

Tuesday, 21 January 2025

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, 29 January 2025 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. **Minutes of Previous Meeting (Pages 5 - 18)**
To approve the minutes of the meeting held on 27 November 2024 and the Extraordinary Council meeting held on 20 January 2025.
2. **Apologies for Absence**
To receive any apologies for absence.
3. **Declarations of Interest**
To receive any declarations from Members of the Committee on any items to be considered at the meeting.
4. **Receipt of Announcements**
To receive any announcements from The Chairman, Leader, Members of the Executive or the Head of Paid Service.
5. **Participation of the Public**
There were no submissions for public participation received by Democratic Services before the deadline of 12.00pm on Monday 20 January 2025.
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 Roger Faulkner to Councillor Alaric Smith, Executive Member for Finance:

What extra financial provision is included in the budget to meet the increased cost of rubbish collection for the inevitable increase in fly tipping following the proposed introduction of a booking system at our household disposal sites.

Recommendations from the Executive and the Council's Committees

7. **Recommendations from the Executive (Pages 19 - 24)**
Purpose:
To receive and consider recommendations made by the Executive and the Council's Committees in the period since 27 November 2024.
Recommendation:
That the recommendations set out in Appendix I to the report be adopted.

Reports from Officers

8. Council meetings programme 2025/26 (Pages 25 - 38)

Purpose

To invite Council to set a programme of Council and Committee meetings for the civic year 2025–2026.

Recommendations

That Council Resolves to:

1. Approve the Programme of Meetings for 2025/26, as detailed at Annex A and Annex B;
2. Delegate authority to the Director of Governance, in consultation with Group Leaders, to make changes to the programme of meetings, in the event that there is any future decision of the Council to change the committee structure, frequencies of committees or sub-committees, or committee remits that impacts the programme of meetings;
3. Delegate authority to the Head of Democratic and Electoral Services to set meeting dates for committees and sub-committees that meet on an ad-hoc basis (Performance and Appointments Committee, Development Control Committee, Licensing Committee, Licensing Panel, Miscellaneous Licensing Sub-Committee, Standards Sub-Committee), member training, member briefing sessions, and any further working groups established by the Council.

9. Motion A: Sewage pollution and Thames Water - Proposed by Councillor Lidia Arciszewska

In 2024 Thames Water discharged raw sewage from their storm overflow tanks into West Oxfordshire rivers for 27.4 thousand hours, that is a 25% increase on discharges in the previous year and on average 1,600 hours of spilling from each of the WO Sewage Treatment Works. [To put it in perspective 1,400 hrs is equivalent to about two months.] Year on year increasing levels of untreated sewage are being discharged. These spills take place following even slight rain, although TW have permits to discharge raw sewage ONLY under exceptional circumstances.

Consequently, the current ecological status of West Oxfordshire rivers is catastrophic. Once beautiful and bountiful with vibrant life our rivers are now murky, dull and lifeless.

Moreover, we have a number of perennial problem areas in the villages across West Oxfordshire, where sewage notoriously backs up the residents' toilets, spills into their gardens, roads, public spaces and fields. All because the sewerage network is often overwhelmed following decades of underinvestment.

The Council has committed to reducing sewage pollution of our rivers and waterways and engaged with Thames Water during regular discussions. We have had some great successes. However, the problems with Thames Water are fundamental and their resolution is far above of what the local authority can do.

Since Thames Water was privatised in 1989, the company has enjoyed great profits, and paid their shareholders, 80% of whom are overseas, some handsome dividends. It has also been rewarding their CEOs with enormous salaries and bonuses. At the same time the company has been 'sweating' the assets and cutting down staff numbers. Moreover, it managed to accumulate £18bn in debts. With this amount of debt the company is in no position to make necessary investments to get our rivers clean. It is estimated that

Thames Water needs about £23bn to bring its crumbling infrastructure to the required capacity. The lack of this infrastructure will hold back the ambitions of the government to build the homes that we need.

Thames Water is currently trying to get a further £3bn loan at an eye watering 9.75% interest and with hefty service charges. Just before Christmas OFWAT agreed for the company to increase its customers' bills by 35% by 2030, though most of the increases will take place in the next couple of years. If TW get the loan, 46% of each customer bill payments will be funding Thames Water debt interest payments. This is not acceptable.

The only way out of the current impasse is for the Government to place Thames Water into a Special Administration Regime and consider moving it into a non-profit or community benefit company.

The Council resolves:

- I. Ask the Council Leader to write to Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, Steve Reed, to request that Thames Water be put into a Special Administration Regime and then moved to a non-profit corporation or community benefit company.

10. **Exclusion of Public and Press**

If Council wishes to exclude the press and the public from the meeting during consideration of any of the items 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 of the Local Government Act 1972 on the grounds that their presence could involve the likely disclosure of exempt information as described in paragraph 3 of Schedule 12A of the Local Government Act 1972.

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.

11. **Recommendations from Executive - Waste and Environmental Service Review - Exempt Appendix 2 (Pages 39 - 120)**

(END)