter.

Recommendation:

It is recommended to create a new polling district to align with the newly created town ward named Witney Leys consequent to the OCC LGBC consultation/review. It is expected that the premise named ATP sports pavilion will be able to accommodate electors within the Witney Leys polling district in the future.

12) Witney Windrush Quay Town ward

Witney East ward (new JE3) (Councillors Joy Aitman, Duncan Enright and Ruth Smith)

Consultation Comments:

Blake's C of E School (JE2/JF) highlights the lack of community facilities in all three areas and electoral officers should think creatively for new locations. There is an opportunity to add further stations for the Windrush Quay and Leys wards, for example the ATP in Gordon Way for the latter.

Recommendation:

There is no visible alternative premise that can be located within the Witney East polling district for JE2, JE3 and JF. Witney Mills cricket club is a consideration, although it is on the main busy road with small facilities and car parking, it would not be a suitable venue and would require

a further polling district to be created within Witney East.

It is recommended to retain the use of the Blake School for the new polling district JE3.

I3) Woodstock Town Hall / Blenheim Estate Office

Woodstock and Bladon Ward (FH, JN and JP) (Councillors Julian Cooper and Elizabeth Poskitt)

Consultation Comments:

It is inappropriate to use a commercial facility for a public democratic purpose. Those who manage Blenheim Estate like to give the impression it is a community facility whose purpose is to provide a service to local people and visitors. This is not the case the Estate is a business designed to maximise profit. Using the Estate Office as a Polling Station is effectively endorsing the Estate and its commercial activities, including the promotion of Botley West Solar Farm and the extra 1000 houses it would like to develop in Woodstock in addition to those for which is already has planning permission. WODC needs to retain independence from Blenheim Estate. It is its regulator in many activities.

Recommendation:

To retain the flexibility of voting in the main primary polling venue of the Blenheim Estate Office and if necessary, to hold any ad hoc town vacancies at the Town Hall should the Estate Office be unavailable at that time.

I4) Woodstock Bowls and Tennis Club

Woodstock and Bladon Ward (JO and JQ) (Councillors Julian Cooper and Elizabeth Poskitt)

Consultation Comments:

People have to walk from Old Woodstock which is quite a way. Alternative venues suggested as The Marlborough School, and the Town Hall.

Recommendation:

It is recommended to retain the polling districts JO and JQ as they are and use the Bowls and Tennis Club as a central polling place for both polling district areas. There is no advantage to creating further polling districts for a small number of electors to vote at the Marlborough School. The polling premises are better being retained centrally in the town.

Electoral Services Manager

November 2024

Summary of Polling District Review changes:

Premise	Polling District and Ward	Conclusion	Cost Saving	Change/Action
Black Bourton Church	FF Bampton and Clanfield ward	Retain	None	None
Bradwell Grove Village Hall / Old School House SHILTON	HP Brize Norton and Shilton ward	Retain	None	None
Swerford Village Hall	HX Kingham, Rollright and Enstone ward	Retain	None	None
Swinbrook Village Hall	HY Brize Norton and Shilton ward	HY voter to Asthal for 2025 only	£500	One off expected while essential works are taking place in Swinbrook Village Hall.
Taynton Village Hall	JA Burford ward	JA voters to Burford	£600	Plan for 2025
Westwell, Mitford Cottages	JC/GS Alvescot and Filkins ward	JC/GS Voters to Filkins Carter Institute	£550	Plan for 2025
Witney - Davenport Road Church	JD/JD2 Witney Central ward	Proportion of voters to a new polling district as shown below.	None	None
Witney Methodist Church (possible)	JD3 Witney Central ward	Create new polling district and source new polling premise venue	Additional cost for building hire and staff. IRO £550	Create a new polling district JD3 to be more central, accessible for voters
Witney Blakes School	JE2/JF/JE3 Witney East ward	Retain	None	Create a new polling district JE3 for the defined Windrush Quay town ward. No change to voting location.

