

# Public Document Pack



Tuesday, 13 May 2025

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## COUNCIL

You are summoned to a meeting of the Council which will be held at Council Offices, Woodgreen, Witney, Oxfordshire OX28 1NB on **Wednesday, 21 May 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, Sandra Cosier, 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, 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. **Election of Chair for 2025/26**

Purpose:

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

Recommendation:

That Council resolves to:

- Elect a Chair of the Council for a term of office extending to the start of the Annual Council meeting in May 2026.

2. **Appointment of Vice-Chair for 2025/26**

Purpose:

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

Recommendation:

That Council resolves to:

- I. Appoint a Vice-Chair of the Council for a term of office extending to the start of the Annual Council meeting in May 2026.

3. **Apologies for Absence**

To receive any apologies for absence.

4. **Declarations of Interest**

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

5. **Minutes of Previous Meeting (Pages 5 - 14)**

To approve the minutes of the meeting held on 19 March 2025.

6. **Receipt of Announcements**

To receive any announcements from the Chair, Leader, Members of the Executive, Head of Paid Service, Chief Finance Officer and/or Monitoring Officer.

7. **Vote of thanks to the Chair and Vice-Chair 2024/25**

To give a vote of thanks to the Chair and Vice-Chair of the Council for 2024/25.

8. **Report of the Leader**

Purpose:

To receive a verbal report from the Leader covering:

- The appointment of the Deputy Leader;
- The appointment of Executive Members and the allocation of portfolio responsibilities;
- The appointment of an Executive Member to the Oxfordshire Leaders Joint Committee (normally the Leader);
- The appointment of a substitute member to the Oxfordshire Leaders Joint Committee, which could be a named Executive Member or any Executive

Members;

- Confirmation that the Executive Scheme of Delegation is as set out in Parts 3D and 4 of the Constitution;

Recommendation:

That Council resolves to:

- I. Note the Report of the Leader.

9. **Report on special urgency key decisions (Pages 15 - 22)**

Purpose

To receive a report from the Leader on key decisions taken under special urgency rules within the last year.

Recommendation

That Council resolves to:

- I. Note the report

10. **Appointment of Members to the Council's Committees, including Substitute Members (Pages 23 - 38)**

Purpose

To establish the Council's committees for the 2025/26 Civic Year and appoint members to committees and working groups:

- To establish the Council's committees as defined in Part 3C of the Council's Constitution, for the Civic Year 2025/26;
- To establish the allocation of seats to political groups based on political proportionality;
- To appoint members to the Council's committees, working groups and external committees for the Civic Year 2025/26.

Recommendations

That Council resolves to:

1. Agree to establish the Council's Committees as defined in Part 3 of the Council's Constitution, for the Civic Year 2025/26;
2. Determine that, in accordance with Section 15 of the Local Government and Housing Act 1989 ("the Act"), the Council shall continue to apply the political balance provisions under the Act to committees as shown in Annex A;
3. Appoint councillors to serve on the Council's committees, working groups and external committees, as set out in Annex B for a term of office expiring at the next Annual Meeting of the Council;
4. Note the arrangements for substitute members set out in part 5 of the report;
5. Agree the terms of reference for the Carterton Area Strategy Working Group;
6. Agree the terms of reference for the Local Government Reorganisation and Devolution Working Group;
7. Agree the updated terms of reference for the Local Plan Cross Party Working Group.

11. **Constitution Working Group Recommendations (Pages 39 - 50)**

Purpose

To present the Council with recommendations arising from a meeting of the Constitution Working Group held on 26 March 2025. To also agree the Scheme of Officer Delegations, other than those relating to Executive functions and to adopt the Council's Constitution, as amended, as is required at the Annual Council meeting.

Recommendations

That Council resolves to:

1. Adopt the Council's Constitution and agree the Scheme of Officer Delegations, other than those relating to Executive functions, as set out in Part 4 of the Constitution.
2. Note that the Director of Governance adopted the Council's Contract Procedure Rules in consultation with the Chair of the Constitution Working Group, following the delegation agreed at the 19 March 2025 Council meeting.
3. Agree to amend the number of seats on the Overview and Scrutiny Committee within Part 3C of the Constitution to 15 members (from 24) and the quorum to 4 members (from 6).
4. Note that the Constitution Working Group endorsed the Officer recommendation for further Overview and Scrutiny training for Members.
5. Agree with the Constitution Working Group that the 'full transparency' electronic voting option will be used at meetings of Full Council (with immediate effect), and (from 22 May 2025) Development Control Committee and planning sub-committees.
6. Agree that the Council will not develop a policy for community governance reviews at the current time in view of local government reorganisation.
7. Agree the revised public speaking rules at Annex A, which seek to align the public speaking rules for different meetings, as far as practicable.

12. **Partnerships report (Pages 51 - 56)**

Purpose

To enable the Leader to provide an update to Council on his portfolio responsibility for Strategic Partnerships.

Recommendation

That Council Resolves to:

1. Note the contents of the Strategic Partnership Update.

13. **Dates of Future Meetings**

- 16 July 2025
- 1 October 2025
- 3 December 2025
- 28 January 2026
- 25 February 2026
- 25 March 2026
- 20 May 2026

(END)

## WEST OXFORDSHIRE DISTRICT COUNCIL

### Minutes of the meeting of the Council

Held in the Council Chamber, Council Offices, Woodgreen, Witney, Oxfordshire OX28 1NB  
at 2.00 pm on **Wednesday, 19 March 2025**

### PRESENT

Councillors: Elizabeth Poskitt (Chair), Andrew Coles (Vice-Chair), Lidia Arciszewska, Thomas Ashby, Hugo Ashton, Andrew Beaney, Michael Brooker, Adam Clements, Julian Cooper, 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, Michele Mead, Rosie Pearson, Andrew Prosser, Nigel Ridpath, Carl Rylett, Geoff Saul, Sandra Simpson, Alaric Smith, Ruth Smith, Tim Sumner, Sarah Veasey, Liam Walker, Adrian Walsh and Alistair Wray

Officers: Ana Prelici (Senior Democratic Services Officer), Giles Hughes (Chief Executive Officer), Madhu Richards (Director of Finance), Andrea McCaskie (Director of Governance), Frank Wilson (Group Finance Director - Publica), Phil Martin (Director of Place), Anne Learmonth (Democratic Services Officer) and Maria Harper (Democratic Services Assistant)

### **CL.240 Minutes of Previous Meeting**

Councillor Andy Graham proposed approving the minutes and Councillor Duncan Enright seconded this. The minutes were put to the vote and approved unanimously.

The minutes of the meeting held on 26 February 2025 were approved and signed by the Chair as a correct record.

### **CL.241 Apologies for Absence**

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors; Alex Wilson, David Cooper, Martin McBride, Mark Walker, Joy Aitman, David Melvin, Stuart McCarroll, Steve Cosier and Mike Baggaley.

### **CL.242 Declarations of Interest**

Declarations of Interest were received as follows in regard to the motion on the Botley West Solar Farm:

- Councillor Elizabeth Poskitt stated that she was a representative for Woodstock Town Council on the Botley West Solar Farm Community benefits group.
- Councillor Lidia Arciewska stated that she lived near to the proposed site so it would impact her property
- Councillor Tim Sumner stated that he was a resident impacted by the application.
- Councillor Sarah Veasey also stated that she was a representative on the Botley West Solar Farm Community Benefit Group.

- Councillor Duncan Enright declared that he conducted work for a group called the Community Communications Partnership, which worked on planning matters but not within the District.

#### **CL.243 Receipt of Announcements**

The Chair provided an overview of her civic commitments;

- The raffle and quiz which took place the previous week had been successful. The Chair thanked Members and Officers who attended and purchased tickets, highlighting that their contributions raised £1430. The Chair also thanked the Vice-Chair and his partner for producing the quiz questions.
- The Chair had visited the Branch Community Hub alongside the Chair of Oxfordshire County Council and the Mayor of Chipping Norton. The Chair encouraged other members to visit the Branch, which provided support for people in the community to overcome challenges and barriers.
- The visit to the Hanborough bus museum, referenced in the minutes of the previous meeting, had been cancelled.
- There was a sale of cakes, marmalades, jams and chutneys outside of the Council Chamber that day.

The Chair also wished Councillor Jane Doughty a happy birthday.

The Leader had no announcements.

Councillor Duncan Enright, the Deputy Leader and Executive Member for Economic Development welcomed Hotter Shoes to Marriot's Walk. The Deputy Leader explained that the Council was in the process of recruiting a new communications officer, who would be working on promoting Mariott's Walk. The Deputy Leader also stated that the official opening of the Hexagon Business Centre, in the Council's Elmfield site would take place the following day. A paper would be brought to the Executive to highlight the work undertaken to support businesses, highlighting the use of the UK shared prosperity fund.

Councillor Andrew Prosser, the Executive Member for Climate Action and Nature Recovery, stated that the Council had been successful in securing a £2.3m grant to decarbonise Chipping Norton Leisure Centre. The Executive Member also stated that the Oxfordshire Climate Adaptation Strategy and Route Map had been launched, and that there were steps that everyone needed to take in order to improve resilience. More information would be coming forward on this at a future point.

Councillor Tim Sumner, The Executive Member for Leisure and Major Projects, stated that he had attended the 50 year anniversary celebration of the Windrush leisure centre, which had

Council

19/March2025

provided a range of free family friendly activities. Councillor Sumner stated that the Council was proud of its leisure centres and that it provided a good service.

Councillor Hugo Ashton, the Executive Member for Planning, stated that the Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) draft charging schedule had been submitted for examination, and that following an eight-week public consultation, all feedback had been reviewed and minor amendments made. The next step was a hearing which would take place in the second half of May, followed by a report, likely in June. CIL would apply to smaller developments and would apply to applications that received permission after the date CIL was implemented. The Council had been successful in securing £228,000 of Government funding to assist with the plan making process.

