



Tuesday, 20 January 2026

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COUNCIL

You are summoned to a meeting of the Council which will be held in Council Chamber, Council Offices, Woodgreen, Witney, Oxfordshire OX28 1NB on **Wednesday, 28 January 2026 at 2.00 pm.**

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Giles Hughes".

Giles Hughes
Chief Executive

To: Members of the Council

Councillors: Andrew Coles (Chair), Carl Rylett (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, Elizabeth Poskitt, Andrew Prosser, Nigel Ridpath, Geoff Saul, Sandra Simpson, Alaric Smith, Ruth Smith, Tim Sumner, Sarah Veasey, Liam Walker, Mark Walker, Adrian Walsh, Alex Wilson and Alistair Wray

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

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

AGENDA

1. Apologies for Absence

To receive any apologies for absence.

2. Declarations of Interest

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

3. Minutes of Previous Meeting (Pages 9 - 18)

To approve the minutes of the meeting held on 3 December 2025.

4. Receipt of Announcements

To receive any announcements from The Chair, Leader, Members of the Executive, Head of Paid Service, Director of Finance or Director of Governance.

5. Changes to Councils Working Groups

Purpose:

To report the change in membership on the Constitution Working Group from Councillor Andrew Coles to Councillor Duncan Enright (agreed under delegated authority).

Recommendation:

That Council resolves to:

- I. Ratify and note the change in the Constitution Working Group membership from Councillor Andrew Coles to Councillor Duncan Enright.

6. Participation of the Public

To receive any submissions from members of the public, in accordance with the Council's [Public Participation Rules](#).

The deadline for submission is 2.00pm, two clear working days before the meeting.

7. Questions by Members

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

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

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

Question 1: From Councillor Thomas Ashby to Councillor Andrew Prosser, Executive Member for Climate Action and Nature Recovery:

I am aware that WODC had won a £2.2m grant from the UK Govt (via a wholly owned organisation called Salix) for a project at Chipping Norton Leisure Centre. This funding

was awarded under PSDS4 Grant (Public Sector Decarbonisation Scheme 4) for the replacement of gas boilers with Air Source Heat Pumps. A requirement of the grant was that the gas boilers be classed as end of life or coming to the end of life.

My understanding is that WODC have written to the UK Govt to hand money back, shortly after being awarded it last year. I may be wrong, but I do have it on very good authority that the Council has made this decision and are about to write to the government if they haven't already.

The grant funding has now been cancelled by central government and no longer exists, with no intent for anything to replace it - therefore, this is no future funding for this type of work.

Given Local Government review, as far as I am aware, there has not been an approach to the County Council to discuss the reasons for the money being handed back to the government. I am of the understanding OCC would have supported WODC with resourcing if required. What is the reason for the decision making? It would seem prudent that all avenues are explored before deciding to hand so much money back.

I am of the understanding that the decision meeting itself occurred between directors and the Chief Executive, were any Executive Members involved? Were Officers involved? If so, who? I would also like to know when the meeting took place, and for a copy of the minutes to be distributed to members.

Additionally, there is a second PSDS project proceeding at Windrush Leisure Centre, and it is unclear as to why Chipping Norton has been cancelled, and Witney is proceeding.

Leisure services are a statutory service and will continue beyond LGR in the same building. Therefore, given that the boilers in Chipping Norton are at end of life, the costs for replacements will now need to be picked up directly by WODC or a successor authority.

One requirement of LGR is for all Councils to conduct a building condition survey to help inform quicker decision making on properties and budgets post LGR. I am suspecting that recent investment into the leisure centres may be shown by the condition surveys as requiring investment. I would appreciate some further information on these condition surveys and potentially an opportunity to meet with officers to discuss these further, if the decision behind this investment is from the surveys.

Therefore, please can the Executive Member explain why £2.2million was handed back to the UK Government?

