

# Public Document Pack



Tuesday, 12 May 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, 20 May 2026 at 2.00 pm.**



Giles Hughes  
Chief Executive

To: Members of the Council

Councillors Andrew Coles, Carl Rylett, Tammy Abarno, Joy Aitman, Thomas Ashby, Andrew Beaney, Adam Clements, Sandra Coleman, Sandra Cosier, Steve Cosier, Rachel Crouch, Jane Doughty, Genny Early, Duncan Enright, Sarah Evans, Roger Faulkner, Nick Field-Johnson, Phil Godfrey, Andy Goodwin, Andy Graham, David Jackson, Edward James, Liz Leffman, Dan Levy, Andrew Lyon, Jan Lund, Paul Marsh, Liam Mackenzie, Stuart McCarroll, Hannah Massie, Michele Mead, David Melvin, Toby Morris, Rosie Pearson, Elizabeth Poskitt, Andrew Prosser, Nigel Ridpath, James Robertshaw, Geoff Saul, Sandra Simpson, Alaric Smith, Tim Sumner, Jack Treloar, Sarah Veasey, Liam Walker, Mark Walker, Simon Watson, 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 2026/27**

Purpose:

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

Recommendation:

That Council resolves to:

- I. Elect a Chair of the Council for a term of office extending to the start of the Annual Council meeting in May 2027.

2. **Appointment of Vice Chair 2026/27**

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 2027.

3. **Apologies for Absence**

To receive any apologies for absence.

4. **Declarations of Interest**

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

5. **Minutes of Previous Meeting (Pages 7 - 36)**

To approve the minutes of the meeting held on 25 March 2026.

6. **Receipt of Announcements**

To receive any announcements from The Chair, Head of Paid Service, Director of Finance or Director of Governance and Regulatory Services.

7. **Vote of thanks for Chair and Vice-Chair 2025/26**

To give a vote of thanks to the Chair and Vice-Chair of the Council for 2025/26.

8. **Report of the Leader**

Purpose:

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 Member

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

Recommendation:

That Council resolves to:

1. Note the report of the Leader.

9. **Report on Special Urgency Key Decisions**

Purpose:

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

Recommendation:

That the Council Resolves to:

1. Note that no key decisions were taken under urgency rules within the last year.

10. **Return of the Returning Officer (Pages 37 - 42)**

Purpose:

To receive a report from the Returning Officer following the district council elections held on 7 May 2026.

Recommendation:

That Council resolves to:

1. Note the return of the Returning Officer.

11. **Establishment and Appointment of Committees, Sub-Committees and Working Groups, including Substitute Members (Pages 43 - 58)**

Purpose

To establish the Council's committees for the 2026/27 Civic Year and appoint members to committees, working groups and external committees.

Recommendations

That Council resolves to:

1. Agree to establish the Council's Committees as defined in Part 3 of the Council's Constitution (version 2.18), for the Civic Year 2026/27;
2. Determine that, in accordance with Section 15 of the Local Government and Housing Act 1989 ("the Act"), the Council shall apply the political balance provisions under the Act to committees as shown in Annex A;
3. Agree to re-establish the Constitution Working Group (with 7 Members), agree the Terms of Reference (Annex B) and in doing so agree to apply the principles of political proportionality.
4. Agree to re-establish the Carterton Area Strategy Working Group (with 6 Members plus the Executive Member with responsibility for Carterton Area Strategy as ex officio Chair), agree the Terms of Reference (Annex C) and in doing so agree to apply the principles of political proportionality, subject to all political groups being represented on the working group.
5. Appoint councillors to serve on the Council's committees, working groups and external committees, as set out in Annex D (to follow) for a term of office expiring at the next Annual Meeting of the Council;
6. Note the arrangements for substitute members set out in part 5 of the report.

12. **Adoption of the Council's Constitution (Pages 59 - 128)**

Purpose

To 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.

To approve the revised Financial Procedure Rules March 2026 (Annex A).

Recommendations

That the 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. Approve the updated Financial Procedure Rules attached as Annex A.
3. Agree to exclude the Strategic Planning Committee and Development Management Sub-Committee from the duration of meeting rule, as shown in Annex B.

13. **Report of the Independent Remuneration Panel (Pages 129 - 136)**

Purpose

To consider recommendations made to Council by the Independent Remuneration Panel.

Recommendations

That the Council considers the recommendations from the Independent Remuneration Panel, which are to;

1. Agree to introduce a 0.25x Special Responsibility Allowance for the Vice-Chair of the Development Management Sub-Committee;
2. Note that the Special Responsibility Allowances for the Chairs of Strategic Planning Committee and Development Management Sub-Committee will be reviewed in the autumn as part of the full review of allowances;
3. Note that the amount paid as the Vice-Chair's Special Responsibility Allowances will be reviewed in the autumn as part of the full review of allowances, in respect to the amount.
4. Note that following changes at national level, from the 11 May 2026, Councillors have been able to opt into the Local Government Pensions Scheme, and that pensions may be payable on a member's basic and/or special responsibility allowance. The members allowances scheme will be updated accordingly.

14. **Strategic Partnerships Update (Pages 137 - 144)**

Purpose

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

Recommendation(s)

That the Council resolves to:

1. Note the contents of the Strategic Partnerships Report

15. **Audit and Governance Committee Annual Council Report (Pages 145 - 156)**

Purpose:

To provide Council with a report on the activities of the Audit and Governance Committee for the municipal year 2025/26.

Recommendation:

That Council resolves to:

- I. Note the report.

16. **Director of Place appointment** (Pages 157 - 166)

Purpose

Following the interview process and the subsequent conditional appointment of Daniel Taylor to the position of Director of Place, via a secondment from Essex County Council to West Oxfordshire District Council, it was agreed that the salary for this role would be £104,722 per annum, plus the applicable pending pay award.

Recommendations

That Council Resolves to:

- I. Confirm the salary for the Director of Place as £104,722 per annum, plus the applicable pending pay award.

17. **Appointment of Returning Officer and Electoral Registration Officer** (Pages 167 - 172)

Purpose

To appoint an Electoral Registration Officer and Returning Officer.

Recommendations

That Council resolves to:

- I. Appoint the Director of Governance and Regulatory Services, Andrea McCaskie, as Electoral Registration Officer and Returning Officer, with effect from 1 June 2026.

18. **Motion to hold an Extraordinary meeting to Confer an Honorary Title**

This Council recognises the outstanding service given to the Council and the people of West Oxfordshire by former Councillor Julian Cooper.

Council resolves to:

1. Convene an extraordinary meeting of the Council to take place at 2pm on 22nd July 2026 for the purpose of considering conferring on Mr Julian Cooper the title of Honorary Alderman, as allowed by s249 of the Local Government Act 1972; and
2. Note that the ordinary meeting of the Council scheduled for that date shall commence at 2.15pm, or at the conclusion of the extraordinary meeting, whichever is the later.

19. **Dates of Future Meetings**

- 22 July 2026
- 16 September 2026
- 18 November 2026
- 20 January 2027
- 24 February 2027
- 24 March 2027
- 19 May 2027

(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, 25 March 2026**

#### PRESENT

Councillors: Andrew Coles (Chair), Carl Rylett (Vice-Chair), Joy Aitman, Lidia Arciszewska, 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, Andy Goodwin, Andy Graham, David Jackson, Edward James, Natalie King, Liz Leffman, Nick Leverton, Dan Levy, 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, Sarah Veasey, Liam Walker, Mark Walker, Adrian Walsh, Alex Wilson and Alistair Wray

Officers: Giles Hughes (Chief Executive Officer), Madhu Richards (Director of Finance), Andrea McCaskie (Director of Governance and Regulatory Services), Phil Martin (Director of Place), Andrew Brown (Head of Democratic and Electoral Services), Anne Learmonth (Democratic Services Officer), Maria Harper (Democratic Services Assistant) and Ana Prelici (Senior Democratic Services Officer)

Other Councillors in attendance:

#### **CL.87 Apologies for Absence**

Apologies for absence were received from:

Councillors Hugo Ashton, Phil Godfrey, Andrew Lyon, Thomas Ashby and David Cooper\*

\*Councillor Cooper arrived late to the meeting.