Burwell Hall	Jl Witney South ward AND JL Witney West ward	Retain	None	Unable to source a further/alternative venue. With the removal of the JK Witney Burwell town ward, voting will be simpler.
Witney ATP Centre (possible)	JJ2 Witney South (Witney Leys town ward)	Create new polling district and source new polling premise venue	Additional cost for building hire and staff. IRO £550	Create a new polling district JJ2 for the defined Windrush Leys town ward. This will be a new voting location.
Witney - Army Cadet Hall	JM Witney West ward	Retain for JM Voters (Deer Park Estate)	None	No action
Windrush CE School (possible)	JM2 Witney West ward	Create new polling district and source new polling premise venue	Additional cost for building hire and staff. IRO £550	New polling district to be created JM2 which will incorporate voters registered in Spring Meadow. The Deer Park Road creates a natural boundary for the two areas.
Woodstock Town Hall and Blenheim Estate Office	JN, JP, FH Woodstock and Bladon ward	Retain	None	No Action
Woodstock Bowls and Tennis Club	JO, JQ Woodstock and Bladon ward	Retain	None	None This is central to the town and is accessible to JO and JQ voters.

P:\Electoral Registration\Polling Place and Electoral Reviews\Polling Place and PD Review 2024-25\Annex A – Consultation responses and recommendations.docx

This page is intentionally left blank

West Oxfordshire District Council - Polling Districts and Polling Places Review 2024

Background:

What is a Polling District and Polling Places review?

In accordance with the Representation of the People Act 1983 and the Electoral Administration Act 2013, local authorities must undertake a review of all polling districts and polling places used for parliamentary elections every five years.

A polling district is a geographical area that is set for election purposes, and electors who live in the same polling district go to the same polling place to vote. The polling place should be located within the border of the geographical area, if possible.

A polling place is the whole building or area where your polling station is located and where you go to vote. There may be more than one polling station inside the same polling place, depending on how many voters need to vote there.

Purpose of the review

The purpose of the review is to ensure voters have reasonable and practical facilities for voting and that, as far as is reasonable and practicable, polling places are accessible to all electors, and meet the needs of disabled persons.

West Oxfordshire District Council (the Council) is looking for feedback on any aspect of the polling districts and/or polling places currently used and invites representation and comments from interested persons. Local political parties and Councillors will also be consulted, and views are invited from electors and local community groups within the district.

Although the review is of polling districts and polling places it is accepted that polling stations are going to be linked to the review, and comments are invited regarding the stations currently used and/or any suggested alternatives.

What is not covered by the review?

This type of review is concerned only with the administrative subdivision of wards into polling districts, which are then assigned polling places.

The following matters are not considered as part of the review:

- The changing of any district ward boundaries – this can only be done by statute following an electoral review carried out by the Local Government Boundary Commission which is due to be carried out in 2025.
- The changing of polling districts in areas that are also aligned with Parish boundaries – these can only be amended during a Community Governance Review.

Review timetable

The Council are now undertaking the review which must be completed between October 2023 and January 2025. A public consultation for the review will commence on Tuesday 24 September to Monday 4 November, the proposed changes and final proposals will be considered at the Council meeting on Wednesday 27 November 2024.

Office Electoral Services, West Oxfordshire District Council, Council Offices, Woodgreen, Witney, Oxon OX28 1NB

Email: elections@westoxon.gov.uk

Online: <https://www.westoxon.gov.uk/about-the-council/elections-and-voting/polling-districts-and-places/>

Findings and Recommendations:

The response to the consultation returned over 60 responses, via both email and a web-based survey. Listed in the following table and highlighted in yellow are polling places where comments were received, and the recommendation is accordingly made. There were three new polling districts identified to create (highlighted green) a new polling area within the District ward which would allow voters greater ease and convenience to vote.

West Oxfordshire District Council - Polling Districts and Polling Places Review 2024

Polling District(s)	Polling Place	Constituency	District Council Ward	Parishes within Polling District	Comments/Proposed Change
FA	Alvescot Village Hall, The Walk, Alvescot, OX18 2PU	Witney	Alvescot and Filkins Ward	Alvescot	Accessible - No Proposed Change
FJ, GV	Kencot Village Hall, Kencot, GL7 3QT	Witney	Alvescot and Filkins Ward	Broadwell, Kencot	Accessible - No Proposed Change
GH	Filkins Carter Institute, Filkins, Nr Lechlade, GL7 3JQ	Witney	Alvescot and Filkins Ward	Filkins and Broughton Poggs	Accessible - No Proposed Change
GM, GY, HB	Langford Village Hall, Filkins Road, GL7 3LW	Witney	Alvescot and Filkins Ward	Grafton & Radcot, Langford, Little Faringdon	Accessible - No Proposed Change
GS, JC	Westwell - The Conservatory, 5 Mitford Cottages, OX18 4JU	Witney	Alvescot and Filkins Ward	Holwell, Westwell	<p>The current polling premise is a residential dwelling which is no longer be available. Alternative accommodation within the village were unable to be sourced. It is recommended to move voters for Westwell and Holwell (JC/GS) to the Filkins Carter Institute as the host polling place.</p> <p>It is recommended that a further review is implemented following the conclusion of the Local Government Boundary Commission consultation.</p>
GU	Kelmscot Morris Memorial Hall, Kelmscott, GL7 3HG	Witney	Alvescot and Filkins Ward	Kelmscot	Accessible - No Proposed Change
FB	Ascott under Wychwood - Tiddy Hall, Shipton Road, Ascott Under Wychwood, OX7 6AG	Witney	Ascott and Shipton Ward	Ascott under Wychwood	Accessible - No Proposed Change
HD, HQ	Shipton Under Wychwood - Beaconsfield Hall, Station Road, OX7 6BQ	Witney	Ascott and Shipton Ward	Lyneham, Shipton under Wychwood	Accessible - No Proposed Change
FE	Bampton Village Hall, Market Square, Bampton, OX18 2JH	Witney	Bampton and Clanfield Ward	Bampton	Accessible - No Proposed Change