Question 2: From Councillor Thomas Ashby to Councillor Alaric Smith, Executive Member for Finance:

How much has West Oxfordshire District Council spent on legal fees in settlement of subsidence claims in Deer Park since 2000? Please split this response by year and cost.

Question 3: From Councillor Thomas Ashby to Councillor Lidia Arciszewska, Executive Member for Environment:

A few years ago, West Oxfordshire District Council removed a significant number of public bins across our towns, villages, and hamlets. Considering the ongoing impact on local cleanliness and amenity, will the Executive Member for Environment commit to a district-wide review of bin locations? Furthermore, will the Council guarantee that Town and Parish Councils, who hold the most granular knowledge of their residents' needs, are formally consulted at the very beginning of this process to ensure infrastructure is placed where it is most needed?

Question 4: From Councillor Thomas Ashby to Councillor Tim Sumner, Executive Member for Leisure and Carterton Area Strategy:

Please can you provide a detailed update on the progress for the adventure play area at Windrush Place?

Question 5: From Councillor Thomas Ashby to Councillor Tim Sumner, Executive Member for Leisure and Carterton Area Strategy:

Please can you confirm the progress on the delivery of the new 3G Pitch at West Witney Sports and Social Club?

Question 6: From Councillor Michele Mead to Councillor Tim Sumner, Executive Member for Leisure and Carterton Area Strategy:

The WODC Voice magazine has recently been sent out to all residents page 9 is all about the Carterton Area Strategy, a working group was set up to work on this strategy but in the last nine months they have only met once so please can you tell me when they are meeting again to progress this strategy?

8. Additional Committee Meeting

Purpose:

To consider an addition to the programme of Committee meetings.

Recommendations:

Council resolves to:

- I. Agree an additional Audit and Governance Committee meeting to be held on 18 March 2027 as this was an omitted from the programme of meetings for 2026/27 agreed at Council on 3 December 2025.

Recommendations from the Executive and the Council's Committees

9. Draft Budget 2026/27 (Pages 19 - 46)

Purpose:

This report provides an update on the developing budget for 2026/27 following the provisional government funding settlement announcement on 17 December 2025

Recommendations:

The Executive resolved on 14 January 2026 to recommend to Council to:

1. Approve the Council Tax Base shown in Annex C, calculated as 49,561.59 for the year 2026/27.
2. Authorise the Director of Finance to submit the National Non-Domestic Rates Return 1 (NNDR1) to Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government by the submission date of 31 January 2026.

Motions on Notice

10. Motion A: Mobile phone reception in rural areas - Proposed by Councillor Lidia Arciszewska, Seconded by Councillor Steve Cosier

Proposed by: Councillor Lidia Arciszewska

Seconded by: Councillor Steve Cosier

Mobile phone reception is very patchy in West Oxfordshire. There are many areas with no mobile signal, extending over significant parts of villages and occasionally encompassing entire settlements. This has been a major frustration for residents, farmers and businesses, whether at home, work, or out and about; for example, when cycling and walking to work or school, or when they are outdoors for sports or recreation. People have been complaining about this for years.

Moreover, there is a new growing concern among the public related to the lack of mobile phone reception, as traditional BT copper phone lines are being phased out and customers are being moved to Voice over Internet Protocol, VoIP, which is delivered over a broadband connection and dependent on electricity supply. Therefore, during any power outages, residents and businesses in areas with no mobile signal have no means to communicate with the outside world. While telephone companies have an obligation to protect vulnerable customers, every household in a non-signal area is at risk. Although switching to digital services is a great step forward, its implementation provides another powerful case for the need to provide rural areas in Oxfordshire with full mobile signal coverage.

The Council resolves to ask the Leader to write to Rt Hon Ian Murray, the Minister of State for Culture, Media and Sport, to ask what the government's strategy is to ensure full mobile signal coverage in rural areas.