#### **CL.88 Declarations of Interest**

There were no declarations of interest received.

#### **CL.89 Minutes of Previous Meeting**

The minutes of the meeting held on 25 February 2025 were approved and signed by the Chair as a correct record.

Corrections of the minutes were proposed as follows; corrections to the spellings of the names of Phillip Martin and Michele Mead.

The minutes, as corrected were proposed by Councillor Andy Graham and seconded by Councillor Duncan Enright.

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These for voted on and approved unanimously.

Voting record – For 39, Against 0, Abstentions 0

#### **CL.90 Receipt of Announcements**

The Chair thanked members for attending his recent fundraising quiz night, which raised £2,031 for charity, and advised that he would circulate invitations in due course for a community event in support of Christian Aid Week. He noted that this was the final meeting of the Civic Year and invited group leaders to pay tribute to retiring councillors.

Councillor Andy Graham stated that Councillor Julian Cooper, Ward Member for Woodstock and Bladon, 1986-2006 and 2010-2026, current Chair of the Uplands Area Planning Sub-Committee and Chair of the Council in 2022/23 would not be standing for re-election. Councillors from across the Chamber paid tributes to Councillor Cooper for his work and longstanding commitment.

Councillor Michele Mead paid tribute to the following Councillors from her group who would be retiring;

- Councillor Nick Leverton, Carterton South Ward, 2018-2026
- Councillor Martin McBride, Carterton North East Ward, 2018-2026, Chair of the Council in 2021/22
- Councillor Adrian Walsh, Ducklington, 2023-26

The Deputy Leader and Executive Member for Economic Development, Councillor Duncan Enright, reported on the outcomes of the UK Shared Prosperity Fund and Rural England Prosperity Fund programmes, highlighting support provided to local businesses, employment and skills initiatives, and investment in facilities such as the Hexagon Business Centre. He also reported recent developments at Marriotts Walk, including the opening of a new independent café, the launch of a trader-funded Easter egg hunt, and the reintroduction of umbrella decorations.

The Executive Member for the Environment, Councillor Lidia Arciszewska, encouraged participation in the Great British Spring Clean and advised that litter-picking equipment was available through the Council. She also updated members on progress following the motion on poor mobile phone reception, confirming that ward-level information had been submitted for technical consultation and that further correspondence with Government would follow.

The Executive Member for Stronger, Healthy Communities, Councillor Rachel Crouch, announced that £5,000 had been secured from Oxfordshire County Council to support an active travel “walking bus” initiative for schools, which had launched successfully and would continue, with scope for expansion to another primary school.

The Executive Member for Climate Action and Nature Recovery, Councillor Andrew Prosser, provided updates on the near-completion of decarbonisation works at Windrush Leisure Centre, progress on feasibility studies for EV charging infrastructure across the district, and publication of the Council's biodiversity duty report.

The Chief Executive reported on a recent presentation of Oxfordshire local government reorganisation proposals to Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government (MHCLG) officials, confirming that Government remained on track with its previously announced decision-making timelines.

#### **CL.91 Participation of the Public**

There was no participation of the public.

#### **CL.92 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.

#### **CL.93 Recommendations from the Constitution Working Group**

Councillor Alaric Smith, as the Chair of the Constitution Working Group (CWG), introduced the report. The purpose of the report was to present recommendations from the Constitution Working Group related to delegations for regulatory matters, a review of the planning committee process and Member Questions.

Councillor Smith stated that the report contained recommendations on three different matters.

- Recommendation one was related to regulatory functions, which ensured that the delegations relied upon by the Environmental and Regulatory Service Team are explicitly codified in the Constitution as opposed to needing to rely on general delegations
- Recommendations two to seven arose following a review of the Council's planning arrangements by the Planning Advisory Service (PAS). The review focused on what is

going well, identifying barriers to success and areas for improvement. It resulted in a number of recommendations which had been considered by an officer working group and the Constitution Working Group. These included; changing the name of the committees, merging the area-based planning sub-committee to a single sub-committee and the subsequent changes to the Constitution and meeting schedule. There were a number of other low level, administrative changes which were included for transparency, but that Council were not being asked to formally consider, as they either did not meet the threshold to require a Council decision or they had not been taken forward by the CWG.

- The final recommendation was related to strengthening the rules around member questions, including; a word limit of 250 words, a time limit of 1 minute for supplementary questions, and a requirement to rotate member questions on the agenda in a similar fashion to motions.

Members debated the proposed changes to the planning committees, raising the following points;

- The existing requirements in the Council's Constitution mandated a vote on the item which was under discussion to be taken after three hours, and that this was not suitable for planning meetings. It was suggested this be looked at.
- The proposal to combine the area-based sub-committees into one sub-committee did not sufficiently take into consideration local knowledge nor the distinction between the Uplands and Lowlands areas.
- The timeliness of the proposals was challenged in light of upcoming changes to the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF). It was stated that any changes should not pre-empt this and should instead be reactive. In particular, concerns about some meetings being very long, and with a very high workload for members were raised.
- Why some of the documents did not show tracked changes. Officers explained that they were new documents.
- Other members stated that the CWG and PAS had taken into consideration the arguments about local views, which were important but that the changes would ensure greater consistency of decision making. It was also re-iterated that PAS was an independent body, and that the CWG took the view, though not unanimously, to agree with the recommendations.
- Changes in national policy were expected to be introduced.
- The proposals should have been referred to the Development Control Committee prior to the recommendations being considered by Full Council.
- The combined committees would improve efficiencies and ensure consistent decision making. It would also make it easier to arrange substitute members.
- Communications to parish council would need to be considered as proposed government changes to the national scheme of delegations would also be affecting them.

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- One Councillor with experience of working at a different authority stated that two separate sub-committees were the source of inconsistency which developers could exploit.
- Neighbouring authorities with similar geographies all operated a single planning committee, and the changes would align with preparation for local government reorganisation.

In summing up, Councillor Smith stated that the changes to the committee structures would not fix the frustrations with the planning system that some raised, but that it would ensure the consistency of decision making. He also explained that while the changes would result in politically proportional committees, as per the requirements in the Local Government and Housing Act 1989, he did not think the changes would add a political element to decision making, as Councillors would still be required to act apolitically.

Council voted on the recommendations in three parts.

Council resolved to:

- I. Approve the updates to Part 4E: Functions in Relation to Regulatory Matters, as shown in Annex A.

Voting record – For 42, abstentions 1, against 0

Council resolved to:

8. Agree to amend the rules for Member Questions, as shown in Annex F, Part 5A Council Procedure Rules to:

- a) Introduce a word limit of 250 words on Member Questions.
- b) Introduce a time limit of 1 minute for supplementary Member Questions.
- c) Rotate the order of Member Questions by political group, in the same way that Motions rotate.

Voting record – For 43, abstentions 0, against 0

Council resolved to:

2. Agree to rename the Development Control Committee to “Strategic Planning Committee”, with effect from the start of the 2026/27 civic year.
3. Agree to combine the two area planning sub-committees (Lowlands and Uplands) into a single, district-wide 12-Member “Development Management Sub-Committee” (quorum 3), with effect from the start of the 2026/27 civic year.

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4. Agree to amend Part 3C: Committee Functions, as shown in Annex C, from the start of the 2026/27 civic year to give effect to recommendations 2 and 3.
5. Agree that the new Development Management Sub-Committee will meet on the Lowlands meeting dates in 2026/27, with the Uplands dates held for overspill meetings, should the sub-committee need to adjourn and reconvene.
6. Request that the Council's Independent Remuneration Panel meets to consider the implications of changing the planning committee structure for the Members' Allowances Scheme 2023-27 and formally report back to the May Council meeting with any recommendations.
7. Agree that the Process for Determining Planning Applications (Annex D) and Roles and Responsibilities on Planning Committees (Annex E) be included in the Constitution as appendices to Part 6Q: Members Planning Code of Good Practice.