Polling District(s)	Polling Place	Constituency	District Council Ward	Parishes within Polling District	Comments/Proposed Change
FF	Black Bourton - St Mary the Virgin Church, Burford Road, OX18 2PQ	Witney	Bampton and Clanfield Ward	Black Bourton	Further to the views and responses of the consultation, and the recent refurbishment of the Church to create a Community space, it would be recommended to retain the Church as a polling place for future elections.
FV	Clanfield - The Carter Institute, The Green, OX18 2SR	Witney	Bampton and Clanfield Ward	Clanfield	Accessible - No Proposed Change
FC	Asthall Leigh Memorial Hall, Minster Road, OX29 9PX	Witney	Brize Norton and Shilton Ward	Asthall Leigh	Accessible - No Proposed Change
FI	Brize Norton Elder Bank Hall, Station Road, Brize Norton, OX18 3PS	Witney	Brize Norton and Shilton Ward	Brize Norton	Accessible - No Proposed Change
HP	Shilton - The Old School, Church Lane, Shilton, OX18 4AE	Witney	Brize Norton and Shilton Ward	Shilton	Consideration was made with creating a further polling district to accommodate voters in Bradwell Grove. However, due to the ongoing consultation Local Government Boundary Review, it is recommended that the Old School, Shilton village remains the primary voting location and a further review is implemented following the conclusion of the LGBC.
HY	Swinbrook Village Hall, Swinbrook, OX18 4DY	Witney	Brize Norton and Shilton Ward	Swinbrook	Swinbrook Village Hall is scheduled to have works carried out during the 2025. It is recommended that Asthal Village Hall is used as a dual polling premise for 2025 election owing to both parishes being within the same District ward. Although these are small villages' they both have strong community uses for their respective village halls and would not recommend that they are merged for voting in one premises for future polls.
FL, GK	Burford - Warwick Hall, Church Green, Burford, OX18 4RY	Witney	Burford Ward	Burford, Fulbrook	Accessible - No Proposed Change
JA	Taynton Village Hall, Taynton, OX18 4UH	Witney	Burford Ward	Taynton	There were no objections received to moving Taynton voters (JA) to vote at the polling premise in Burford, Warwick Hall. It is recommended to make this change for 2025 onwards.