The Chief Executive stated he was deeply saddened to report the sudden passing of Daisy Catterall. Daisy joined Publica as a Customer Service Advisor in January 2020 and then transferred to the Waste Contracts team in 2023. A service of remembrance was held for Daisy the previous day in Cirencester and was attended by over 400 family, friends, and colleagues. The Council held a moment of silence in her memory.

There were no further announcements.

#### **CL.244 Participation of the Public**

There was no participation of the public.

#### **CL.245 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.

Councillor Micheal Brooker raised a point of order under 6A of the Constitution, the Council's Code of Conduct over the use of language in question five. The Chair stated that Members were only able to raise points of order under the Council's procedure rules, and that the code of conduct was not part of this. The Chair reminded members that it was important nonetheless to abide by the code of conduct at all times.

**CL.246 Publica Phase two transition plan**

Councillor Andy Graham, the Leader of the Council, introduced the item. The purpose of the item was to consider the Transition Plan, to note its contents and to approve the recommendations therein. Councillor Graham highlighted the services that were being transitioned, explaining that phase two was smaller, containing 60 roles across the whole partnership as opposed to the 271 roles that were transferred in phase one.

The Leader explained that the hope was that as many of the existing staff would be able to transfer either through TUPE or through an expressions of interest process. Publica would continue to deliver a range of services for the councils.

Councillor Andy Graham proposed accepting the recommendations in the report and Councillor Duncan Enright seconded this proposal, which was put to the vote and agreed unanimously by Council.

Council resolved to:

1. Approve the implementation of Phase 2 of the Publica Transition on the basis of the Phase 2 Transition Plan.
2. Delegate to the Chief Executive in consultation with the Leader of the Council the decision to deal with any final detailed matters arising from the Phase 2 Transition Plan.
3. Delegate authority to the Director of Governance in liaison with the Leader to update the Constitution by making any consequential changes required as a result of Phase 2 of the Publica Transition.
4. Agree to carry out a budget re-basing for the 2026/7 financial year so that the funding provided to Publica is proportionate to the services received.

**CL.247 Provision of an Empty Property Lending Scheme**

The purpose of the item was to consider a loan provider for owners of long-term empty properties who need financial support to bring their properties back into use.

Councillor Andy Graham stated he would be proposing the item, but asked Councillor Alaric Smith to introduce it as he had worked on the details of the project.

Councillor Alaric Smith, the Executive Member for Finance, introduced the item, highlighting the following;

- The report set out a proposed initiative to put vacant homes into use.
- An initial financial investment of £300,000 would be used to create lending pot for repair work to put these properties into use.
- Lending would be at a favourable rate.



19/March2025

- The scheme was aligned to the Council's priorities.
- Should the scheme be approved, it would be for a one year trial period and loans would be available in the coming months.
- The scheme was to be delivered in partnership with Lendology, a not-for-profit social enterprise lender.
- At the end of March 2025, there were 1,128 properties in the district which were empty, and 125 had been vacant for over two years. As many of these homes required financial investment to make them habitable, the scheme would help meet local housing need.

Members asked the following questions for clarity.

- Whether there was a cap on the scheme. The Executive Member explained that the maximum loan amount would be considered in the development of the scheme, but that the indicative average loan amount was £20,000.
- How cost would be recovered if a borrower defaulted on a loan. The Executive Member stated that Lendology would be responsible for collecting the debt and had processes in place, having worked with other councils on similar schemes.
- Whether social housing providers would be able to utilise the scheme. The Executive Member explained that the scheme was currently intended for individual homeowners only.

In debate, members raised the following points;

- Another member of the Executive stated that in discussion with Lendology, it was clear that they would not secure loans against the property, utilising instead other protections such as restrictions on the owners' legal title. Lendology had very low default rates in other areas of the country.
- Whether £20,000 was sufficient. The Executive Member stated that as this was indicative, the final details would need to be worked out with Lendology.
- The item had not gone to the Overview and Scrutiny Committee. The Executive member stated that the Committee's workplan was the responsibility of that Committee, and it could have looked at it as a pre-decision scrutiny item if it had wished to.
- It was stated that temporary accommodation was an expense for the Council, and the Council was likely to make a saving if individuals were placed into permanent accommodation. However, there was no restriction on what would happen to the homes after refurbishment.
- The scheme was welcomed by some for being an imaginative solution.
- The scheme could be used in situations such as when an individual has passed away or moved into a care home, and the family didn't have the money available to renovate the home to bring it back into use.
- Lendology had worked with councils across the country on similar schemes.

- It was felt by some that the scheme should be extended to social housing providers.

In summing up, Councillor Andy Graham stated that the scheme would be reviewed constantly, and that it was a new and proactive scheme that had the ability to help the district's supply of houses.

Councillor Andy Graham proposed accepting the recommendations. Councillor Alaric Smith seconded this proposal, which was put to the vote and agreed by Council

Council resolved to;

1. Approve a capital investment of £300,000 to create a lending pot.
2. Approve an initial set up fee of £30,125.

Voting record- For 34, against 4, abstentions 1, did not vote 0.

#### **CL.248 Recommendations from the Constitution Working Group**

The purpose of the report was to present Council with recommendations arising from meetings of the Constitution Working Group (CWG).

Councillor Alaric Smith, the Chair of the CWG, introduced the item, highlighting the changes to the proposed changes to the Council's Constitution:

- To amend part 5C of the Constitution so that only key decisions would be subject to call-in by the Overview and Scrutiny Committee, consistent with part 3A of the Constitution.
- To amend part 4C of the Constitution so that it included the Chair of the Council as being authorised to apply the common seal of the Council, consistent with Article 2 of the Constitution. To further include the Vice-Chair of the Council and the Director of Place in this authorisation.
- To amend part 3C to make it explicitly clear that the Development Control Committee is responsible for agreeing the Council's responses to nationally Significant Infrastructure Projects, as per the Council's established customs and practice.
- To amend part 4B of the Constitution to include delegations that would allow proactive enforcement work by the Head of the Counter Fraud and Enforcement Unit.

Councillor Smith also stated that the CWG would be meeting on 26 March to consider an updated version of the Council's Contract Procedure Rules. Council was asked to delegate authority to the Director of Governance and Regulatory Services to adopt this following consideration by the CWG and in consultation with the Chair of the CWG.

Councillor Alaric Smith proposed accepting the recommendations, and Councillor Rosie Pearson seconded this. The proposal was put to the vote and agreed by Council.

Council resolved to:

- 1) Agree to remove the following provisions from paragraph 36 of Part 5C of the Constitution to ensure consistency with other parts of the Constitution in setting out which decisions are subject to call in (as shown in Annex A):
  - ii. is taken by the Executive itself; or
  - iii. is taken under powers delegated by the Executive to Page 59 Agenda Item 9 individual Executive Member(s); or
  - iv. is taken under powers delegated by the Executive to a Committee or Sub-Committee.
- 2) Agree to include the Chair of the Council in Part 4C and the Vice Chair of the Council and the Director of Place in both Part 4C and Article 2 as being authorised to apply the common seal of the Council and sign documents (as shown in Annexes B and C).
- 3) Agree to include in the responsibilities of the Development Control Committee at Part 3C responsibility for determining the Council's response to Nationally Significant Infrastructure Projects within the District (as shown in Annex D).
- 4) Agree to include in Part 4B additional delegations to the Head of the Counter Fraud and Enforcement Unit relating to reactive enforcement functions (as shown in Annex E).
- 5) Delegate authority to the Director of Governance, in consultation with the Chair of the Constitution Working Group (which is due to meet on 26 March 2025), to adopt the new Contract Procedure Rules which have been rewritten following the implementation of the Procurement Act 2023.

The recommendations were agreed unanimously.

**CL.249 Motion A: Botley West Solar Farm (proposed by Councillor Roger Faulkner, seconded by Councillor Sarah Veasey)**

Councillor Roger Faulkner proposed the motion which was;

“This Council is deeply concerned about the impact that the Botley West Solar Farm project will have on both the local community and countryside. This Council requests the Leader of the Council to write to the Secretary of State for Energy Security and Net Zero objecting to the proposal.”

Councillor Dan Levy proposed an amendment to the motion, the amended motion would read as follows;

“This Council is deeply concerned about the impact that the Botley West Solar Farm project as currently proposed will have on both the local community and countryside. This Council requests the Leader of the Council to write to the Secretary of State for Energy Security and Net Zero objecting to the proposal. as currently promoted by the developer. This Council also recognises the excellent report written by officers as part of its representations to the Planning Inspectorate, which set out the main issues of concern with the current proposal, and supports WODC in its role as a statutory consultee in the inspection of the proposed scheme.”

In proposing the amendment, Councillor Levy stated that the amendment recognised the work of officers, and the role of the Council as a statutory consultee. Councillor Levy stated that the amendment removed the political angle to the motion.

Councillor Faulkner accepted the amendment to the motion. Councillor Sarah Veasey stated she would be seconding the motion and also accepted the amendment.

The motion was debated as amended. The following points were raised;

- Some members felt that the amendment had improved the motion, and that while there was concern over the impacts that the Botley West solar farm would have on residents, the countryside and heritage, the motion did not identify any specific concerns.
- It was stated by some that sending a letter would not cause any harm.
- It was stated that in debate on the Council’s response to the Botley West application on 24 February, the Development Control Committee had asked that an objection letter be sent, but this had not been done.
- Some members objected the motion on the grounds that the Development Control Committee had already agreed the Council’s response to the application, and that sending a letter would have the risk of contradicting the response, potentially downgrading the role of the Development Control Committee. It was stated that the original report was nuanced and detailed, and that any letter sent would not add anything.
- The importance of the application in decarbonising the country’s energy supply was also raised by some who opposed the motion.
- On the other hand, some members in support of the motion stated that the objections that were being raised were to the specific plan, not against solar in principle and that they did not feel it fulfilled the needs of the community.
- Some Members stated that the amendment had improved the motion, and that it provided recognition of the role of the Development Control Committee and of the response produced by officers.

Council

19/March2025

- Other Members stated that the debate showed why planning matters should remain matters for the Council's planning committees.

Councillor Sarah Veasey spoke as seconder of the motion. Councillor Veasey stated that the proposed development was too large, and that the Council had a duty to represent its parishes and the district's residents.