Voting record For 22, against 17, abstentions 4.

Councillor Andrew Beaney requested that his vote against the recommendations be recorded in the minutes of the meeting.

There was a brief adjournment, with the meeting recommencing at 3:25pm.

**CL.94 Motion A - Response to the proposed changes to the National Planning Policy Framework Proposed by Councillor Andy Goodwin, Seconded by Councillor Early**

Councillor Goodwin proposed the motion, and Councillor Genny Early had seconded this.

The motion was as follows;

“West Oxfordshire District Council has responded to a Government consultation on proposed changes to the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF), backing some elements of the reforms but urging Ministers to rethink proposals that could weaken local planning powers.

The consultation proposes a number of fundamental changes to the current NPPF. West Oxfordshire District Council supports the changes in the new draft framework, that create a clearer structure and bring together guidance that currently sits in several different places. This should simplify the process for Councils to prepare local plans, reducing costs and speeding up the process.

However, the response also highlights several significant concerns:

- Nature recovery and climate resilience are treated as secondary considerations rather than fundamental planning principles.
- The proposal to move more policy detail from local plans into nationally set planning rules. This is a step too far and local plans must continue to play a strong role in shaping

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development at the local level, reflecting the unique needs and circumstances of individual areas.

- Reduced evidential requirements could hamper the ability of local planning authorities to robustly scrutinise applications and make well-informed, legally sound decisions. Ensuring proportionate but adequate supporting information is critical to maintaining confidence in the planning process.
- The lack of transitional arrangements for the decision-making policies, which are proposed to take effect immediately upon publication of the final Framework. This approach risks rendering certain adopted local plan policies - including relatively recently adopted policies - out of date or subject to significantly reduced weight in decision-making. Such an outcome would undermine plan-led decision-making and create uncertainty for local authorities, applicants and communities.
- The serious implication this has for policies such as the recently adopted net-zero carbon requirements set out in the Salt Cross Garden Village Area Action Plan (Written Ministerial Statement Planning – Local Energy Efficiency Standards Update (13 December 2023)), because locally set energy standards would not be allowed for in the new draft national planning rules.
- The proposals for an overly permissive approach towards new development within and outside towns and villages and in locations near well-served railway stations, without reflecting the special conditions arising in a National Landscape.
- The unsustainable further upward pressure on housing targets that will already be extremely challenging to deliver, as well as reduced local control over major energy and digital infrastructure projects.
- The proposal that ‘medium scale’ developments of up to 50 homes could avoid on-site affordable housing requirements and other established planning requirements.

The Council resolves:

- I. To request the Leader of the Council to write the Rt Hon Matthew Pennycook, the Minister of State for Housing and Planning), and our West Oxfordshire Members of Parliament to highlight the concerns raised above.”

Councillor Andrew Beaney proposed an amendment to the motion, which was to add “such as permission in principle” to the sixth bullet point so that it read “The proposals for an overly permissive approach towards new development, such as permission in principle”. The amendment was seconded by Councillor Alex Wilson and accepted by the proposer and seconder.

The motion was debated as amended, with members raising the following points;

- The draft NPPF undermined localism.
- National changes would reduce the powers of local planning authorities and conflict with locally developed plans; particular reference was made to the Council’s emerging local plan.

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- Members highlighted local initiatives such as zero-carbon energy schemes, arguing that councils should retain the ability to set higher environmental and energy standards than those proposed nationally.
- Concerns were raised that the framework prioritised making it easier for developers to build houses over creating sustainable, liveable communities.
- Members highlighted local initiatives such as zero-carbon energy schemes, arguing that councils should retain the ability to set higher environmental and energy standards than those proposed nationally.
- Particular concern was expressed about the impact on net-zero ambitions embedded in recently adopted local plans and area action plans, despite welcome national moves on solar panels and heat pumps.
- The proposed “blanket approach” was criticised as overly permissive, risking harm to local character, the natural environment and community wellbeing.

Cllr Genny Early as the seconder, having reserved her right to speak, highlighted concerns about the increased centralisation of power under the proposed NPPF changes, warning that this undermines local decision-making and the value councils bring to their communities. Cllr Early highlighted the risk that locally developed initiatives and significant work on the local plan, including Cap Zero and area action plans, could be overridden or lost.

Cllr Goodwin summed up the debate and supported the need for planning reform but argued that proposed NPPF changes risked over-centralisation, weakening local decision-making, climate ambition and nature recovery, and undermining locally tailored planning policies. Concerns were raised about overly permissive development, reduced evidential requirements, lack of transitional arrangements, restrictions on higher local energy standards, and the risk that medium-scale developments could erode affordable housing provision and mixed communities.

The motion was voted on as follows;

For – 34, Abstentions - 8, Against 0

The Council resolved:

To request the Leader of the Council to write the Rt Hon Matthew Pennycook, the Minister of State for Housing and Planning, and our West Oxfordshire Members of Parliament to highlight the concerns raised above.

**CL.95 Motion B - Protecting Historical Figures in Banknotes Proposed by Councillor Liam Walker**

This motion was not considered, as the time limit for motions had been exceeded.

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**CL.96 Motion C - Discretionary Business Rate Local Discount and Engagement Proposed by Councillor Ruth Smith, Seconded by Councillor Michael Brooker**

Councillors Michelle Mead and Alex Wilson left the meeting.

Councillor Ruth Smith introduced the item. Councillor Smith read out the motion as follows;

“2026 has seen the introduction of a new Business Rates system, with updated rateable values and changes to sector-specific rate relief.

Councillors have been hearing from town centre businesses that the increases are a shock and a threat to the viability of their businesses. There are reports that it is hard to speak to council advisors about the changes.

This Council would like the Executive members and CEO to consider adopting a Local Discounts and Incentives policy to safeguard the prosperity of West Oxfordshire’s high streets, local jobs and to promote growth within and relocation to the district, in the post 2026 rates landscape.

In addition, assurances are sought that small businesses eligible for the Supporting Small Business Relief scheme can access clear information about how their rates will vary year on year until the full new rate is reached.

Council notes:

- The finance team perform their business rates functions excellently every year, as evidenced by External Audit and internal audit.
- Business Rates are set by national government. WODC is responsible for collection.
- The powers for granting discretionary rate relief by Councils are provided in Sections 44a, 47 and 49 of the Local Government Finance Act 1988, which was amended by the Localism Act 2011 to incorporate wider powers to grant relief under discretions.
- The Council website has the Discretionary Rate Relief Policy at the bottom of the Rate Relief page. This policy lists Local Discounts and Incentives as a category under its powers, but does not contain a section indicating any policy for that category of relief.

<https://www.westoxon.gov.uk/business-and-licensing/business-rates-and-rate-relief/rate-relief/>

Council resolves to:

1. Agree that the Executive and CEO should consider whether a Local Discount and Incentives policy could enhance the economic objectives and wellbeing of the District.
2. Agree that communications with small businesses and all residents be reviewed and improved to ensure they all understand the 2026-27 £800 cap and how that will vary during transition to their new rates in the coming years.”

Councillor Micheal Brooker seconded the motion and emphasised the importance of supporting local businesses, which were stronger contributors to the local economy than national chains.

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At this point the Chair, proposed suspending Council procedure rule 12A, before moving onto the debate. Procedure rule 12A only allowed 60 minutes for motions, which at this point had been reached. The motion was seconded by the vice-chair and voted on as follows.

For 23, Against 10, 1 Abstention

Council Resolved to:

1. Suspend Council Procedure Rule 12A in order to allow more than one hour for motions.

The Council then debated the motion, raising the following points;

- Significant increases in business rates from 2026 were causing concern and confusion among local businesses, despite transitional relief, and members felt the Council should do more to explain and support businesses through the changes.
- Members highlighted that the Council's discretionary rate relief policy includes scope for local discounts and incentives, which were not currently used, and suggested these could help support local businesses, high streets, and economic wellbeing.
- The importance of small and medium-sized businesses, charities, and community organisations to the local economy and community life was emphasised, with concerns raised that rising rates and wider cost pressures could threaten their viability.
- It was noted that existing reliefs were available and that an updated discretionary rate relief policy was due to be considered by the Executive, alongside a need to improve communication and engagement with affected businesses.