Polling District(s)	Polling Place	Constituency	District Council Ward	Parishes within Polling District	Comments/Proposed Change
FM3	Carterton Methodist Church and Hall, Burford Road, OX18 3AG	Witney	Carterton North East Ward	Carterton Upavon Town Ward	Accessible - No Proposed Change
FM4	Carterton Community Centre - The Small Hall, Shilton Park, OX18 1AX	Witney	Carterton North East Ward	Carterton Upavon Town Ward	Accessible - No Proposed Change
FM	Carterton Methodist Church and Hall, Burford Road, OX18 3AG	Witney	Carterton North West Ward	Carterton Rock Farm Town Ward	Accessible - No Proposed Change
FM2	Carterton - Army Cadet Force Hut, Swinbrook Road, Carterton, OX18 1DU	Witney	Carterton North West Ward	Carterton Shillbrook Town Ward	Accessible - No Proposed Change
FN, FN2	Carterton Town Hall, Alvescot Road, OX18 3JL	Witney	Carterton South Ward	Carterton Gateway Town Ward	Accessible - No Proposed Change
FP, FS, FX	Chadlington Memorial Hall, Chapel Road, OX7 3NA	Banbury	Chadlington and Churchill Ward	Chadlington, Chilson, Cornbury & Wychwood	Accessible - No Proposed Change
FU, HO	Churchill Village Hall, Church Road, OX7 6NJ	Banbury	Chadlington and Churchill Ward	Churchill, Sarsden	Accessible - No Proposed Change
HS	Spelsbury War Memorial Hall, Charlbury Road, Spelsbury, OX7 3JR	Banbury	Chadlington and Churchill Ward	Spelsbury	Accessible - No Proposed Change
FQ	Charlbury War Memorial Hall, Browns Lane, OX7 3QW	Banbury	Charlbury and Finstock Ward	Charlbury	Accessible - No Proposed Change
GF, GI	Finstock Village Hall, Well Hill, OX7 3BU	Banbury	Charlbury and Finstock Ward	Fawler, Finstock	Accessible - No Proposed Change
FT	Chipping Norton Town Hall, Market Place, OX7 5FB	Banbury	Chipping Norton Ward	Chipping Norton	Accessible - No Proposed Change
GA, HA	Curbridge Parish Hall, Main Road, OX29 7NT	Witney	Ducklington Ward	Curbridge, Lew	Accessible - No Proposed Change
GC	Ducklington Village Hall, Standlake Road, OX29 7UX	Witney	Ducklington Ward	Ducklington	Accessible - No Proposed Change

Polling District(s)	Polling Place	Constituency	District Council Ward	Parishes within Polling District	Comments/Proposed Change
FO	Cassington Village Hall, The Green, OX29 4DN	Bicester and Woodstock	Eynsham and Cassington Ward	Cassington	Accessible - No Proposed Change
GE	Eynsham Village Hall, Back Lane, OX29 4QW	Bicester and Woodstock	Eynsham and Cassington Ward	Eynsham	Accessible - No Proposed Change
HR	South Leigh and High Cogges Village Hall, South Leigh, OX29 6UR	Bicester and Woodstock	Eynsham and Cassington Ward	South Leigh & High Cogges	Accessible - No Proposed Change
GJ	Freeland Village Hall, Newell Room, Wroslyn Road, OX29 8AQ	Bicester and Woodstock	Freeland and Hanborough Ward	Freeland	Accessible - No Proposed Change
GP	Hanborough - The Pavilion, Playing Field, Roosevelt Road, OX29 8JG	Bicester and Woodstock	Freeland and Hanborough Ward	Hanborough	Accessible - No Proposed Change
FZ, GO	Hailey Village Hall, Middletown, OX29 9UA	Witney	Hailey, Minster Lovell and Leafield Ward	Crawley, Hailey	Accessible - No Proposed Change
GZ	Leafield New Village Hall, Lower End, OX29 9QJ	Witney	Hailey, Minster Lovell and Leafield Ward	Leafield	Accessible - No Proposed Change
HF	Minster Lovell - St. Kenelms Hall, Brize Norton Road, OX29 0SE	Witney	Hailey, Minster Lovell and Leafield Ward	Minster Lovell	Accessible - No Proposed Change
HJ	Ramsden Memorial Hall, High Street, OX7 3AU	Witney	Hailey, Minster Lovell and Leafield Ward	Ramsden	Accessible - No Proposed Change
FR, FY, GX	Kingham Village Hall, West Street, OX7 6YQ	Banbury	Kingham, Rollright and Enstone Ward	Chastleton, Cornwell, Kingham	Accessible - No Proposed Change
GD	Enstone Parish Hall, The Paddocks, OX7 4AZ	Banbury	Kingham, Rollright and Enstone Ward	Enstone	Accessible - No Proposed Change
GN, HC	Great Tew - The Tew Centre, Ledwell Road, OX7 4AF	Banbury	Kingham, Rollright and Enstone Ward	Great Tew, Little Tew	Accessible - No Proposed Change.
GR, HI	Over Norton Village Hall, Choicehill Road, OX7 5PP	Banbury	Kingham, Rollright and Enstone Ward	Heythrop, Over Norton	Accessible - No Proposed Change