Councillor Roger Faulkner summed up the debate on the motion. Councillor Faulkner thanked officers for the report outlining the Council's response and stated that the detrimental impact of the application outweighed its benefits. Councillor Faulkner stated that the motion clarified the Council's position and urged members to support the motion

Council resolved to approve the amended Botley West Solar Farm motion as set out above.

Voting record - For 27, Against 7, Abstention 3, Did not vote 1

**CL.250 Motion B: Public Engagement in Council Meetings (proposed by Councillor Michele Mead, seconded by Councillor Liam Walker)**

Councillor Michelle Mead proposed the motion which was:

"Public participation in council meetings is something we should all encourage and support. Currently the council constitution sets out different rules regarding public participation in our meetings. For committee meetings members of the public must register to speak by 10AM on the working day before. For Executive it's by 2PM two clear working days before, and for Full Council it is by 12NOON seven working days before and therefore before the council agenda is published two days later.

In order to improve and encourage public participation in our meetings this council asks the constitution working group to review these deadlines and to report back to full council within six months with an update on any new changes decided by the committee."

In debate it was stated that the current rules seemed to be anomalous.

Councillor Liam Walker supported the motion as seconder but did not speak on it.


Council resolved to approve the Public Engagement in Council Meetings motion as set out above.

The motion was approved unanimously.

Council  
19/March2025

The Meeting closed at 3.23 pm

CHAIR

 <p><b>WEST OXFORDSHIRE DISTRICT COUNCIL</b></p>	<p><b>WEST OXFORDSHIRE DISTRICT COUNCIL</b></p>
<p>Name and date of Committee</p>	<p><b>COUNCIL – 21 MAY 2025</b></p>
<p>Subject</p>	<p><b>DECISIONS TAKEN UNDER SPECIAL URGENCY RULES</b></p>
<p>Wards affected</p>	<p>None</p>
<p>Accountable member</p>	<p>Councillor Andy Graham, Leader of the Council Email: <a href="mailto:Andy.Graham@westoxon.gov.uk">Andy.Graham@westoxon.gov.uk</a></p>
<p>Accountable officer</p>	<p>Giles Hughes, Chief Executive Officer Email: <a href="mailto:democratic.services@westoxon.gov.uk">democratic.services@westoxon.gov.uk</a></p>
<p>Report author</p>	<p>Andrew Brown, Head of Democratic and Electoral Services Email: <a href="mailto:democratic.services@westoxon.gov.uk">democratic.services@westoxon.gov.uk</a></p>
<p>Summary/Purpose</p>	<p>To report to Council on decisions taken under special urgency rules.</p>
<p>Annexes</p>	<p>Annex A – Urgent Decision Notice Annex B – Urgent Decision Report</p>
<p>Recommendation(s)</p>	<p>That the Executive resolves to: I. Note the decision taken as set out in Annex A.</p>
<p>Corporate priorities</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Putting Residents First</li> <li>• A Good Quality of Life for All</li> <li>• A Better Environment for People and Wildlife</li> <li>• Responding to the Climate and Ecological Emergency</li> <li>• Working Together for West Oxfordshire</li> </ul>
<p>Key Decision</p>	<p>NO</p>
<p>Exempt</p>	<p>NO</p>
<p>Consultees/ Consultation</p>	<p>The urgent decision was taken in consultation with the Leader of the Council, the Executive Member for Finance, the Executive Member for Leisure and Major Projects, the Chair of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee, the Director of Finance and the Director of Governance.</p>

## **1. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**

- 1.1** This report is to notify Council of key decisions taken under special urgency rules over the last year. One such decision was taken, which was to agree a funding application to Sports England.

## **2. BACKGROUND**

- 2.1** Regulations and the Council's Constitution (Part 5G) require that the Leader of the Council will submit at least one report annually to full Council with details of each key executive decision taken under special urgency rules.

## **3. URGENT DECISION**

- 3.1** The urgent decision taken by the Chief Executive Officer, including the reasons for it and why it was treated as urgent, are set out in the decision notice attached at Annex A.

## **4. ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS**

- 5.** The alternative options considered are set out in the decision notice at Annex A.

## **6. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS**

- 6.1** The Financial Implications were set out in the decision report attached as Annex B.

## **7. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS**

- 7.1** The Legal Implications were set out in the decision report attached as Annex B.
- 7.2** The requirement for the Leader to report to full Council is set out in Regulation 19 of the Local Authorities (Executive Arrangements) (Meetings and Access to Information) (England) Regulations 2012.

## **8. RISK ASSESSMENT**

- 8.1** The risk assessment was set out in the decision report attached as Annex B.

## **9. EQUALITIES IMPACT**

- 9.1** There are no equality implications arising from this urgent decision.

## **10. CLIMATE AND ECOLOGICAL EMERGENCIES IMPLICATIONS**

- 10.1** The climate and ecological emergencies implications were set out in the decision report attached as Annex B.

## **11. BACKGROUND PAPERS**

- 11.1** None.

(END)



## Annex A: Decision Notice


This form is used to record any delegated decision which has been taken by officers under delegated authority.

Decision title	Sports England Funding SPSF Phase 2 for Carterton Leisure Centre Solar PV
Decision date	21 March 2025
Decision maker	Chief Executive & Head of Paid Service - Giles Hughes
Source of delegation (resolution or Constitution – please reference)	<p>Constitution Part 5A RULE 30: Business of an Urgent Nature</p> <p>If having consulted both the Chief Financial Officer and the Monitoring Officer, the Chief Executive is of the opinion that urgent action is required, in accordance with the Scheme of Officer Delegations, before a decision could be taken by Council, the Executive or a Committee that has the appropriate authority, they may take the decision in accordance with their urgency power as set out in the Part 4A of the Constitution (Officer Scheme of Delegations).</p> <p>If the decision is one which would normally be taken by the Council, the Chief Executive will consult with the Leader of the Council and all other Group Leaders, where practicable. If the decision is one which would normally be taken by the Executive, the Chief Executive will consult with the Leader. If the decision is one which would normally be taken by a Committee, the Chief Executive will consult with the Leader and the Chair of that Committee.</p>
Decision taken	<p>The Chief Executive, following consultation with the Chair of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee, Executive Member for Finance and Executive Member for Leisure and Major Projects, resolved to:</p> <p>I. Approve the funding application to Sports England.</p>
Reasons for the decision	The Council was approached by Sports England who have offered to fund its 2nd claim, that was circa £350,000 from the Swimming Pool Funding Scheme, which was previously rejected due to oversubscription of the scheme.
Alternative options considered	Alternative option: To not accept the SPSF offered by Sport England due to tight timescales associated with the project. This is not the preferred option.
Key or non-key?	Key



Subject to urgency rules?	Yes – the Chair of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee agreed to the taking of the decision in a case of special urgency and to the waiving of call in rights.
Affected wards	All
Details of consultation undertaken	Leader of the Council Executive Member for Finance Executive Member for Leisure and Major Projects Chair of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee Director of Finance Director of Governance
Lead officer	Phil Martin, Director of Place
List of documents considered	Decision report titled “Sports England Funding. SPSF Phase 2.

## Annex B: Urgent Decision report

 <b>WEST OXFORDSHIRE DISTRICT COUNCIL</b>	<b>WEST OXFORDSHIRE DISTRICT COUNCIL</b>
Name and date of Committee	<b>CHIEF EXECUTIVE – 21 MARCH 2025</b>
Subject	<b>SPORTS ENGLAND FUNDING. SPSF Phase 2</b>
Wards affected	ALL
Accountable member	Councillor Alaric Smith – Executive Member for Finance <a href="mailto:Alaric.smith@westoxon.gov.uk">Alaric.smith@westoxon.gov.uk</a>
Accountable officer	Giles Hughes – Chief Executive Officer Email: <a href="mailto:giles.hughes@westoxon.gov.uk">giles.hughes@westoxon.gov.uk</a>
Report author	Phil Martin - Director of Place Email: <a href="mailto:phil.martin@westoxon.gov.uk">phil.martin@westoxon.gov.uk</a>
Summary/Purpose	To provide an overview of the acceptance of funding offer from Sports England in the amount of £350k.
Annexes	None
Recommendation(s)	That the Chief Executive resolves to:  I. Approve the funding application to Sports England following consultation with the Chairman of the Overviews and Scrutiny Committee, Executive Member for Finance and Executive Member for Leisure and Major Projects.
Corporate priorities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Putting Residents First</li> <li>• Enabling a Good Quality of Life for All</li> <li>• Creating a Better Environment for People and Wildlife</li> <li>• Responding to the Climate and Ecological Emergency</li> <li>• Working Together for West Oxfordshire</li> </ul>
Key Decision	YES
Exempt	NO
Consultees/ Consultation	Director of Finance, Director of Governance

## I. BACKGROUND

- I.1 On the 6<sup>th</sup> March 2025, Sports England notified the Council that it had sums of Swimming Poll Support Fund (SPSF) money unspent and that they could support the Council's 2nd claim from the funding scheme which was previously rejected as they had already agreed to fund the installation of solar PV panels on the Windrush Leisure Centre and could not support multiple claims from each Local Authority at that point in time.
- I.2 The original claim was for the installation of solar PV to provide sustainable energy and shower flow reducers to conserve energy at Carterton Leisure Centre at a cost of circa £350k.
- I.3 The key conditions associated with the funding is that the Council would have to take up the offer by the end of March 2025 and that the project must be complete by end of May 2025.
- I.4 Since notification, a small project team have been exploring the feasibility of accepting the Sports England's funding offer, working through the challenges and risks associated with the extremely tight timescale.
- I.5 The team have reviewed the findings and challenges from the comparable project that took place at the Windrush Leisure Centre and have been proactive in checking and testing the key project stages.
- I.6 Areas that have been tested include:

Planning Permission	This is already in place following the previous PSDS project
DNO conditions and approval	The request has been sent and application for the appropriate certificate submitted
Legal requirements	Legal have been advised that the project may be about to go live and will be able to support in the HMLR registration application
Contractor Materials and availability	GSM have confirmed availability and have reserved engineer and installer time for the project. They have also confirmed that their supply chain can meet the deadline
Financial restrictions	There is no match funding for this grant, it is 100% of project funding which will be certified by supplying invoices and evidence of costs incurred
Roof Condition	Roof works are due for some areas at Carterton Leisure Centre. The Estates team and contractor have acknowledged that they can coordinate any work required to overcome any potential challenges in

	delivering this work. Due to the nature of the installation of the panels, they can be temporarily removed to provide access if any defects need to be repaired either during or after the panels are installed.
Leisure Operator co-operation and acceptance	Officers have liaised with GLL initially and will ensure that they are full on board with the project. As the ultimate aim of the funding is to reduce the costs of energy used for swimming pools this project will be in their benefit as well
Project Management resource	Officers have included the Project Management team in the initial discussions and they will have capacity to support the roof works as this was already in place. The Leisure Contract Lead Officer will support the solar PV installation as was the case for the Windrush LC installation.
Structural survey	This has been commissioned, but as there were no concerns at the PSDS stage this is more for good practice than an expectation that any structural requirements will not be met

## 2. ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS

- 2.1 The Council may wish not to accept the SPSF offered by Sport England due to tight timescales associated with the project.