Council resolved to:

1. Agree that the Executive and CEO should consider whether a Local Discount and Incentives policy could enhance the economic objectives and wellbeing of the District.
2. Agree that communications with small businesses and all residents be reviewed and improved to ensure they all understand the 2026-27 £800 cap and how that will vary during transition to their new rates in the coming years.

Voting record for 38 for, Against 0, Abstentions 2.

Councillors Andrew Beaney and Sarah Veasey left the chamber.

**CL.97 Motion D - Bring Thames Water back into public ownership Proposed by Councillor Early, Seconded by Councillor Arciszewska**

Councillor Genny Early introduced the motion, and explained she was altering her own motion. The motion, as altered read as;

“This Council notes:

- The Recent Channel 4 docudrama ‘Dirty Business’ was shown in February 2026 and featured pollution of rivers in West Oxfordshire. □ The River Windrush was polluted by sewage discharges from Burford Sewage Treatment Works (STW) for a total discharge duration of 338 hours in 2024, which equates to around 14 days. (Estimates based on Thames Water data, <https://top-of-the-poops.org/waterway/thames-water/river-windrush>; accessed 16 March 2026).
- Five STWs in the Evenlode catchment each discharged untreated sewage for over 2000 hours in 2024, which equates to more than 83 days. Data from Thames Water STW ‘Event Duration Monitors (<https://earthwatch.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2025/06/Water-Qualityin-the-Evenlode-Catchment-2024.pdf>; accessed 16 March 2026).
- During a cross-party EFRA Committee hearing in September 2025, Emma Hardy (Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Water and Flooding in the Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (Defra)) clarified the high threshold for special administration, stating: "If it comes to special administration... it's if a company can't perform its basic duty, so if your water doesn't come out your taps and your sewage isn't being taken away". Environment, Food and Rural Affairs Committee,
- There was a serious interruption to water supply in the OX7 and OX29 postcodes due to a burst water main in March 2026 that caused severe water supply interruptions (low pressure or no water) for thousands of residents and businesses in Oxfordshire. (<https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/articles/cq6qp0146ggo>; accessed 16 March 2026).

This Council further notes:

- Raw sewage contains dangerous pathogens, including E. coli, hepatitis A, and parasites, which pose severe risks through direct contact or ingestion. Exposure causes gastrointestinal infections (vomiting, diarrhoea), skin/eye/ear infections, and respiratory issues. It is a major cause of waterborne diseases like cholera and dysentery.
- Thames Water are responsible for 72 billion litres of sewage discharged into rivers since 2020, with 2024 data indicating a 50% increase in raw effluent dumped.
- Thames Water have paid out £7.2bn to shareholders since 1989, including £158.3m in 2024. This Council believes:
- That the next step is to bring Thames Water should be brought into a special administration regime (SAR) and then back into some form of non-profit, public ownership. This Council resolves:
- To request that the Leader of the Council writes to the Prime Minister calling for Thames water to be brought into public ownership. Page 15

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- To request that the letter to the Prime Minister also asks that in the meantime no dividends should be made to Thames Water Shareholders, nor bonuses to Thames Water Management until all rivers in the region meet all clean water standards.
- To request that the Overview and Scrutiny Committee regularly invites Thames Water to report on a quarterly basis to WODC on how much raw sewage has been pumped into West Oxfordshire rivers and the progress towards preventing this.”

Councillor Lidia Arciszewska seconded the motion, as altered.

Members debated the motion, raising the following points;

- Serious and longstanding sewage pollution across West Oxfordshire’s rivers and communities was highlighted, with untreated discharges, flooding incidents, and disruption to residents, businesses, schools, and public spaces, which members attributed to Thames Water’s failure to maintain adequate infrastructure.
- Members referred to Thames Water’s financial position, high levels of debt, dividend payments, and what was described as a failure of both the privatised model and its regulatory oversight, which they deemed as resulting in poor service and environmental harm.
- Support was expressed for calling on the Government to place Thames Water into special administration and move towards non-profit public ownership, to ensure investment is directed into infrastructure rather than shareholder returns.
- It was emphasised that current local measures, including engagement with Thames Water, planning controls, and Grampian conditions, had been limited in effect and insufficient to resolve the scale of the problem, particularly in the context of planned housing growth.
- Members stressed the need for stronger accountability, independent oversight, and clearer reporting on sewage discharges affecting West Oxfordshire.
- While views differed on whether privatisation itself or regulation was the primary cause, there was broad agreement in seeking intervention to protect residents, public health, and the natural environment.
- The motion was supported as a necessary signal to the Government that the current situation was unacceptable requiring decisive action

Council resolved to:

- To request that the Leader of the Council writes to the Prime Minister calling for Thames water to be brought into public ownership.
- To request that the letter to the Prime Minister also asks that in the meantime no dividends should be made to Thames Water Shareholders, nor bonuses to Thames Water Management until all rivers in the region meet all clean water standards.
- To request that the Overview and Scrutiny Committee regularly invites Thames Water to report on a quarterly basis to WODC on how much raw sewage has been pumped into West Oxfordshire rivers and the progress towards preventing this.

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Voting record – 33 for, 0 against, 4 abstentions

At this point the three-hour time limited allowed for meetings under 12A of the Council's Constitution had been reached.

The Chair proposed suspending this rule to allow the remaining motions on the agenda to be considered. This was seconded by the Leader of the Council.

The motion was voted on and fell. The meeting was then closed.

Voting record – For – 3, Against 24

**CL.98 Motion E - Protecting precious habitats in West Oxfordshire Proposed by Councillor Arciszewska, seconded by Councillor Pearson**

This motion was not considered as the time limit for motions had been exceeded.

**CL.99 Motion F - The impact of the new restrictions imposed at the Household Waste and Recycling Centres in Oxfordshire on the residents of West Oxfordshire, proposed by Councillor Roger Faulkner, seconded by Councillor Sarah Veasey.**

This motion was swapped with Motion B on the request of the Leader of the Conservative Group. As they were both Conservative motions, the Chair and the meeting agreed to this.

Councillor Faulkner introduced the motion, which was read out as follows;

“For eleven consecutive years, under a variety of political leaderships, Oxfordshire County Council was the top performing County Council Waste Disposal Authority. In the County Council's own Satisfaction Ratings of Services Survey in 2025 it showed that 72% of residents were satisfied with the Household Waste and Recycling Centres, with only 16% being dissatisfied. This success reflects both the hard work of staff and the responsible behaviour of Oxfordshire residents.

Despite this positive record, the County Council has introduced new rules for the recycling centres including a mandatory booking system and the requirement to provide proof of address on arrival.

This Council notes that:

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1. These rules place additional bureaucratic barriers for residents wishing to access the recycling centres.
2. Reduced access to recycling centres risks diverting waste into District Council collection services and to an increase in fly-tipping , both of which place additional practical and financial burdens on the District Council.
3. These changes risk undermining both Oxfordshire's high recycling rates in recent years and the public's satisfaction with waste and recycling services.
4. This Council therefore resolves to request that the Executive Member for the Environment writes to the Oxfordshire County Council Cabinet asking them to reconsider these restrictions, assess their impact on District waste and recycling services and work with all local authorities to ensure that waste and recycling centre policies continue to provide an accessible and effective service for the residents of Oxfordshire.”

The Motion was seconded by Councillor Sarah Veasey, who stated that the restrictions were onerous on residents and confusing. The restrictions should be reconsidered by the County Council.

The Motion was debated as follows;

- Some members stated that the motion provided anecdotal evidence and that there was no evidence that booking systems increased fly tipping incidents.
- That the slots were easily bookable online although it was accepted that the extra step was an annoyance, and also potentially prevented those with no internet access from using the tip.
- The booking system may exacerbate hoarding disorders as it added an additional barrier to disposing of waste.
- There were concerns that the booking system would exacerbate fly tipping.