Polling District(s)	Polling Place	Constituency	District Council Ward	Parishes within Polling District	Comments/Proposed Change
HK	Great Rollright Village Hall, Great Rollright, High Street, OX7 5RY	Banbury	Kingham, Rollright and Enstone Ward	Great Rollright	Accessible - No Proposed Change
HM	Salford Village Hall, Salford, OX7 5YP	Banbury	Kingham, Rollright and Enstone Ward	Salford	Accessible - No Proposed Change
HX	Swerford Village Hall, Between Towns Lane, Swerford, OX7 4BB	Banbury	Kingham, Rollright and Enstone Ward	Swerford	The response to the survey determined that Swerford Village Hall should remain as a polling place for future elections at this time.
FK, HE	Milton under Wychwood Village Hall, Shipton Road, Milton under Wychwood, OX7 6JW	Witney	Milton under Wychwood Ward	Bruern, Milton under Wychwood	Accessible - No Proposed Change
GG, GT	Fifield Parish Hall, High Street, OX7 6HL	Witney	Milton under Wychwood Ward	Fifield, Idbury	Accessible - No Proposed Change
HG	North Leigh Memorial Hall, Park Road, OX29 6SA	Bicester and Woodstock	North Leigh Ward	North Leigh	Accessible - No Proposed Change
FD	Aston New Village Hall, Cote Road, Aston, OX18 2DU	Witney	Standlake, Aston and Stanton Harcourt Ward	Aston, Cote, Shifford & Chimney	Accessible - No Proposed Change
GQ, HT	Standlake Village Hall, Rack End, OX29 7SB	Witney	Standlake, Aston and Stanton Harcourt Ward	Hardwick with Yelford, Standlake	Accessible - No Proposed Change
HH	Northmoor Village Hall, Northmoor, OX29 5SX	Witney	Standlake, Aston and Stanton Harcourt Ward	Northmoor	Accessible - No Proposed Change
HU	Stanton Harcourt Millennium & Memorial Hall, Blackditch, Stanton Harcourt, OX29 5SB	Witney	Standlake, Aston and Stanton Harcourt Ward	Stanton Harcourt	Accessible - No Proposed Change
FW	Combe Reading Room, The Green, OX29 8NT	Bicester and Woodstock	Stonesfield and Tackley Ward	Combe	Accessible - No Proposed Change
GL, GW, JR	Wootton Village Hall, Church Street, OX20 1DZ	Bicester and Woodstock	Stonesfield and Tackley Ward	Glympton, Kiddington with Asterleigh, Wootton	Accessible - No Proposed Change
HL, HZ	Tackley Village Hall, 27 Medcroft Road, Tackley, OX5 3AH	Bicester and Woodstock	Stonesfield and Tackley Ward	Rousham, Tackley	Accessible - No Proposed Change

Polling District(s)	Polling Place	Constituency	District Council Ward	Parishes within Polling District	Comments/Proposed Change
HW	Stonesfield Village Hall, Field Close, Stonesfield, OX29 8HA	Bicester and Woodstock	Stonesfield and Tackley Ward	Stonesfield	Accessible - No Proposed Change
HN, JS	Sandford St Martin Parish Hall, Sandford St Martin, OX7 7AH	Banbury	The Bartons Ward	Sandford St. Martin, Worton	Accessible - No Proposed Change
HV, JB	Middle Barton Memorial Sports & Social Club, Worton Road, Middle Barton, OX7 7EE	Banbury	The Bartons Ward	Steeple Barton, Westcot Barton	Accessible - No Proposed Change
JD	Witney - Ceewood Hall, Fettiplace Road, Witney, OX28 5AR	Witney	Witney Central Ward	Witney Central Town Ward	Accessible - No Proposed Change
JD2	Witney - Davenport Road Methodist Church, Davenport Road, Witney, OX28 6EJ	Witney	Witney Central Ward	Witney Central Town Ward	To retain the use of the Davenport Road Methodist Church as a polling station which is welcomed by the Tower Hill School and community. This will also help with parking issues around the Church if a new polling district is created as explained below.
JE	Witney - Wood Green School, Woodstock Road, OX28 1DZ	Witney	Witney East Ward	Witney East Town Ward	Accessible - No Proposed Change
JE2. JF	Witney - Blake C.E. School, The Main Hall, Cogges Hill Road, OX28 3FR	Witney	Witney East Ward	Witney East Town Ward	Accessible - No Proposed Change
JF2	Witney - Madley Park Hall, Northfield Farm Lane, OX28 1UE	Witney	Witney East Ward	Witney East Town Ward	Accessible - No Proposed Change
JG	Witney - WODC Committee Room 1, Council Offices, Woodgreen, OX28 1NB	Witney	Witney North Ward	Witney North Town Ward	Accessible - No Proposed Change
JH	Witney - Witney C.P.School, Hailey Road, Witney, OX28 1HL	Witney	Witney North Ward	Witney North Town Ward	Accessible - No Proposed Change
JI, JK	Witney - Burwell Hall, Thorney Leys, Witney, OX28 5NP	Witney	Witney South Ward	Witney South Town Ward	The polling place is small for three polling stations within it. Complications arise where there is a mix of wards, town wards and county electoral divisions. The polling district for 'JI and JK' consists of Witney West residential areas including the 'Burwell Estate, and Burwell Meadow', it is recommended to seek an alternative polling premise for JI and JK polling districts.