## 3. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

- 3.1 The Council has been approached by Sports England who have offered to fund its 2nd claim, that was circa £350,000 from the Swimming Pool Funding Scheme, which was previously rejected due to oversubscription of the scheme.
- 3.2 No match funding requirements have been set as a condition of the offer.
- 3.3 If the Council is unable to meet the deadline of the end of May 2025, the Council would be required to return the funding, however the risk of this has been mitigated by a number of actions outlined in Section 5 of this report. The project team will also complete all preparatory works and investigative works before committing to purchase the materials – thus allowing a walkaway point should any unforeseen critical matter arise.

## 4. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

- 4.1 The Council would enter into a funding agreement with Sports England, which would include acceptance of the deadline of the end of May 2025, however if due to unforeseen issues this could not be met the Council can return the funding without penalty.

- 4.2 The Council will enter a restriction to the site to confirm that Sport England will be notified should the Centre be put up for closure within the next 10 years
- 4.3 A JCT standard contract will be entered into for the works with the Solar PV contractor

## **5. RISK ASSESSMENT**

- 5.1 The key risk associated with the proposal to accept the SPSF funding being offered by Sports England is the very tight timescales for the completion of the project and drawing down of the funds. This has been mitigated by getting a commitment from the supplier who delivered both the Windrush and Elmfield solar PV projects that they are able to meet the deadline set of the 31<sup>st</sup> May 2025.
- 5.2 A walk-away point will also be established before a major investment in materials takes place.

## **6. EQUALITIES IMPACT**

- 6.1 There are no immediate equality implications arising from the report.


## **7. CLIMATE AND ECOLOGICAL EMERGENCIES IMPLICATIONS**

- 7.1 There are clear climate related benefits associated with the installation of solar PV panels on the Carterton Leisure Centre as these will deliver clean sustainable energy that will help to offset the use of fossil fuels currently used.

## **8. BACKGROUND PAPERS**

- 8.1 None

(END)

 <b>WEST OXFORDSHIRE DISTRICT COUNCIL</b>	<b>WEST OXFORDSHIRE DISTRICT COUNCIL</b>
<b>Name and Date of Committee</b>	<b>ANNUAL COUNCIL – WEDNESDAY 22 MAY 2025</b>
<b>Subject</b>	<b>APPOINTMENT OF MEMBERS TO THE COUNCIL'S COMMITTEES, INCLUDING SUBSTITUTE MEMBERS</b>
<b>Wards Affected</b>	<b>All</b>
<b>Accountable Member</b>	Councillor Andy Graham – Leader of the Council Email: <a href="mailto:andy.graham@westoxon.gov.uk">andy.graham@westoxon.gov.uk</a>
<b>Accountable Officer</b>	Andrew Brown – Business Manager, Democratic Services Email: <a href="mailto:andrew.brown@publicagroup.uk">andrew.brown@publicagroup.uk</a>
<b>Report Author</b>	Ana Prelici, Senior Democratic Services Officer Email: <a href="mailto:ana.prelici@westoxon.gov.uk">ana.prelici@westoxon.gov.uk</a>
<b>Purpose</b>	To establish the Council's committees for the 2025/26 Civic Year and appoint members to committees and working groups: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• To establish the Council's committees as defined in Part 3C of the Council's Constitution, for the Civic Year 2025/26;</li> <li>• To establish the allocation of seats to political groups based on political proportionality;</li> <li>• To appoint members to the Council's committees, working groups and external committees for the Civic Year 2025/26.</li> </ul>
<b>Annexes</b>	Annex A – Political Proportionalities on Committees 2025/26 Annex B – Committee Nominations 2025/26 (to follow) Annex C – Carterton Area Strategy Working Group Draft Terms of Reference Annex D – Reorganisation and Devolution Working Group Draft Terms of Reference Annex E- Updated Local Plan Working Group Terms of Reference
<b>Recommendations</b>	That Council resolves to: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Agree to establish the Council's Committees as defined in Part 3 of the Council's Constitution, for the Civic Year 2025/26;</li> <li>2. Determine that, in accordance with Section 15 of the Local Government and Housing Act 1989 ("the Act"), the Council shall continue to apply the political balance provisions under the Act to committees as shown in Annex A;</li> </ol>

	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>3. Appoint councillors to serve on the Council's committees, working groups and external committees, as set out in Annex B for a term of office expiring at the next Annual Meeting of the Council;</li> <li>4. Note the arrangements for substitute members set out in part 5 of the report;</li> <li>5. Agree the terms of reference for the Carterton Area Strategy Working Group;</li> <li>6. Agree the terms of reference for the Local Government Reorganisation and Devolution Working Group;</li> <li>7. Agree the updated terms of reference for the Local Plan Cross Party Working Group.</li> </ol>
Corporate Priorities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Putting Residents First</li> <li>• Working Together for West Oxfordshire</li> </ul>
Key Decision	NO
Exempt	NO
Consultees/ Consultation	Leaders of political groups have been consulted on allocation of seats to political groups and asked to nominate members.



## **1. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY AND BACKGROUND**

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

## **2. COMMITTEE CHAIRS AND VICE-CHAIRS**

- 2.1** Council may appoint the Chairs and Vice-Chairs of each committee or if Council does not do so, the Chair and Vice-Chair are to be elected at the first scheduled meeting of each Committee. The suggested approach this year is for a Chair and Vice-Chair to be appointed at the first meeting of each Committee. Five committee meetings are scheduled to take place at the rising of the Annual Council in order for these committees to elect a Chair, appoint a Vice-Chair and establish any sub-committees.

## **3. APPOINTMENT OF SUB-COMMITTEES**

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

## **4. APPOINTMENT OF WORKING GROUPS**

- 4.1** In addition to the existing Working Groups (Local Plan Working Group, Constitution Working Group) Council is recommended to appoint members to two new working groups and to agree the terms of reference for these working groups;
  - Carterton Area Strategy Working Group
  - Local Government Reorganisation and Devolution Working Group
- 4.2** The terms of reference for the Local Plan Working Group has been updated for 2025/26 and now includes the expectations around confidentiality.

## **5. SUBSTITUTIONS**

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

## **6. EXTERNAL COMMITTEES**

- 6.1** In addition to the Council's own committees, the Council is also invited to appoint one member, who can be any member of the Council, to the Oxfordshire Joint Health Overview and Scrutiny Committee. The Joint Committee is made up of 15 members. Twelve of them are Councillors, seven from Oxfordshire County Council, and one from each of the district councils in Oxfordshire. Three people can be coopted to the Joint Committee to bring a community perspective. Unlike other local authority Scrutiny Committees, the work of the Health Scrutiny Committee involves looking 'outwards' and across agencies. Its focus is on health, and while its main interest is likely to be the NHS, it may also look at services provided by local councils which have an impact on health.

## **7. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS**

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

## **8. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS**

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

## **9. RISK ASSESSMENT**

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

## **10. EQUALITIES IMPACT**

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

## **11. ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS**

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

## **I2. BACKGROUND PAPERS**

None.

(END)

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## Annex A- Political proportionalities on committees and sub-committee 2025-26

### 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 by-election held on 1 May 2025:

Liberal Democrat: 22

Conservative: 13

Labour and Co-Operative: 10

Green: 4

**Table A: Initial seat allocations**

Committee	Seats	Lib Dem	Con	Lab & Co-op	Green	Total	Balance
Audit and Governance	11	5	3	2	1	11	0
Development Control	24	11	6	5	2	24	0
Licensing Committee	11	5	3	2	1	11	0
Overview and Scrutiny Committee	15	7	4	3	1	15	0
Performance and Appointments Committee	5	2	1	1	0	4	-1
Total seats allocated (real entitlement) (rounded entitlement)	66	30 29.63 (30)	17 17.51 (18)	13 13.47 (13)	5 5.39 (5)	65	-1

The Conservative Group has an overall under-allocation of 1 seat. One seat remains unallocated on the Performance and Appointments Committee. The Conservative Group, as the only group with an overall under-allocation gains the vacancy on the Performance and Appointments Committee.

### Steps to allocate remaining seats:

**Table B: Final seat allocation after adjustments**

Committee	Seats	Lib Dem	Con	Lab & Co-op	Green	Total	Balance
Audit and Governance	11	5	3	2	1	11	0
Development Control	24	11	6	5	2	24	0

Licensing Committee	11	5	3	2	1	11	0
Overview and Scrutiny Committee	15	7	4	3	1	15	0
Performance and Appointments Committee	5	2	2	1	0	5	0
Total seats allocated (real entitlement) (rounded entitlement)	66	30 29.63 (30)	18 17.51 (18)	13 13.47 (13)	5 5.39 (5)	66	0

### Sub-Committee allocations (for appointment by committees)

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

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

The licensing and standards sub-committees each have one seat vacant after all groups have received their full proportional entitlement of seats.