Councillor Steve Cosier proposed amending the motion, removing the fourth resolution, and replacing it with “The Council therefore resolves that the Executive Member for the Environment writes to the Oxfordshire County Council Cabinet and asking them to carry out an evidence-based review after six months, covering access, bookings, staff resilience, recycling, worker safety, fly tipping and district collections”. Councillor Cosier explained that taking any action after only a few months of the changes being in place felt premature, and the amendment sought to alleviate this.

Councillor Graham seconded this.

Councillor Liam Walker proposed changing the amendment to ask the County Council Cabinet to reconsider the changes after six months and in the meantime consider the changes. As this was not accepted by the proposer, the original amendment as proposed by Councillor Cosier was voted on.

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Councillor Dan Levy, a West Oxfordshire District Councillor as well as the Oxfordshire County Council Cabinet Member for Finance, Property and Transformation stated that he had no issue with the amendment and that the Cabinet would look upon it favourably, as they would likely look to review the changes after a period anyway.

The amendment was voted on as follows

For 29, Against 14, Abstentions 0.

Councillor Faulkner summed up, challenging the statements that there had been no increase in fly-tipping or restrictions on visits by some members. He provided anecdotes of frustrations that residents in his ward had raised to him. While noting that the amendment had been accepted and would therefore be supported as the substantive motion, he expressed hope that referring the matter to the County Council would highlight the concern, anxiety and worry felt by many residents and prompt a full reconsideration of the scheme.

37 for, 4 against, 1 abstentions

**CL.100 Motion G - Policy into Action, Proposed by Councillor Michael Brooker, seconded by Councillor Ruth Smith**

This motion was not considered as the time limit for motions had been exceeded.

The Meeting closed at 5:15pm

CHAIR

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Member Questions and Responses for Full Council 25 March 2026

Question	Raised By	Executive Member	Response
<p>I. Residents on Madley Park are concerned about the algae and perceived overgrowth of reeds in the balancing ponds. People wonder who manages the ponds.</p> <p>I have been in contact with a council ecologist via the Estates team, who was very helpful and will take the matter forward in due course. In the meantime, please can the Executive Member</p> <p>a) confirm whether or not site visits are regular or merely responsive and;</p> <p>b) work with the communications team to inform residents that WODC is responsible for the balancing ponds and acts to manage issues when ecologists deem necessary. That way residents will have peace of mind and will know who to contact when concerns arise.</p> <p>Follow up question – Part B gives a link to the landscape management plan, please can work be done to make it more navigable from the front page of West Oxfordshire District Council and</p>	<p>Cllr Ruth Smith</p>	<p>Alaric Smith - Executive Member for Finance</p>	<p>I Thank you for your question</p> <p>I(a) The site is inspected on a monthly basis by our in house team and on an annual basis by Rospa with all recommended planned and reactive works carried out. Our grounds maintenance contractors carry out routine maintenance at the site. Our Ecology team and Flood Risk Team visit where there are management queries.</p> <p>I (b) The Assets and Ecology teams would be happy to assist our Comms team to raise awareness. For information our landscape management plans including this site and showing the extent of the Council’s ownership in the Madley Park area are on our website <a href="https://www.westoxon.gov.uk/environment/climate-action/enhancing-our-natural-capital/">https://www.westoxon.gov.uk/environment/climate-action/enhancing-our-natural-capital/</a></p> <p>Follow up question response – An officer will be asked to look at website to make it easier to access.</p>

<p>particularly from the environment mosaic that that gets you there as it is not obvious unless you know about it.</p>			
<p>2. Data from the House of Commons Library suggests that around 10,600 households in the Witney area are not connected to the gas grid and instead rely on heating oil or LPG, leaving many rural residents particularly exposed to rising global fuel prices. Given the scale of this issue in West Oxfordshire, what assessment has the administration made of the impact of rising off-grid heating costs on residents, and will the Council advocate for targeted support such as a rural heating support payment for affected households?</p>	<p>Cllr Liam Walker</p>	<p>Andrew Prosser - Executive Member for Climate Action and Nature Recovery</p>	<p>Due to the ongoing volatility in the Middle East that is impacting on fuel prices, the Government are looking at options that would be targeted to protect poorer households, however no formal schemes have been announced at this point.</p> <p>We recognise that many rural households in West Oxfordshire are off the gas grid and are particularly exposed to rising oil and LPG prices. This is a real concern, especially for those at risk of fuel poverty, and we continue to monitor the impact locally.</p> <p>However, while short-term financial support can help, it does not address the root cause of high and volatile heating costs. The Council's focus is on supporting residents to reduce their energy use and reliance on fossil fuels.</p> <p>We are promoting and supporting services such as <i>Better Housing Better Health</i> and schemes like the <i>Warm Homes: Local Grant</i> and <i>Boiler Upgrade Scheme</i>, which help households improve insulation,</p>

<p>Follow up question - How is the Council engaging with these households impacted?</p>			<p>save energy and transition to lower-carbon heating systems.</p> <p>From both a cost-of-living and climate perspective, investment is better directed toward energy efficiency and alternatives such as heat pumps, rather than subsidising rising oil prices. Follow up question response –</p> <p>As the written answer says we are awaiting the details of the Government Programme to give support in this area and the Council will, once that detailed programme is clear, take the necessary follow up steps to engage with households on that.</p>
<p>3. There is a growing issue across England of unadopted amenities on privately managed housing estates, where infrastructure such as roads, green spaces and drainage systems are maintained by private management companies rather than being adopted by local authorities. With a number of new developments being built across West Oxfordshire, this can leave residents facing ongoing estate management charges while still paying full council tax.</p> <p>Did the District Council submit a response to the Government's recent consultation on this issue, and if so, what position did West Oxfordshire District Council take in relation to protecting residents from unfair or</p>	<p>Cllr Liam Walker</p>	<p>Geoff Saul - Executive Member for Housing and Social Care</p>	<p>Officers fully recognise the importance of this issue and the need to move away from the current reliance placed on private estate management companies. Having reviewed the consultation material, Officers concluded that the most effective way of addressing this matter is to put in place a clear and robust planning policy within the Regulation 19 draft West Oxfordshire Local Plan 2043 due for publication in June 2026. A working draft policy has been prepared and has been the subject of recent discussion with Executive Members ahead of being finalised as part of the overall draft plan.</p>

<p>excessive estate management fees on new housing estates?</p> <p>No follow up question.</p>			<p>The current situation has arisen from the policies of previous administrations to push these costs onto developers, and therefore homeowners, and minimise the additional costs for Councils. This has been in response to austerity policies introduced by previous national governments.</p>
<p>4. As Leader of West Oxfordshire District Council you also have the responsibility for emergency planning. Can the Leader therefore outline what role he personally played during the recent water outage which left thousands of homes across parts of West Oxfordshire without water for an extended period? In particular, when were you first informed of the situation and what actions did you take to coordinate the Council's response and support affected residents?</p> <p>No follow up question.</p>	<p>Cllr Liam Walker</p>	<p>Andy Graham - Leader of the Council</p>	<p>The Council offered support to help with water disruption, updating their list of vulnerable people and sharing communications from Thames Water with our residents. Incidents of this type where there is disruption to water supply are led by Thames Water, who are responsible for managing the incident and have plans in place to distribute water and identify and support vulnerable people.</p> <p>I was first made aware by Thames Water on the 3<sup>rd</sup> March that they were working on a burst pipe in Eynsham, and there was a risk to customer supply as the repairs were undertaken at that point, but no specific details as to the area or potential scale of the disruption were available at that point.</p> <p>Throughout the incident I regularly liaised with the Officers involved, who attend regular meetings with both Thames Water and Oxfordshire County</p>