Polling District(s)	Polling Place	Constituency	District Council Ward	Parishes within Polling District	Comments/Proposed Change
JJ	Witney - Corn Exchange, Market Square, Witney, OX28 6AB	Witney	Witney South Ward	Witney South Town Ward	Accessible - No Proposed Change
JL	Witney - Burwell Hall, Thorney Leys, Witney, OX28 5NP	Witney	Witney West Ward	Witney West Town Ward	<p>Following the Oxfordshire County Council LGBC review, the JK (Burwell Meadow) has been amalgamated back into the polling district JI. This administratively removes the complications of voting for Burwell Hall, although they are still two different wards, and two different electoral divisions, there will no longer be the additional separate Burwell town ward.</p> <p>There are no local viable alternative polling places at this time, no comments or suggested alternatives have been received during the consultation.</p>
JM	Witney - The Joint Cadet Centre, Edington Square, OX28 5YP	Witney	Witney West Ward	Witney West Town Ward	<p>It is recommended to create a new polling district to accommodate the electors of 'Spring Meadow' to the west of Deer Park estate.</p> <p>It is expected that a new Sports pavilion will be constructed and will potentially be available as a polling premise in the future. In the interim the new Windrush CE School has been approached requesting that electors within this new polling district can vote at the school.</p> <p>With regard to the Colwell Green development in Curbridge (Ducklington ward), this will need to be reviewed again after the Local Government Boundary Commission consultation is complete.</p>
FG	Bladon Church Room, Church Street, Bladon, OX20 1RS	Bicester and Woodstock	Woodstock and Bladon Ward	Bladon	Accessible - No Proposed Change
FH, JN, JP	Woodstock - Blenheim Estate Office, Woodstock Gate - Blenheim Palace, Park Street, OX20 1PP	Bicester and Woodstock	Woodstock and Bladon Ward	Blenheim, Woodstock No.1, Woodstock No.3	To retain the flexibility of voting in the main primary polling venue of the Blenheim Estate Office and if necessary, to hold any ad hoc town vacancies at the Town Hall should the Estate Office be unavailable at that time.
JO, JQ	Woodstock Bowls and Tennis Club, Cadogan Park, Woodstock, OX20 1UW	Bicester and Woodstock	Woodstock and Bladon Ward	Woodstock No.2, Woodstock No.4	It is recommended to retain the polling districts JO and JQ as they are and use the Bowls and Tennis Club as a central polling place for both polling

Polling District(s)	Polling Place	Constituency	District Council Ward	Parishes within Polling District	Comments/Proposed Change
					district areas. There is no advantage to creating further polling districts for a small number of electors to vote at the Marlborough School. The polling premises are better being retained centrally in the town.
NEW: JD3	Possible: Witney Methodist Church Meeting Room	Witney	Witney Central Ward	Witney Central No.3	To divide the polling district JD2 creating a new polling district within the Witney Central Ward. This would allow for electors who live closer to the High Street to be within a more local vicinity to vote. Contact has been made with the Church with the view of using their adjacent meeting room as a polling station in the future.
NEW JJ2	New: Witney Artificial Turf Pitch Hall	Witney	Witney South Ward	Witney South No. 3 (Witney Leys Town Ward)	It is recommended to create a new polling district to align with the newly created town ward named Witney Leys consequent to the OCC LGBC consultation/review. It is expected that the premise named ATP sports pavilion will be able to accommodate electors within the Witney Leys polling district in the future.
NEW JE3	Witney - Blake C.E. School, The Main Hall, Cogges Hill Road, OX28 3FR	Witney	Witney East Ward	Witney East No.2a (Witney Quays Town Ward)	There is no visible alternative premise that can be located within the Witney East polling district for JE2. JE3 and JF. Witney Mills cricket club is a consideration, although it is on the main busy road with small facilities and car parking, it would not be a suitable venue and would require a further polling district to be created within Witney East. It is recommended to retain the use of the Blake School for the new polling district JE3 which is a division of JE2.