11. **Motion B: Local Governance Review: Parish and Town Boundary Review for West Oxfordshire - Proposed by Councillor Michele Mead, Seconded by Councillor Liam Walker**

Proposed by: Councillor Michele Mead
Seconded by: Councillor Liam Walker

This Council notes:

That parish and town councils form the most local tier of democratic governance and play a vital role in representing community identity, delivering services, and fostering civic pride across West Oxfordshire.

That West Oxfordshire has experienced changes in population, housing development, settlement patterns, and community usage in recent years, including significant growth on the edges of existing parishes and towns.

That in some areas current parish and town boundaries no longer accurately reflect community identities, patterns of service use, or the expectations of residents.

That the Local Government and Public Involvement in Health Act 2007 provides district councils with the power to conduct Local Governance Reviews to ensure parish and town arrangements remain effective and representative.

This Council believes:

That parish and town boundaries should be logical, clearly understood, and reflective of established and emerging communities.

That regular review of governance arrangements is good practice and supports strong local democracy.

That any review should be locally driven, evidence-based, and involve meaningful engagement with residents, parish and town councils, and other stakeholders.

This Council resolves:

That council officers undertake a Community Governance Review focused specifically on parish and town boundary arrangements across West Oxfordshire.

That the review should:

Assess whether existing boundaries remain appropriate considering housing growth, demographic change, and community identity.

Consider requests or representations from parish and town councils and residents. Seek to ensure boundaries promote effective governance, community cohesion, and clarity for residents.

To require that the review includes a full programme of public consultation with affected parish and town councils, ward members, and local communities.

To request that officers bring forward a detailed scope, timetable, and consultation plan for approval by Executive and Council prior to the commencement of the review.

That no changes to boundaries will be implemented without full consultation and formal approval by Council.

12. **Motion C: Review and Improve the Fast Track Disabled Facilities Grant (DFG): Proposed by Councillor Genny Early, Seconded by Councillor Andrew Prosser**
Proposed by: Councillor Genny Early
Seconded by: Councillor Andrew Prosser

Motor neurone disease (MND) is a rapidly progressing condition – a third of people die within a year of diagnosis and half within two years. As the disease progresses, symptoms worsen and needs increase, often unpredictably. People living with progressive or terminal conditions like MND deserve to live in safe, accessible homes. They have the right to independence and quality of life in the time they have left.

Council notes:

- It is our council's role to ensure that local people living with MND are supported to access the home adaptations they need in a timely manner. The current system can be too slow to respond to the rapidly changing needs of people with MND. Without timely support, people face becoming trapped in unsuitable and unsafe homes. This risks significant negative impacts on their health and well-being, including increased risk of avoidable hospital admissions and early entry into care.
- The MND Association has proposed a set of recommendations and highlighted examples of good practice in their recent report, *A Lifeline Not a Luxury*.
- One such recommendation is to speed up applications for the funding and installation of home adaptations. This would be hugely beneficial for people living with MND, who could live safely at home for longer, maintain their health and wellbeing for as long as possible, and remain engaged with their communities, family and friends. People living with MND do not have time to wait – every day is critical.
- This council recognises that people with progressive conditions should be able to apply for adaptations as early as possible following diagnosis, so that their future needs can be anticipated rather than responded to in crisis. This council also recognises that early interventions can save taxpayer money by enabling people to manage their condition more effectively and reducing the need for critical interventions at a later stage.

Council resolves to:

1. Request officers to review the fast-track process for delivering home adaptations for people with progressive or terminal conditions such as MND, and taking all necessary steps to ensure that target timeframes of 55 days for simple adaptations and 130 days for complex adaptations are adhered to. These timelines are based on the national guidance set out by Foundations on Disabled Facilities Grant (DFG) delivery standards.
2. With that in mind, the council recognises that 55 days (almost two months) should be seen as a maximum, and that this timeframe is not appropriate for smaller adaptations such as ramps or stairlifts. The goal is to ensure these smaller adaptations are completed much faster.

(END)