			<p>Council, to offer both support and assistance where appropriate.</p> <p>As is the norm with these types of incidents an internal debrief is being organised, to help capture learning points, the outcomes of which will be shared with the Executive.</p> <p>I'd like to thank all Councillors and the local MP, who also played their part and supported the community during the incident.</p>
<p>5. In circumstances where a councillor facing serious allegations related to domestic abuse is allowed to rejoin a political group at West Oxfordshire District Council, does the Leader accept that this could risk sending the wrong message to residents who have experienced domestic abuse? What guidance or standards does the Council expect political groups to follow in such situations to maintain public confidence and demonstrate support for victims?</p> <p>No follow up question.</p>	<p>Cllr Liam Walker</p>	<p>Andy Graham - Leader of the Council</p>	<p>First, I want to be clear that any allegation of domestic abuse is taken extremely seriously, and that must always be the starting point.</p> <p>In this case, the councillor brought the matter to the attention of the group immediately. It was dealt with promptly and robustly — the councillor was suspended from the group the same day, pending the outcome of the police investigation. That is exactly how these situations should be handled.</p>

			<p>Upon a thorough investigation, the police found that the evidence in the case did not support the allegations. No charges were brought at any stage, and the police took no further action. The councillor cooperated fully throughout and maintained from the outset that the allegations were entirely untrue. With due process having been followed at every stage, the councillor was reinstated to the group.</p> <p>On the wider point, the Council itself does not control membership of political groups. What we do set—and enforce—are the standards of conduct expected of all councillors through our Code of Conduct. That framework exists to ensure accountability, uphold public confidence, and provide clear routes for any concerns to be properly considered.</p> <p>Supporting victims of domestic abuse remains an absolute priority for this Council. I would caution against conflating the proper handling of an individual case — in which due process was followed at every stage and the allegations were found to be unsupported — with the Council's ongoing work on safeguarding and support.</p>
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<p>6. Can the Executive member confirm the recorded number of fly-tipping incidents for the months of November 2025, December 2025, then January, February, and March (recorded so far) of this year.</p> <p>Follow up question – Thank you for the figures. On the internal dashboard we have access to, the fly tipping is shown by locations, but the figures are not included. Please can these figures be published to the dashboard?</p>	<p>Cllr Liam Walker</p>	<p>Lidia Arciszewska - Executive Member for Environment</p>	<table border="1" data-bbox="1346 236 2033 395"> <thead> <tr> <th>Fly Tips</th> <th>Nov</th> <th>Dec</th> <th>Jan</th> <th>Feb</th> <th>Mar</th> </tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr> <td>24-25</td> <td>123</td> <td>89</td> <td>113</td> <td>109</td> <td>157</td> </tr> <tr> <td>25-26</td> <td>113</td> <td>119</td> <td>145</td> <td>121</td> <td>80*</td> </tr> </tbody> </table> <p>* up to 20/03/26</p> <p>The Fly Tips data suggests a more intense winter period in 2025–26 compared to 2024–25, with a slightly lower November (113 vs 123) followed by notably higher figures in December (119 vs 89), January (145 vs 113), and February (121 vs 109), indicating a strong mid-season peak; although March appears lower (80 vs 157), it is only partial and not directly comparable. In relation to the booking system introduced by Oxfordshire County Council on 14 January 2026, the figures do not show a clear correlation with increased fly tipping, as activity remained elevated in both January and February after implementation, suggesting demand stayed high and residents adapted to the system, though conclusions are limited by the lack of split January data and the incomplete March figures.</p> <p>Follow up response – I will give Councillor Liam Walker an answer in writing once I have discussed this with officers.</p>	Fly Tips	Nov	Dec	Jan	Feb	Mar	24-25	123	89	113	109	157	25-26	113	119	145	121	80*
Fly Tips	Nov	Dec	Jan	Feb	Mar																
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<p>7. Given over 4000 residents have now signed a petition calling for Woodford Way car park in Witney to not be built, will he now listen to residents and accept that within the allocation of 18,000 homes planned for West Oxfordshire there will already be a large percentage of social housing, therefore this key car park should remain?</p> <p>Follow up question – Would the Council consider a two-week trial by closing the Woodford Way car park to measure the true impact?</p>	<p>Cllr Liam Walker</p>	<p>Hugo Ashton - Executive Member for Planning</p>	<p>I can assure you that the Council is listening to local residents, many of whom are asking us to provide truly affordable housing, which is why Officers continue to work hard to design a viable scheme that strikes the right balance between providing social housing, that will be sustainable and provide easy access to both shops and transport links as well as providing public parking.</p> <p>The site is included in the current local plan which was approved by the previous administration. This administration is taking it forward, and the fact that the Council owns the land means that we can make a 100% social housing scheme financially viable.</p> <p>Once the scheme has been finalised, a full consultation exercise will be undertaken as part of the overall planning process.</p> <p>Follow up answer – Its not something we have thought about at this stage.</p>						
<p>8. In the West Oxfordshire District Council parking strategy report the document only shows the average occupancy for the Woodford Way car park. Can the council</p>	<p>Cllr Liam Walker</p>	<p>Lidia Arciszewska - Executive Member for Environment</p>	<table border="1"> <thead> <tr> <th>Car Park</th> <th>Woodford Way</th> </tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr> <td>Total</td> <td>264</td> </tr> <tr> <td>6/20/2022</td> <td>234</td> </tr> </tbody> </table>	Car Park	Woodford Way	Total	264	6/20/2022	234
Car Park	Woodford Way								
Total	264								
6/20/2022	234								

<p>publish the actual data that was collected in order to ascertain these averages?</p> <p>No follow up question.</p>			<table border="1"> <tr><td>07/07/2022</td><td>237</td></tr> <tr><td>7/13/2022</td><td>230</td></tr> <tr><td>7/21/2022</td><td>209</td></tr> <tr><td>7/29/2022</td><td>166</td></tr> <tr><td>8/24/2022</td><td>196</td></tr> <tr><td>9/27/2022</td><td>231</td></tr> <tr><td>10/06/2022</td><td>193</td></tr> <tr><td>11/08/2022</td><td>221</td></tr> <tr><td>12/02/2022</td><td>257</td></tr> <tr><td>01/05/2023</td><td>244</td></tr> <tr><td>02/08/2023</td><td>209</td></tr> <tr><td>03/09/2023</td><td>228</td></tr> <tr><td>04/06/2023</td><td>194</td></tr> <tr><td>06/02/2023</td><td>182</td></tr> <tr><td>Average occupancy Number</td><td>211.27</td></tr> <tr><td>Average Occupancy %</td><td>80%</td></tr> </table>	07/07/2022	237	7/13/2022	230	7/21/2022	209	7/29/2022	166	8/24/2022	196	9/27/2022	231	10/06/2022	193	11/08/2022	221	12/02/2022	257	01/05/2023	244	02/08/2023	209	03/09/2023	228	04/06/2023	194	06/02/2023	182	Average occupancy Number	211.27	Average Occupancy %	80%
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<p>9. Many businesses in Witney are concerned about the impact of the District Council building on the Woodford Way car park. Are you concerned about the impact this could have on the local economy and visitors to Witney?</p>	<p>Cllr Liam Walker</p>	<p>Duncan Enright - Deputy Leader of the Council and Executive Member for Economic Development</p>	<p>Many people come into the town on foot, by bicycle, or via public transport, and these journeys are completely unaffected by changes to a single parking location. The town benefits from multiple entry points and a range of parking options, meaning visitor behaviour is not dependent on a single site.</p> <p>Witney's consumers can arrive from several directions across the town's other car parks. The Marriotts Walk multistorey car park continues to</p>																																