### Steps to allocate remaining seats:

1. Of the four political groups, the Green Group has the strongest proportional entitlement to the unallocated seat on both the licensing and standards sub-committees (0.41), higher than the Conservative Group (0.33), the Liberal Democrat Group (0.24) and the Labour and Co-Operative Group (0.02).
2. The Green Group gains one seat on each of the licensing and standards sub-committees.

3. The Development Control Committee has previously appointed to the Lowlands and Uplands sub-committees based on ward rather than political balance. This requires a 'nem con' vote at the Development Control Committee (i.e. with no member voting against).

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

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## **Annex C - Draft Terms of Reference: Carterton Area Strategy Working Group**

### **Purpose**

To receive updates on and provide a sounding board for the development of proposals for a delivery vehicle for the Carterton Area Strategy, which will lay the foundations for growth, homes, regeneration and connectivity improvements in and around Carterton.

### **Background**

Carterton, as the second-largest town in West Oxfordshire and home to RAF Brize Norton, presents significant opportunities for transformational economic growth. Carterton has a young growing population, as a result of relatively affordable housing due to significant private housing development from the 1980's and 2000's onwards. The town and area around it have high economic activity rates (73.1%) and low unemployment, with over 7,000 jobs, including military and civilian positions being hosted at the air base, making the MOD the largest employer in the area.

Carterton has good public transport connections by bus and is located close to the A40 so has good transport links with other towns in the district and Oxford, however the town centre is small and offers limited choice to shoppers, which results in trade 'leaking' away from it.

A Strategic Study was produced in March 2024 to help guide the future of Carterton and the surrounding area. The Study was intended to inform the review of the Local Plan and other non-planning matters pertaining to Carterton.

Whilst the Study made a number of suggested interventions, which focused around key themes that included leisure, wellbeing, business and housing, it didn't look at the wider strategic opportunities or how these could be delivered. Therefore, the focus going forward will be to develop the proposed vision, how the interventions will help realise this and identify a delivery model to help guide the future of Carterton and the surrounding area.

### **Approach**

The Working Group will meet with senior officers and may with the agreement of the Director of Place engage with external stakeholders. The Working Group will examine the issues and provide feedback to officers but won't make reports or recommendations to Council.

### **Membership**

The Working Group will comprise 5 Members based on nominations made by political groups and appointed at the Annual Meeting of full Council, plus the Executive Member with portfolio responsibility for the Carterton Area Strategy who will be an ex-officio member.

The membership does not have to be politically proportionate to the Council as a whole but the principle of proportionality will be applied, subject to all political groups being represented on the 5-Member Working Group.

The quorum for a meeting is any three Councillors, who may be in attendance in person or remotely.

Substitute members will be permitted on the Working Group, with members being substituted by a member from the same political group.

The Chair of the Working Group will be the Executive Member with portfolio responsibility for the Carterton Area Strategic Plan.

#### **Meetings and access to information**

Meetings will be scheduled as required with the first meeting taking place in summer 2025. The frequency of meetings is expected to be quarterly but this may vary and meetings will be called as and when required.

The Working Group is not a formal committee or sub-committee and is not subject to access to information regulations. To ensure that all attendees feel that they can speak openly about the issues, meetings will not be open to the public but will be open to all West Oxfordshire District Councillors. The content of the meetings is to be treated as confidential and not shared beyond the membership of the Council.

Meetings will generally take place either remotely via Teams, or will be hybrid meetings, or in person meetings. Meetings will not be webcast.

#### **Officer support**

The Working Group will be primarily advised by the Director of Place but may be advised by other officers as required.

Democratic Services will attend meetings and make a note of the key points and actions arising, which will be presented at the next suitable meeting of the Working Group.

(END)

## **Annex D- Draft Terms of Reference: Reorganisation and Devolution Working Group**

### **Purpose**

To receive updates on and provide a sounding board for the development of proposals for local government reorganisation and devolution.

To consider how the district's needs and preferences may be met and catered for in future local government arrangements.

### **Background**

The Government has set out its intention to significantly reform, at great pace, local government structures and implement devolution across England:

- The Government wishes to see successor councils emerge from the current two-tier system of district and county councils and that those successor councils and the existing unitary -structured councils of England must join a Strategic Authority.
- The Government also wishes to see all areas of England covered by strategic authorities, involving a number of councils working together to deliver the Government's enhanced devolution framework.

### **Approach**

The Working Group will meet with senior officers and may with the agreement of the Chief Executive Officer engage with external stakeholders. The Working Group will examine the issues and provide feedback to officers but won't make reports or recommendations to Council.

The Council will also hold member briefing sessions on local government reorganisation and devolution, which will be open to all members. Ultimately any decisions on proposals for reorganisation and devolution will be a matter for the Executive.

### **Membership**

The Working Group will comprise 9 Members based on nominations made by political groups and appointed at the Annual Meeting of full Council.

The membership does not have to be politically proportionate to the Council as a whole but the principle of proportionality will be applied, subject to all political groups being represented on the 9-Member Working Group.

The quorum for a meeting is any three Councillors, who may be in attendance in person or remotely.

Substitute members will be permitted on the Working Group, with members being substituted by a member from the same political group.

The Leader of the Council will be an ex officio member and chair the Working Group.

### **Meetings and access to information**

Meetings will be scheduled as required with the first meeting taking place in June or July 2025. The frequency of meetings is expected to be every six to eight weeks but this may vary and meetings will be called as and when required.

The Working Group is not a formal Committee or Sub-Committee and is not subject to access to information regulations. To ensure that all attendees feel that they can speak openly about the issues, meetings will not be open to the public but will be open to all West Oxfordshire District Councillors. The content of the meetings is to be treated as confidential and not shared beyond the membership of the Council.

Meetings will generally take place either remotely via Teams, or will be Hybrid meetings, or in person meetings. Meetings will not be webcast.

### **Officer support**

The Working Group will be primarily advised by the Chief Executive Officer but may be advised by other officers as required.

Democratic Services will attend meetings and make a note of the key points and actions arising, which will be presented at the next suitable meeting of the Working Group.

(END)

## **Annex E - Updated Terms of Reference: Local Plan Working Group**

### **Background**

The Council has committed to producing a new Local Plan covering the period up to 2041.

Council established a Local Plan Working Group in July 2023 to ensure that the views of Members are taken fully into account during the process of developing a new Local Plan.

### **Key Purpose**

The group will meet to discuss the emerging Local Plan as it takes shape. This will include the consideration of technical supporting evidence as it is produced and the development of plan content and policies.

The group will provide input and a steer directly to the Planning Policy Manager and the Executive Member for Planning.

The Local Plan Working Group will be augmented with all Member briefings/workshops at appropriate junctures which provide a further forum for discussion on key issues arising.

### **Meetings and access to information**

Meetings of the working group will take place regularly (e.g. every 8 weeks or more frequently as required) from summer 2023.

The Working Group is not a formal committee or sub-committee and is not subject to access to information regulations. To ensure that attendees feel that they can speak openly about the issues, meetings will not be open to the public but will be open to all West Oxfordshire District Councillors. The content of the meetings is to be treated as confidential and not shared beyond the membership of the Council.

Meetings will generally take place in person and will not be webcast. Remote attendance may be an option at the discretion of the Chair.

### **Membership**

The Group will comprise members of all political groups and the quorum for a meeting to take place will be any three members:

4 Liberal Democrat

3 Conservative

2 Labour

1 Green

The Group will be chaired by the Executive Member for Planning who will be an ex officio member.

Substitute members will be permitted on the Working Group, with members being substituted by a member from the same political group.

### **Officer Support**

The Group will primarily be supported by the Council's Planning Policy Manager.


Democratic Services will provide administrative and governance support to the Group.

### **Suggested Areas of Focus**

In line with the emerging Local Plan, it is proposed that the Working Group will focus on the following main areas:

1. Tackling the climate and ecological emergency
2. Healthy, safe, strong and inclusive communities
3. An enhanced natural and built environment
4. Attractive, accessible and thriving places
5. Meeting the housing needs of all
6. A vibrant, resilient and diverse local economy

(END)

 <p><b>WEST OXFORDSHIRE DISTRICT COUNCIL</b></p>	<p><b>WEST OXFORDSHIRE DISTRICT COUNCIL</b></p>
<p>Name and Date of Committee</p>	<p><b>COUNCIL – 21 MAY 2025</b></p>
<p>Subject</p>	<p><b>RECOMMENDATIONS FROM THE CONSTITUTION WORKING GROUP</b></p>
<p>Wards Affected</p>	<p>None</p>
<p>Accountable Member</p>	<p>Councillor Alaric Smith, Chair of the Constitution Working Group Email: <a href="mailto:alaric.smith@westoxon.gov.uk">alaric.smith@westoxon.gov.uk</a></p>
<p>Accountable Officer</p>	<p>Andrea McCaskie, Director of Governance Email: <a href="mailto:democratic.services@westoxon.gov.uk">democratic.services@westoxon.gov.uk</a></p>
<p>Report Author</p>	<p>Ana Prelici, Senior Democratic Services Officer Email: <a href="mailto:democratic.services@westoxon.gov.uk">democratic.services@westoxon.gov.uk</a></p>
<p>Purpose</p>	<p>To present the Council with recommendations arising from a meeting of the Constitution Working Group held on 26 March 2025. To also agree the Scheme of Officer Delegations, other than those relating to Executive functions and to adopt the Council's Constitution, as amended, as is required at the Annual Council meeting.</p>
<p>Annexes</p>	<p>Annex A – Revised Public Speaking Rules</p>
<p>Recommendations</p>	<p>That Council resolves to:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Adopt the Council's Constitution and agree the Scheme of Officer Delegations, other than those relating to Executive functions, as set out in Part 4 of the Constitution.</li> <li>2. Note that the Director of Governance adopted the Council's Contract Procedure Rules in consultation with the Chair of the Constitution Working Group, following the delegation agreed at the 19 March 2025 Council meeting.</li> <li>3. Agree to amend the number of seats on the Overview and Scrutiny Committee within Part 3C of the Constitution to 15 members (from 24) and the quorum to 4 members (from 6).</li> <li>4. Note that the Constitution Working Group endorsed the Officer recommendation for further Overview and Scrutiny training for</li> </ol>