(Acting) Returning Officer - Witney Constituency
 West Oxfordshire District Council
 Council Offices
 Woodgreen, Witney
 Oxon OX28 1NB

Electoral Services Manager - 13 November 2024

P:\Electoral Registration\Polling Place and Electoral Reviews\Polling Place and PD Review 2024-25\Annex B Recommendations 2024 (All areas)(Sept2024).docx

 WEST OXFORDSHIRE DISTRICT COUNCIL	WEST OXFORDSHIRE DISTRICT COUNCIL
Name and Date of Committee	COUNCIL – 27 NOVEMBER 2024
Subject	RESULTS OF MEMBER SURVEY ON COUNCIL START TIMES FOLLOWING 4PM TRIAL
Wards Affected	None
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@publicagroup.uk
Report Author	Andrew Brown – Democratic Services Business Manager. Email: andrew.brown@publicagroup.uk
Purpose	To report to Council the results of the Member Survey on Council start times which Council agreed to undertake following a trial of a 4.00pm start time for the 25 September full Council meeting.
Annexes	Annex A – Summary of Survey Responses Annex B – Detailed Survey responses
Recommendations	That Council resolves to: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Note the report. 2. Consider any proposal to change the start time of future Council meetings from the default start time of 2.00pm.
Corporate Priorities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Working Together for West Oxfordshire
Key Decision	NO
Exempt	NO
Consultees/ Consultation	A survey was circulated to all Members of the Council.

1. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

- 1.1 This report presents the results of a survey circulated to all members on preferred start times for full Council meetings following a trial of a 4pm start time at the 25 September 2024 full Council meeting.

2. BACKGROUND

- 2.1 Full Council meetings currently start at 2.00pm. Council on 22 May 2024 considered a proposal to trial a 6.00pm start time for the full Council meeting on 25 September 2024. Council agreed to defer the decision pending all members being surveyed on their preferred start times. A survey was circulated to all members on 23 May 2024 with a response deadline of 5 July 2024. 32 responses were received, representing a response rate of 65%.
- 2.2 Council on 24 July 2024 received the survey responses and agreed to trial a 4pm start time at the 25 September 2024 full Council meeting. Following that trial a further survey was circulated to all Members on 13 October with a response deadline of 9 November to which 31 Members responded, a response rate of 63%.

3. SURVEY RESULTS

- 3.1 The results of the survey are set out in Annex A and Annex B. Of the 31 Members who responded, 13 (42%) favoured retaining a 2.00pm start time, 12 (39%) favoured moving to 4pm and 6 (19%) were unsure.

4. ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS

- 4.1 Council is responsible for setting the meeting times of full Council. The status quo is 2.00pm and the favoured alternative based on the responses to the first survey was 4.00pm.

5. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

- 5.1 There are no financial implications.

6. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

- 6.1 There are no legal implications.

7. RISK ASSESSMENT

- 7.1 There are no significant risks.

8. EQUALITIES IMPACT

- 8.1 Council will have due regard to equalities issues when agreeing any changes to meeting start times.

9. CLIMATE AND ECOLOGICAL EMERGENCIES IMPLICATIONS

- 9.1 There are no climate and ecological emergencies implications.

10. BACKGROUND PAPERS

10.1 None.

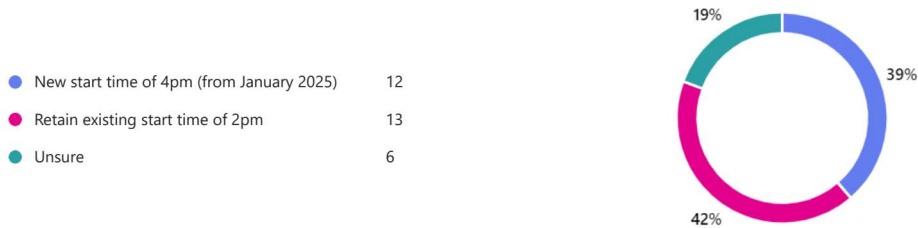
(END)

This page is intentionally left blank

Responses Overview Active

Responses 31	Average Time 04:31	Duration 28 Days
------------------------	------------------------------	----------------------------

1. Following the recent trial of a 4:00pm start time for full Council, would you prefer to have 4:00pm as the new start time for full Council meetings going forward or retain the 2:00pm start time?



2. Following the trial, are there any comments (for example about ease of attending or issues that are more or less problematic) that you would like to make regarding the start times of meetings?