<p>Follow up question – Thank you for the answer. Would Councillor Enright support the previous Conservative administration’s plan to build a multi-storey car park on the site with housing around it, replicating essentially what is at Marriots Walk.</p>			<p>provide significant capacity close to the retail core, alongside other long-stay and short-stay options around the town centre.</p> <p>Because visitors choose parking based on convenience, duration of stay and the purpose of their trip, the change is unlikely to materially affect overall footfall. Witney’s strong retail offer, walkable layout and multiple access points mean the town remains resilient and attractive to both residents and visitors.</p> <p>Follow up response – We have just done a review of car parking across the district and with very much the business viability in mind and also looking at parking for people visiting the shops but also working in the shops. We will continue to do that and will bear that in mind during the Woodford Way development.</p>
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<p>10. Please can you confirm how many times the Chamber and committee rooms have been hired out for 25/26</p> <p>No follow up question.</p>	Cllr Michele Mead	Andy Graham - Leader of the Council	<p>There have been 95 bookings for all the rooms for 2025-26.</p> <p>The Council have not included any income associated with the hiring of the Chamber or Committee Rooms in the 2025-26 nor 2026-27 budget.</p>												
<p>11. I would like to request data regarding parking enforcement outcomes within the Witney town boundary. There are ongoing concerns regarding persistent parking issues on Corn Street and Welch Way, which are expected to escalate following the impending closure of Woodford Way.</p> <p>To assess the impact of the transition in enforcement authority from West Oxfordshire District Council to Oxfordshire County Council in 2021, please provide the annual number of Penalty Charge Notices (PCNs) issued for the three years immediately preceding the transfer.</p>	Cllr Jane Doughty	Lidia Arciszewska - Executive Member for Environment	<p>The transfer of on-street parking enforcement happened 1<sup>st</sup> April 2023.</p> <p>Please find below the penalty charge notices issued within Witney.</p> <table border="1"> <thead> <tr> <th>Financial year</th> <th>On Street (Roads)</th> <th>Off Street (car parks)</th> </tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr> <td>2020-21</td> <td>614</td> <td>523</td> </tr> <tr> <td>2021-22</td> <td>1540</td> <td>1024</td> </tr> <tr> <td>2022-23</td> <td>1488</td> <td>816</td> </tr> </tbody> </table>	Financial year	On Street (Roads)	Off Street (car parks)	2020-21	614	523	2021-22	1540	1024	2022-23	1488	816
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<p>For a clear comparison of historical and current trends, please provide the data categorised by:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>* On-street PCNs (Roadside enforcement)</li> <li>* Off-street PCNs (Council-managed car parks)</li> </ul> <p>This information is vital for understanding how the change in enforcement powers has influenced parking compliance in the town centre ahead of significant local infrastructure changes.</p> <p>No follow up question.</p>			
<p>12. Over the last couple of years, you have been asked time and time again about when the Tree Management Policy is going to be reviewed. It should have been last year, and it didn't happen....</p> <p>We are now in the nesting season, which means any tree works will happen, few and far between.</p> <p>Please can I be provided a clear breakdown of all the work / maintenance that is going to take place from April 2026 - April 2027 on the District Council owned green spaces in: Deer Park, Ducklington and Curbridge. A meeting</p>	<p>Thomas Ashby</p>	<p>Lidia Arciszewska - Executive Member for Environment</p>	<p>The Tree Management Policy has now been updated and approved as a delegated decision on 16th March. The updated policy reinforces the key principles that the Council will follow for managing the trees it owns / has the responsibility to maintain. This includes ensuring the tree stock is managed in a way that balances risks and resources as well as ensuring landscape, amenity, ecological, environmental and historical benefits.</p> <p>We do not own any land in Curbridge or Ducklington. In respect of Deer Park, works to the line of trees on the residential side has been scheduled for October/November. This is</p>

<p>with an Officer about such work would also be useful.</p> <p>No follow up question.</p>			<p>predominantly reducing lime trees and clearance. No other major works for the wooded areas of Deer Park are scheduled at present but there are some provisionally planned works for the Deer Park recreational grounds and surrounding woodland. Ubico also carry out general grounds maintenance in the area to a schedule.</p> <p>Officers would be happy to meet with the Member to discuss the works planned.</p> <p>Any further queries can be directed to <a href="mailto:trees@westoxon.gov.uk">trees@westoxon.gov.uk</a>.</p>
<p>13. Please can you state the plans for the over £300,000 in S106 money from the Spring Meadow development in Witney that is due to be spent by late this year? Witney Town Council sent some suggestions, so I would be keen to understand what options you are looking to explore.</p> <p>No follow up question.</p>	Thomas Ashby	Alaric Smith - Executive Member for Finance	<p>The plans for this funding will support two priority projects. The first focuses on improving the public realm at Marriotts Walk. Working with a landscape designer, we aim to reimagine and revitalise the large open areas to create a more welcoming and better-connected space. Enhancements such as new seating, high- quality planting and more attractive social areas will help improve pedestrian flow, strengthen the visitor experience and encourage people to spend more time in this part of the town centre.</p> <p>The second project is a comprehensive upgrade of Witney's wayfinding and signage. Much of the existing signage is dated or inaccurate and no longer</p>

			<p>reflects how people move around the town. By modernising and expanding the signage network, supported by additional REPF, we aim to improve navigation both within the town centre and at key entry points, including routes to destinations such as Cogges Farm. This will help visitors understand how close the town centre is and encourage greater footfall into local shops and attractions. We continue to work closely with Witney Town Council on projects and maintain a strong, constructive partnership throughout.</p> <p>The ideas Witney Town Council suggested did not fall within the geographical scope of the fund.</p>
<p>14. Garden waste licenses - Please can you provide the figures for the number of licenses purchased in the 25/26 financial year?</p> <p>No follow up question.</p>	Thomas Ashby	Lidia Arciszewska - Executive Member for Environment	<p>The number of Garden Waste licenses purchase in 25/26 was 31,679.</p> <p>The Council took the decision to freeze the license fees for Garden Waste for 2026-27; it is the lowest licence fee in Oxfordshire.</p>

# Election of DISTRICT COUNCILLORS for the Wards of West Oxfordshire District Council Summary of Results

Date of Election : Thursday 07 May 2026

## Ascott and Shipton

Name of Candidate	Description (if any)	Number of Votes
BOANAS Edward Thomas	Local Conservatives	343
LUND Janet Lisbeth	Liberal Democrats	444 Elected
PUTTICK Robin Esmond Scott	Labour Party	22
REASON Elizabeth Frances	Green Party	47
WALKER Nigel Frederick	Reform UK	111

**Vacant Seats: 1    Electorate: 1,773    Ballot Papers Issued: 970    Turnout: 54.71%**

## Bampton and Clanfield

Name of Candidate	Description (if any)	Number of Votes
EVANS Philip Simon	Green Party	85
FENTON Edward John	Local Conservatives	622
ROBINEAU Yvonne Doreen	Labour Party	29
SMITH Alaric Michael	Liberal Democrats	706 Elected
TAYLOR Simon	Reform UK	320

**Vacant Seats: 1    Electorate: 3,553    Ballot Papers Issued: 1,767    Turnout: 49.73%**

## Brize Norton and Shilton

Name of Candidate	Description (if any)	Number of Votes
COOPER David John	Local Conservatives	269
LONG Joseph Andrew	Reform UK	248
NEWSHAM Diane Mary	Labour Party	16
OVERTON Toyah Jade Leah	Liberal Democrats	256
PEARSON Rosanna	Green Party	335 Elected

**Vacant Seats: 1    Electorate: 2,543    Ballot Papers Issued: 1,126    Turnout: 44.28%**

## Burford

Name of Candidate	Description (if any)	Number of Votes
BAKER Natalie Jane	Green Party	39
CHANNON Leslie Barbera	Liberal Democrats	330
FIELD-JOHNSON Nicholas Anthony	Local Conservatives	370 Elected
MILES Nathaniel Robert	Labour Party	8
POXON James David	Reform UK	189

Vacant Seats: 1 Electorate: 1,757 Ballot Papers Issued: 938 Turnout: 53.39%

## Carterton North East

Name of Candidate	Description (if any)	Number of Votes
BARRETT Brian Leonard	Reform UK	345
HORSLEY David Christopher	Green Party	116
INGLETON Barry Paul	Independent	58
STEERE Robert James	Labour Party	38
STEVENSON Gillian	Liberal Democrats	324
WATSON Simon Paul	Local Conservatives	619 Elected

Vacant Seats: 1 Electorate: 4,269 Ballot Papers Issued: 1,504 Turnout: 35.23%

## Carterton North West

Name of Candidate	Description (if any)	Number of Votes
CRIPPS Thomas Anthony John	Local Conservatives	489
EVANS Sarah Louise	Reform UK	600 Elected
KOTECHA Hemashu	Green Party	152
WALTON Andrew Stacey	Liberal Democrats	272
WESSON David John	Labour and Co-operative Party	52