	<p>Members.</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>5. Agree with the Constitution Working Group that the ‘full transparency’ electronic voting option will be used at meetings of Full Council (with immediate effect), and (from 22 May 2025) Development Control Committee and planning sub-committees.</li> <li>6. Agree that the Council will not develop a policy for community governance reviews at the current time in view of local government reorganisation.</li> <li>7. Agree the revised public speaking rules at Annex A, which seek to align the public speaking rules for different meetings, as far as practicable.</li> </ol>
Corporate Priorities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Putting Residents First</li> <li>• Working Together for West Oxfordshire</li> </ul>
Key Decision	NO
Exempt	NO
Consultees/ Consultation	<p>Constitution Working Group Head of Democratic and Electoral Services</p>



## **EXECUTIVE SUMMARY AND BACKGROUND**

- 1.1** Part 2.2 of the Council's procedure rules requires the Council to adopt its Constitution and Officer Scheme of Delegation for non-executive functions at the Annual Council Meeting.
- 1.2** The report also recommends changes to the Council's Constitution, following a meeting of the Constitution Working Group (CWG) held on 26 March, when the Working Group considered several items on its work plan. Council is recommended to approve the recommendations made to it by the CWG.
- 1.3** 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.
- 1.4** The Council has a legal duty to publish a constitution, which should be reviewed at least annually. The Council has an established, cross-party Constitution Working Group, which meets regularly and makes recommendations to Council regarding amendments to the Constitution, keeping it up to date with changes to legislation, governance practice and the wishes of the Council.

## **2. CONTRACT PROCEDURE RULES**

- 2.1** The Council's Contract Procedure Rules were rewritten following the implementation of the Procurement Act 2023.
- 2.2** This exercise provided the opportunity to review the Council's own rules, which were last updated in 2023, to provide for extra flexibility, reduce red tape, and to remove barriers to local small and medium-sized enterprise (SME) engagement.
- 2.3** At the Full Council meeting on 19 March 2025, it was resolved to delegate authority to the Director of Governance in consultation with the Chair of the Constitution Working Group to agree the new rules.
- 2.4** The CWG considered the new rules on 26 March 2025, which were subsequently adopted under delegated authority by the Director of Governance in consultation with the Chair of the Constitution Working Group. Council is recommended to note that the delegation was exercised, and the new Contract Procedure Rules are now in place.

## **3. REVIEW OF THE OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE**

- 3.1** Part 3C of the Council's Constitution outlines the function of the Council's Committees, including of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee. Under the Overview and Scrutiny Committee's function it states that there are 24 members on the Committee.
- 3.2** In November 2023, Full Council resolved to replace the three previous Overview and Scrutiny Committees (Climate and Environment, Economic and Social, Finance and Management) with a single committee. The aim of this change was to properly embed pre-decision scrutiny as part of the Executive decision-making process; ensure effective scheduling of meetings; and to facilitate effective work planning and improve efficiency (e.g. by reducing duplication).

- 3.3** Members and Officers were surveyed to assess the effectiveness of the move to a single committee and identify future improvements to the function.
- 3.4** The results of the survey were presented to the Constitution Working Group on 26 March 2025 and to the Overview and Scrutiny Committee on 16 April 2025.
- 3.4.1** The survey results showed that 50% of members and 82% of Officers supported reducing the Committee's size. This was discussed by the CWG, who agreed unanimously that the Committee size should be reduced to 15 members for the following reasons;
1. The CWG agreed with the observation raised in the survey that the Committee's size was not conducive to inclusive discussions, and did not enable all members to participate to the extent that they might wish to.
  2. A smaller Committee would make it easier for members to find substitutes, and for officers to administer meetings.
  3. A smaller Committee would lead to a loss of expertise on the Committee itself, but this could be mitigated through the greater use of task and finish groups. Task and finish groups would be required to regularly report to the Committee. Unlike a sub-committee, the members of task and finish groups would not need to sit on the 'parent' committee, so long as its Chair is on the Committee (to provide a clear reporting line and accountability). The greater use of task and finish groups would provide a way for more of the Council's members to participate in scrutiny activities if they wish to.
- 3.4.2** The size of 15 members was agreed by the CWG as it was the more popular choice with survey respondents who preferred a smaller committee. It was felt 11 members would be too small.
- 3.4.3** The CWG resolved unanimously to recommend to Full Council to amend section 3C of the Council's Constitution so that the membership of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee be reduced to 15 members.
- 3.4.4** Part 5A of the Council's constitution, under rule 9, states that the "The quorum of any meeting of a Committee or sub-Committee shall be: not less than one quarter of the total membership of the Committee or Sub-Committee; and subject to a minimum of three". It is therefore recommended that the quorum of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee, in part 3C be amended to 4 members, as a quarter of the Committee's new membership number (rounded to the next nearest whole number).
- 3.5** The CWG also discussed whether the Committee should return to three Committees. Within the survey responses, several members commented that a single Overview and Scrutiny Committee does not operate as effectively as the three committees it replaced. However, the responses in the survey largely indicated that the move to a single Committee has at least partially achieved the intended aims. While further work is needed in some areas, for instance in ensuring that Executive Members are more accountable to the Committee (as opposed to officers being held to account), and that there is greater input

from Committee Members in work planning, these further improvements could be implemented without needing to return to three committees.

- 3.6** The CWG therefore endorsed retaining the single Overview and Scrutiny Committee structure but with the recommendation to Council to reduce the size from 24 to 15 Members.
- 3.7** The CWG also discussed and endorsed the officer recommendation for further Overview and Scrutiny training for Members.

#### **4. ELECTRONIC VOTING**

- 4.1** A system which allows members to vote on the resolution of agenda items electronically (instead of a show of hands) was trialled at the meetings of Full Council on 27 November, 20 January, 29 January, 26 February and 19 March.
- 4.2** The electronic voting system provides greater certainty and transparency for members of the public who are watching the webcast of live meetings, as the outcome of votes is displayed on the Council's website. The use of this system also reduces the administrative burden of counting votes accurately and speeds up meetings.
- 4.3** During these meetings, several options for the level of transparency in displaying the vote breakdown were used, these can be summarised as;
- a) No transparency - No one can see the vote until after it has closed;
  - b) Limited transparency - Votes are visible on the microphones during the vote;
  - c) Full transparency - Votes are visible on the screens and microphones during and after the vote.
- 4.4** The CWG felt that the trial had been successful, and that electronic voting should continue to be utilised.
- 4.5** The CWG discussed the options in 4.3 and stated that the 'full transparency' option was the preferred option. As well as providing more transparency for those watching the webcast, this would reduce the room for error e.g. if the wrong button was pressed because everyone would be able to see their name on the screens immediately after voting. It would also be possible to work out who had not cast a vote, which wouldn't be possible under the no transparency or limited transparency options.
- 4.6** It is recommended that Council agrees for the full transparency approach to electronic voting to be utilised as standard at meetings of full Council and that it should also be extended to future meetings of Development Control Committee and the Uplands and Lowlands area planning sub-committees.
- #### **5. COMMUNITY GOVERNANCE REVIEWS**
- 5.1** At the meeting on 24 July 2024, Full Council considered a motion titled "Community Governance Reviews". Full Council resolved to adopt, by the end of 2024/25, a policy for Community Governance Reviews (CGRs), setting out:
- The expected interval between reviews.
  - The size of proposed developments that should trigger a CGR.

- 5.2** The CWG discussed the motion and stated that it would not be an efficient use of resources for the Council to develop a long-term policy for Community Governance Reviews, or proactively undertake community governance reviews, at the current time in view of Local Government Reorganisation and the likely abolition of West Oxfordshire District Council.
- 5.3** The CWG note that the Council may be required to undertake CGRs in certain circumstances. In doing so the Council would need to follow the relevant legislation and guidance and any such CGR would need to be aligned with proposals for local government reorganisation. However, it is recommended that the Council should not develop a CGR Policy at this stage.

## **6. PUBLIC SPEAKING RULES**

- 6.1** At the Full Council meeting on 19 March 2025, Full Council considered a motion titled “Public Engagement in Council meetings”.

- 6.2** The motion stated that:

“Public participation in council meetings is something we should all encourage and support. Currently the council constitution sets out different rules regarding public participation in our meetings. For committee meetings members of the public must register to speak by 10AM on the working day before. For Executive it’s by 2PM two clear working days before, and for Full Council it is by 12NOON seven working days before and therefore before the council agenda is published two days later.

In order to improve and encourage public participation in our meetings this council asks the constitution working group to review these deadlines and to report back to full council within six months with an update on any new changes decided by the committee.”

- 6.3** The motion was referred to the CWG for consideration.
- 6.4** At the CWG meeting, officers explained that the reason behind having different rules for different committees was due to their different functions. The CWG stated that Planning rules should be kept the same to not discourage public participation. Otherwise the public speaking rules for Council and Executive should be aligned.
- 6.5** It was highlighted that members of the public may wish to speak on a particular motion at full Council, and that changing the rules to have a later registration deadline would allow the public to know what motions are coming forward.
- 6.6** The CWG agreed to recommend to Full Council that the public speaking rules be changed so that Full Council follows the same rules as the Executive.
- 6.7** The amended public participation rules are at Annex A of the report. It is recommended that Full Council agree the new rules.

## **7. ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS**

- 7.1 Council may choose not to accept recommended updates to its Constitution. By doing this, there is a risk in ensuring that decision-making is efficient, transparent and accountable to local people. This course of action is not recommended.

## **8. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS**

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

## **9. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS**

- 9.1 The Council has a duty to keep the Constitution up to date under S9P of the Local Government Act 2000. There are no other legal implications arising from this report.

## **10. RISK ASSESSMENT**

- 10.1 By not regularly considering updates to the Council's Constitution, which sets out how the Council operates, how decisions are taken and the procedures which are followed, there is a risk to ensuring that decision-making is efficient, transparent and accountable to local people.