31

Responses

Latest Responses

"I am not opposed to 4pm start time, but 2pm works better for me. However, I ap... "

"If starting at 4pm this may not finish by 6 or 7pm which could impact on evening ..."

"While it was possible to make it just about in time, for me it was the narrowest of..."

...



This page is intentionally left blank

1	Givers officers more time to prepare and more practical with other commitments
2	Whilst I have indicated a 2pm start time , I have no strong feeling either way but there isn't a box for that . I am sure I have no preference !
3	4:00pm worked well as it enabled pre-work etc to fit within the afternoon and evening slot and did not encroach into the morning.
4	No
5	No, it makes little difference to me and there is no time that will suit everyone, so I don't have any particular comments to make.
6	No
7	I often have an evening meeting which would leave very little time to prepare and eat a meal if Council was at 4.00pm
8	No
9	The 4pm start suited me
10	The 4pm start was considerably less disruptive to my work day than a 2pm, and still early enough to be back for the kids bedtime
11	4.00 pm impacts on my ability to attend parish meetings
12	I am happy to go along with the majority view as I think those who are employed full-time are most affected
13	I felt it worked really well starting at 4pm , My Employers really appreciated the time, and it gave me much more time to complete my day job work load.
14	No
15	The new time of 4.00 made it possible for me to attend work and then leave to take part in the meeting. It meant that I was not under pressure which for someone with mental health issues helped me to deal with the anxiety of trying to make a meeting, and ensure that my work commitments were met. It also meant that ward residents were able to watch the meeting on line and feedback with observations.
16	I find 2pm less disruptive of my day.
17	The later time may conflict with attendance at Parish Council meetings, although this is more of an issue if the Council start time is 6pm.
18	No
19	4PM works really well. As someone who works Full-Time, this allows me to start work an hour or so earlier, but still fit in a working day, even if a Group Meeting is at 3PM.

20	Easier to work in the day and then attend the council meeting.
21	It seems easier for all.
22	14.00 easier in structure and timing.
23	Later starting meetings make it harder for some working councillors to attend, particularly shift workers and those with child care commitments. It also limits opportunities for briefings and training after meetings.
24	I am happy with either 2pm or 4pm
25	Either time suits me equally for most occasions. I am happy to go with others' decisions.
26	I don't see how pre-meetings and training and briefings after full council can work around 4pm. The whole culture of appending things to Full Council would have to change to make it a sleek and efficient 4pm meeting. As a teacher, starting at 4pm removes my right to request time off (bar being excused from meetings on occasion) but any less formal meetings earlier would be off limits to me. I would almost prefer 6pm or 7pm, to allow 5pm extra meetings. But 2pm works as things stand. On behalf of others, 4pm impinges on times later than regular daytime childcare and after school clubs. This particularly affects lone parents. And the later time affects those doing evening shifts.
27	Work would prohibit me being available for 1600hr starts I'm afraid.
28	No comments
29	While it was possible to make it just about in time, for me it was the narrowest of windows to do school pick up and take kids to child minders then chance my luck with Bridge street and I would have needed to depart by 6pm regardless of the progress on the agenda. I'd like to be able to continue to attend and remain throughout.
30	If starting at 4pm this may not finish by 6 or 7pm which could impact on evening community meetings etc. Also rest of WODC is closed down by the end of the meeting so not as easy to meet with council employees afterwards.
31	I am not opposed to 4pm start time, but 2pm works better for me. However, I appreciate that there are members for whom the start time makes a significant difference.

By virtue of paragraph(s) 1, 3 of Part 1 of Schedule 12A
of the Local Government Act 1972.

Document is Restricted

This page is intentionally left blank

By virtue of paragraph(s) 1, 3 of Part 1 of Schedule 12A
of the Local Government Act 1972.

Document is Restricted

This page is intentionally left blank

By virtue of paragraph(s) 1, 3 of Part 1 of Schedule 12A
of the Local Government Act 1972.

Document is Restricted

This page is intentionally left blank

By virtue of paragraph(s) 1, 3 of Part 1 of Schedule 12A
of the Local Government Act 1972.

Document is Restricted

This page is intentionally left blank

By virtue of paragraph(s) 1, 3 of Part 1 of Schedule 12A
of the Local Government Act 1972.

Document is Restricted

This page is intentionally left blank

By virtue of paragraph(s) 1, 3 of Part 1 of Schedule 12A
of the Local Government Act 1972.

Document is Restricted

This page is intentionally left blank