## **11. EQUALITIES IMPACT**

- 11.1 There are no equality implications arising from this report.

## **12. CLIMATE AND ECOLOGICAL EMERGENCIES IMPLICATIONS**

- 12.1 There are no climate and ecological emergencies implications arising from this report.

## **13. BACKGROUND PAPERS**

None.

(END)

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## ANNEX A Public Speaking Rules – Proposed amendments with track changes.

New version additions = green

Removals = ~~red/strike-through~~

### Taking part in Planning Committees

When planning applications are heard by the Development Control Committee or a Planning Sub-Committee, there is an opportunity for applicants, members of the public and other interested parties to put forward views for or against the application. The information that they provide is considered to be very useful in helping the Committee or Sub-Committee to reach a sound planning decision.

You can request to attend the meeting and address the Committee or Sub-Committee in person. Three minutes is allocated for each of the following groups to address the meeting:

- Those objecting to the application
- The relevant parish or town council
- Those supporting the application, including the applicant
- The ward member(s)

The time limit will be strictly applied. This means that the total time allocated for all representations on any application is twelve minutes. We ask that you forward a copy of your submission to us prior to the meeting, just in case there are any difficulties on the day and you are unable to attend the meeting.

Planning applications for which a speaker or speakers have been registered will, whenever possible, be heard first. This may involve some re-ordering of the applications compared to how they appear on the ~~meeting~~ ~~committee~~ agenda.

Please contact us by 12 noon the Friday before the meeting to request to take part by emailing [democratic.services@westoxon.gov.uk](mailto:democratic.services@westoxon.gov.uk) ~~or by calling Customer Services on 01993 861000.~~

### What you can comment on

Submissions will be allowed on any application on the schedule of planning applications to be considered by the Development Control Committee or Planning Sub-Committees. For example, applications for planning permission, listed building consent, conservation area consent, advertisement consent and applications to fell trees subject to Tree Preservation Orders. ~~It will also be allowed those types of application included on the agenda for determination at the meeting, or where confirmation of a previous decision is being sought.~~ Public speaking will also be allowed where confirmation of a previous decision is being sought. Submissions will not be allowed on ~~other~~ items within the agenda, such as potential

enforcement action cases where there is no associated retrospective planning application, decisions taken under delegated authority, appeal decisions, or Lawful Development Certificates which are legal determinations based on the facts.

Planning meetings are held in public and no submissions of a personal, slanderous, defamatory, or otherwise offensive or abusive nature should be made.

A maximum of three minutes per submission will be allowed. The time must be strictly adhered to. The Chair may, in exceptional circumstances, use their discretion to extend the time allocated for representations.

### Conflict of interests

Submissions must be seen to be truly independent and not have a direct interest in the application or be related to, or a business associate of the applicant. Town and Parish Councillors are reminded of their responsibilities under the agreed Code of Conduct. ~~We will~~ The Council will not be aware of any interests or conflicts which town or parish councillors have, ~~so~~ so the responsibility for complying with this rests with the town or parish councillor concerned.

### Taking part in Council, Executive and all other Committee meetings.

~~These meetings are all~~ The majority of Committee, Executive and full Council meetings are open to the public and ~~most have time set aside for submissions to be read out~~ there is a standing item on Executive and full Council agendas for public participation. Anyone who lives ~~in the district, or who pays Council Tax or business rates,~~ works, or studies in West Oxfordshire is eligible to take part.

### How to participate

At meetings of the Executive and Full Council, members of the public may ask ~~a one~~ question ~~at a meeting of the Executive for up to three minutes~~ directed at the Leader or any Executive Member on any agenda item or on any issue that affects the district or its people.

~~Direct questions are not allowed~~ At meetings of committees, members of the public cannot ask a question but ~~you~~ you may read a statement or express an opinion. A statement or expression of opinion is also allowed at meetings of full Council.

All questions or statements must be no longer than three minutes long.

~~You will need to send us a written submission of no more than 750 words. For committee meetings we must receive your written submission by 10am on the working day before the meeting. For Council meetings we must receive your written submission by noon on the seventh working day before the meeting. You must contact us to request to take part and let us know what you want to comment on by:~~

- ~~• Calling Customer Services on 01993 861000~~



• ~~Emailing democratic.services@westoxon.gov.uk~~

Members of the public wishing to speak at a meeting must notify democratic.services@westoxon.gov.uk, including their name and the agenda item or topic they wish to speak on, by 2.00pm two clear working days before the meeting (e.g. for a Wednesday meeting, the deadline would be 2.00pm on the Friday before).

If the topic of the question is not within the remit of the Council, advice will be provided on where best to direct the question.

The relevant Executive Member will either respond ~~verbally~~ to a question verbally at the meeting or provide a written response which will be included in the minutes of the meeting.

### **What your submission can be about**


At committee meetings your submission must relate to points on the meeting agenda. At full Council meetings ~~or Executive meetings~~ other issues can be raised which are relevant to the district. You can find out which committee has responsibility for the issue you want to raise by looking at the agendas and reports for the meetings. These are available five clear working days before each meeting. Some matters may be excluded, contact ~~us for advice of more information~~ democratic.services@westoxon.gov.uk for advice or more information.

### **What happens during the meeting**

The time limit for one submission is ~~five~~ three minutes. If several people want to contribute on the same subject they are restricted to a total of ~~five~~ three minutes. The time for all submissions at one meeting is 30 minutes. You will be invited to read out your statement, or if you are unable to attend the meeting in person, your submissions will be read to the meeting by a member of staff. You will not be asked questions on your submission. Contact ~~us for advice if you are unsure~~ democratic.services@westoxon.gov.uk for advice if you are unsure.

These processes aim to strike a balance between the need to conduct business, technological and other risks, and being able to hear the views of the public. We will keep this process under review.

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 <p>WEST OXFORDSHIRE DISTRICT COUNCIL</p>	<p>WEST OXFORDSHIRE DISTRICT COUNCIL</p>
<p>Name and Date of Committee</p>	<p>COUNCIL – 21 MAY 2025</p>
<p>Subject</p>	<p>STRATEGIC PARTNERSHIP UPDATE</p>
<p>Wards Affected</p>	<p>ALL</p>
<p>Accountable Member</p>	<p>Councillor Andy Graham – Leader of the Council. Email: <a href="mailto:andy.graham@westoxon.gov.uk">andy.graham@westoxon.gov.uk</a></p>
<p>Accountable Officer</p>	<p>Giles Hughes – Chief Executive. Email: <a href="mailto:Giles.Hughes@westoxon.gov.uk">Giles.Hughes@westoxon.gov.uk</a></p>
<p>Report Author</p>	<p>Astrid Harvey – Corporate Strategy Manager. Email: <a href="mailto:Astrid.Harvey@westoxon.gov.uk">Astrid.Harvey@westoxon.gov.uk</a></p>
<p>Summary/Purpose</p>	<p>To enable the Leader to provide an update to Council on his portfolio responsibility for Strategic Partnerships.</p>
<p>Annexes</p>	<p>Nil.</p>
<p>Recommendation(s)</p>	<p><i>That Council Resolves to:</i> <i>1. Note the contents of the Strategic Partnership Update.</i></p>
<p>Corporate Priorities</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Putting Residents First</li> <li>● A Good Quality of Life for All</li> <li>● A Better Environment for People and Wildlife</li> <li>● Responding to the Climate and Ecological Emergency</li> <li>● Working Together for West Oxfordshire</li> </ul>
<p>Key Decision</p>	<p>NO</p>
<p>Exempt</p>	<p>NO</p>
<p>Consultees/ Consultation</p>	<p>Nil.</p>

## **1. BACKGROUND**

- 1.1 The Leader has portfolio responsibility for Strategic Partnerships. These strategic partnerships include the Oxford to Cambridge Pan-Regional Partnership, the Future Oxfordshire Partnership, South East Councils and OxLEP.
- 1.2 The West Oxfordshire Council Plan recognises that in order for the Council to deliver on its aspirations it is essential to work collaboratively with others. Strategic partnerships provide opportunities to tackle issues of common interest, share best practice, and provide a strong voice back to Government on areas of concern.

## **2. MAIN POINTS**

### Oxfordshire Leader's Joint Committee (Future Oxfordshire Partnership)

- 2.1 The Oxfordshire Leader's Joint Committee has been established (January 2025). The Council has been a longstanding member of the Future Oxfordshire Partnership alongside the other Principal Councils in Oxfordshire and other key partners. The purpose of the Future Oxfordshire Partnership has been to build collaboration across the county to deliver the bold aims of the Oxfordshire Strategic Vision for Sustainable Development, which all six Principal councils have adopted.
- 2.2 In light of the conclusion of the Oxfordshire Housing and Growth Deal, around which much of the Future Oxfordshire Partnership's activity was focused, and the need to be prepared to engage with the UK government's evolving stance on devolution and proposed reforms to economic planning and industrial strategy, all Member authorities agreed a reset of the Partnership with its reestablishment as a formal joint committee of council leaders. The newly formed Oxfordshire Leader's Joint Committee (from January 2025) will focus on delivering the Oxfordshire Strategic Vision, engaging with government on devolution, and coordinating efforts to address infrastructure needs, economic inequality and the climate and nature crises.
- 2.3 The Oxfordshire Leader's Joint Committee will continue to work closely with other partnerships that contribute to the delivery of its priorities, including the Oxfordshire Local Nature Partnership and the Oxfordshire Inclusive Economy Partnership.
- 2.4 The Oxfordshire Local Nature Partnership aims to radically enhance nature, its positive impact on our climate and the priority it's given, helping to make Oxfordshire a county where people and nature thrive. A key focus has been the production of the Oxfordshire Local Nature Recovery Strategy, a requirement of the 2021 Environment Act. This coordinated strategy for nature's recovery will enable wildlife to flourish, improve the quality of our air and water, and mitigate the impacts of climate change. The final version of the LNRS will be published in mid-Autumn 2025.
- 2.5 The Oxfordshire Inclusive Economy Partnership is working to develop a more equal and sustainable region that creates opportunities and benefits for all people within the county. Four working groups have been established made up of experts in inclusive employment, educational attainment social value and procurement, and place-based interventions. The Oxfordshire Inclusive Economy Charter pledges to help individuals, companies and organisations set out ways in which they will contribute to the achievement of an inclusive economy for Oxfordshire.

- 2.6 One important item on the existing Future Oxfordshire Partnership work programme is a refresh of the Oxfordshire Infrastructure Strategy (OXIS). This strategy identifies the strategic infrastructure requirements needed to support the planned growth in Local Plans. Earlier versions of this key strategy have helped support successful funding bids to Government through the Oxfordshire Housing and Growth Deal and the Housing Infrastructure Fund.
- 2.7 Two further areas of focus for the Future Oxfordshire Partnership relate to affordable housing delivery and supporting Oxfordshire's transition to net zero. The Council is hosting a Future Oxfordshire Partnership funded project to accelerate the delivery of Community Led Housing in the District. Community First Oxfordshire's Rural Housing Enabler and Communities Lead is providing expertise and outreach support to newly formed groups (including Community Land Trusts) actively pursuing affordable housing opportunities.
- 2.8 Working alongside the Zero Carbon Oxfordshire Partnership, each of the six Oxfordshire councils are being supported to work together to develop their own Local Area Energy Plans (LAEPs). As the UK transitions away from fossil fuels to renewable, locally generated energy sources, the energy grid will need to work differently to store and distribute energy. The grid also needs to be prepared for fluctuations in energy demand which result from the delivery of other council ambitions, such as housing delivery and decarbonisation. The LAEPs will provide a plan of clear, community-focused actions for transforming how energy is generated, used and managed in Oxfordshire. The LAEPs will identify the actions needed within each district, alongside cross-boundary initiatives to be delivered at the county level.

#### Oxford to Cambridge Growth Corridor (Oxford to Cambridge Pan- Regional Partnership)

- 2.9 The Council has been represented by the Leader on Oxford to Cambridge Pan-Regional Partnership since its inception in January 2023. Formed by a group of leaders from local government, Local Enterprise Partnerships, the Arc Universities Group and England's Economic Heartland, and with government support, the Partnership's mission has been to secure a future in which communities prosper from the very best in environmentally sustainable ways of living and working. Partners have collaborated to accelerate economic opportunities created through the region's innovation strengths, achieve significant environmental enhancements, and unlock investment for inclusive, high quality sustainable development
- 2.10 In December 2024 the English Devolution White Paper set out its ambition to place powers working across regions where are larger geographic scale is needed to coordinate on strategic issues. The Government's intention to support new models for regional collaboration driven by Mayors and their partners was also stated with a commitment to establish Mayoral Strategic Authorities for the Oxford - Cambridge Region. This means a transition away from the Oxford to Cambridge Pan-Regional Partnership with a cessation of its funding and wind down of its programme by 31 March 2025 and formal closure by 30 June 2025.
- 2.11 Development and implementation of new models for the Oxford to Cambridge Growth Corridor will be led by Science Minister, Lord Patrick Vallance, in his new role as the Oxford-Cambridge Growth Corridor Champion.
- 2.12 Discussions with Local Authority partners are underway to inform proposals for a Mayoral Strategic Authority covering on the Thames Valley geography with potential to link with other partners across the Oxford to Cambridge Growth Corridor, thus further building on its economic strengths. Forming proposals for Local Government Reorganisation as required by

the English Devolution White Paper also recognize the importance of ensuring new unitary authorities enable the economic ambitions for the Oxford to Cambridge region.

#### South East Councils and the District Councils Network

- 2.13 South East Councils is a cross-party membership association which represents the views of local authorities in the South East region. With most local authorities in the South East as members, the partnership seeks to provide a unified democratic voice on South East interests with elected representatives actively assisting in making the case on priority issues to, and through, Government, Parliament, Industry, and the media. It is endeavoring to promote and maintain the South East's position as a leading global economy, seeking fairer funding for the region, and monitoring and highlighting its economic profile. The Council Leader sits on the Executive Board for South East Councils.
- 2.14 The District Councils Network is a cross-party network of 169 district and unitary councils of which the Council is a member. It is a special interest group of the Local Government Association that provides a single voice for all District services. As the Council embarks on the task of preparing for Local Government Reorganisation, the benefits of shared learning and advocacy afforded through membership of the District Councils Network will continue to be valuable as the Council navigates its path towards unitarization of Local Government, ensuring that the priorities and needs of residents are met into the future.

#### Enterprise Oxfordshire (Oxfordshire Local Enterprise Partnership (OxLEP))

- 2.15 Established in 2011 to help determine local economic priorities and lead economic growth and job creation within Oxfordshire, OxLEP is a partnership between local authorities and businesses. The public and private sector partnership works to champion and develop Oxfordshire's economy, acting as a catalyst and convenor to drive a dynamic, sustainable and growing economy in pursuit of the delivery of the Oxfordshire Strategic Vision for Sustainable Development.
- 2.16 Following a change in Government policy, from 1 April 2024 it was decided that the function of Local Enterprise Partnerships would be delivered through a mechanism agreed by respective upper-tier local authorities. In November 2024 an agreement with Oxfordshire County Council was reached ensuring that OxLEP could continue to deliver economic development functions across Oxfordshire and from 1 April 2025 the trading name for OxLEP will be Enterprise Oxfordshire. Enterprise Oxfordshire's focus will remain ensuring that Oxfordshire's economic potential is delivered in a sustainable and inclusive way, benefiting businesses, communities and the environment.
- 2.17 OxLEP has led on development of the 2023 Oxfordshire Strategic Economic Plan with key strategic partners. The Plan acknowledges that Oxfordshire has a world class innovation ecosystem and a knowledge economy of international renown but that this is linked to a wider foundational economy that accounts for the majority of jobs. The foundational economy is therefore important to the extent to which Oxfordshire thrives. Closely aligned with the Oxfordshire Strategic Vision for Sustainable Development, the aim is to make Oxfordshire a more inclusive, fair, vibrant and culturally rich place for our communities and businesses to benefit from whilst ensuring our environmental assets are protected and enhanced.
- 2.18 In recognition of the importance of the visitor economy to the County, OxLEP has also prepared the Oxfordshire Visitor Economy Vision and Destination Management Plan 2023-28. Endorsed by the Future Oxford Partnership in November 2023, it provides a framework supporting the work of the two new Local Visitor Economy Partnerships covering Oxfordshire (Cotswold Plus and Experiential Oxfordshire).

## Other Key Partnerships

### Publica and Ubico

- 2.19 The Council works with a number of other key partnerships. In particular the Council delivers a wide range of its services through Publica and through Ubico, both of which are local authority owned companies of which the Council is a shareholder.
- 2.20 The four Publica shareholder councils commissioned Human Engine to undertake a strategic review of the company operations in 2023, 6 years after its formation in 2017. The review recommended that the majority of services should move from Publica and return to being under greater control of the Councils.
- 2.21 A subsequent report by Local Partnerships, supported by the Local Government Association, endorsed the Human Engine report findings and set out two phases under which the majority of services would be repatriated. A Detailed Transition Plan was then produced to guide the repatriation of services with Phase I on 1 November 2024 seeing 90 roles transferring to the Council. A further 26 roles will transfer in Phase II on 1 July 2025.

### Oxfordshire Migration Partnership

- 2.22 The Council works closely with other Councils in Oxfordshire on refugee and asylum seekers as part of the Oxfordshire Migration Partnership. This has enabled close working between the Councils and other partners to support a range of people in need including Ukrainian Refugees, Afghan Refugees and also those asylum seekers placed in the County by the Home Office. A Silver Group of Officers coordinates the activities of partners on this programme and reports through to the Council Chief Executives and Leaders.

### Oxfordshire Waste and Environmental Services Transformation Programme

- 2.23 The Council has also been working in partnership with Oxford City Council and Cherwell District Council to determine how it wants to provide waste and environmental services in the future and who it wants to commission these when current contractual arrangements with Ubico come to an end in March 2027. Consultants' 'Activist' were commissioned to undertake a review of service options, outlining the potential financial and non-financial benefits of a more joined up approach across Oxfordshire to waste management and environmental services. The Oxfordshire Waste and Environmental Services Transformation Programme has been established as the vehicle to deliver the service reviews and potential change.

## **3. ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS**

- 3.1 The Council could choose not to participate in strategic partnership activity, however this would limit its ability to tackle cross boundary issues and share best practice.

## **4. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS**

- 4.1 The Council provides funding to help support the work of the Future Oxfordshire Partnership and its associated bodies. For 2024/25 the Council has budgeted £100,000 in total for the partnership, the Local Nature Partnership and Inclusive Economy Partnership. Over the years the partnership has attracted significant Government investment into Oxfordshire, including the £215 million Housing and Growth Deal.

- 4.2 The annual membership cost for the Oxford to Cambridge Partnership is currently £10,000. This Partnership has also attracted significant revenue support from the Government.
- 4.3 South East Councils membership is currently £1,845.
- 4.4 The Council does not provide core funding for OxLEP.

## **5. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS**

- 5.1 None from this report.

## **6. RISK ASSESSMENT**

- 6.1 A partnership approach helps mitigate some of the risks facing the Council, although there are potential impacts on the Council if one of these partnerships should fail both in terms of direct services and reputational risk. Partnership risks are addressed in the Council's risk register.

## **7. EQUALITIES IMPACT**

- 7.1 None from this report.
- 8. The Oxfordshire Inclusive Economy Partnership is working to create a more equal and sustainable region that creates opportunities and benefits for all people within the county.

## **9. CLIMATE AND ECOLOGICAL EMERGENCIES IMPLICATIONS**

- 9.1 None from this report
- 9.2 The Future Oxfordshire Partnership, Oxfordshire Local Nature Partnership, and forming Oxford to Cambridge Growth Corridor delivery model provide valuable forums to help the Council address the climate and ecological emergencies.

## **10. BACKGROUND PAPERS**

- 10.1 None

(END)