Vacant Seats: 1 Electorate: 4,067 Ballot Papers Issued: 1,573 Turnout: 38.68%

## Carterton South

Name of Candidate	Description (if any)	Number of Votes
ABARNO Tammy Anne	Local Conservatives	518 Elected
BARRETT Anthony Edward	Green Party	85
ENGLAND Kate Susan	Labour Party	46
KING Natalie Jayne	Reform UK	440
YALLOP Gemma Louise	Liberal Democrats	293

Vacant Seats: 1 Electorate: 3,697 Ballot Papers Issued: 1,387 Turnout: 37.52%

## Chipping Norton

Name of Candidate	Description (if any)	Number of Votes
COLEMAN Sandra June	Liberal Democrats	745 Elected
LASKO Claire Eliane	Green Party	409
MARSHALL Darren John	Reform UK	622
MORRIS Caspar	The Conservative Party Candidate	364
O'NEILL Sian Priscilla Florence	Labour and Co-operative Party	338

**Vacant Seats: 1    Electorate: 5,682    Ballot Papers Issued: 2,485    Turnout: 43.73%**

## Ducklington

Name of Candidate	Description (if any)	Number of Votes
LANGRIDGE Richard Andrew	Reform UK	265
MACKENZIE Liam	Local Conservatives	470 Elected
MEADOWS Georgia Jonathan	Labour Party	33
MOREL-ALLEN Benjamin	Liberal Democrats	309
PONTON Penelope Barbara	Green Party	44

**Vacant Seats: 1    Electorate: 2,225    Ballot Papers Issued: 1,123    Turnout: 50.47%**

## Eynsham and Cassington

Name of Candidate	Description (if any)	Number of Votes
COMPTON Adam	The Conservative Party Candidate	417
GARNER Penelope Susan	Green Party	337
GRANT Michael James	Reform UK	466
MELLISS Nicholas John	Labour Party	112
RYLETT Carl Martin	Liberal Democrats	1,156 Elected

**Vacant Seats: 1    Electorate: 5,132    Ballot Papers Issued: 2,494    Turnout: 48.60%**

## Freeland and Hanborough

Name of Candidate	Description (if any)	Number of Votes
ARCISZEWSKA Lidia Kamilla	Liberal Democrats	785
MORRIS Toby Jacob	Local Conservatives	808 Elected
RUSSELL Ann	Reform UK	237
SHAW Miranda	Green Party	151
SMITH James John Christopher	Labour Party	54

**Vacant Seats: 1    Electorate: 4,064    Ballot Papers Issued: 2,039    Turnout: 50.17%**

## Standlake, Aston and Stanton Harcourt

Name of Candidate	Description (if any)	Number of Votes
COSIER Sandra Joan	Liberal Democrats	981 Elected
EISENHANDLER Daniel	Green Party	81
MILDENHALL Peter Richard	Reform UK	363
NICHOLLS Lysette Clare Emma	Local Conservatives	516
THOROGOOD Sachin David Singh	Labour Party	30

**Vacant Seats: 1    Electorate: 3,845    Ballot Papers Issued: 1,975    Turnout: 51.37%**

## The Bartons

Name of Candidate	Description (if any)	Number of Votes
HAMES Ian David	Labour and Co-operative Party	13
JACKSON David Neil	Liberal Democrats	435 Elected
ROBERTSON Mary Ann	Green Party	15
SYDENHAM Matthew Charles	Reform UK	117
TANDI Amanda Benhilda	The Conservative Party Candidate	250

**Vacant Seats: 1    Electorate: 1,549    Ballot Papers Issued: 832    Turnout: 53.71%**

## Witney East

Name of Candidate	Description (if any)	Number of Votes
BROWN George Frank Edward	Liberal Democrats	633
HAAR Lawrence	Reform UK	398
HOULTON Alexander James	Green Party	223
ROBERTSHAW James Firth	Local Conservatives	978 Elected
SMITH Ruth Helen	Labour and Co-operative Party	574

**Vacant Seats: 1    Electorate: 5,782    Ballot Papers Issued: 2,814    Turnout: 48.67%**

## Witney South

Name of Candidate	Description (if any)	Number of Votes
BROOKER Michael James	Labour and Co-operative Party	427
KELLY Ross Adam	Reform UK	474
MARSHALL Harriet Lorna Mary	Green Party	194
TRELOAR Jack Benjamin Albert	Local Conservatives	658 Elected
WHITTEN Peter Daniel	Liberal Democrats	289

**Vacant Seats: 1    Electorate: 4,856    Ballot Papers Issued: 2,044    Turnout: 42.09%**

## Woodstock and Bladon


Name of Candidate	Description (if any)	Number of Votes
GIBBS James Graham	Reform UK	261
MASSIE Hannah Stephanie	Liberal Democrats	772 Elected
MCDONALD Samuel Duncan	Labour Party	101
SUKUMARAN Eric Sean Joni	The Conservative Party Candidate	463
WHEATLEY Barry Ivan	Green Party	246

**Vacant Seats: 1    Electorate: 3,763    Ballot Papers Issued: 1,848    Turnout: 49.11%**

### Totals for District Election

Ballot Papers Issued	=	26,919	Votes Cast	=	26,850
Electorate	=	58,557	Votes Rejected	=	69
Turnout %	=	45.97 %			

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 <b>WEST OXFORDSHIRE DISTRICT COUNCIL</b>	<b>WEST OXFORDSHIRE DISTRICT COUNCIL</b>
<b>Name and Date of Committee</b>	<b>ANNUAL COUNCIL – WEDNESDAY 20 MAY 2026</b>
<b>Subject</b>	<b>ESTABLISHMENT AND APPOINTMENT OF COMMITTEES, SUB-COMMITTEES AND WORKING GROUPS, INCLUDING SUBSTITUTE MEMBERS</b>
<b>Wards Affected</b>	All
<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>	Andrea McCaskie, Director of Governance and Regulatory Services Email: <a href="mailto:andrea.mccaskie@westoxon.gov.uk">andrea.mccaskie@westoxon.gov.uk</a>
<b>Report Author</b>	Andrew Brown, Head of Democratic and Electoral Services Email: <a href="mailto:andrew.brown@westoxon.gov.uk">andrew.brown@westoxon.gov.uk</a>
<b>Purpose</b>	To establish the Council’s committees for the 2026/27 Civic Year and appoint members to committees, working groups and external committees.
<b>Annexes</b>	Annex A – Political Proportionalities on Committees 2026/27 Annex B – Constitution Working Group Terms of Reference Annex C – Carterton Area Strategy Working Group Terms of Reference Annex D – Committee Nominations 2026/27 (to follow)
<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 <a href="#">Constitution (version 2.18)</a>, for the Civic Year 2026/27;</li> <li>2. Determine that, in accordance with Section 15 of the Local Government and Housing Act 1989 (“the Act”), the Council shall apply the political balance provisions under the Act to committees as shown in Annex A;</li> <li>3. Agree to re-establish the Constitution Working Group (with 7 Members), agree the Terms of Reference (Annex B) and in doing so agree to apply the principles of political proportionality.</li> <li>4. Agree to re-establish the Carterton Area Strategy Working Group (with 6 Members plus the Executive Member with responsibility for Carterton Area Strategy as ex officio Chair),</li> </ol>

	<p>agree the Terms of Reference (Annex C) and in doing so agree to apply the principles of political proportionality, subject to all political groups being represented on the working group.</p> <p>5. Appoint councillors to serve on the Council's committees, working groups and external committees, as set out in Annex D (to follow) for a term of office expiring at the next Annual Meeting of the Council;</p> <p>6. Note the arrangements for substitute members set out in part 5 of the report.</p>
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 Council on 25 March 2026 agree changes to the naming and structure of planning committees with effect from the start of the 2026/27 which are reflected in [Version 2.18 of the Constitution](#) (published 10 May 2026).
- 1.3 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. Council is recommended to appoint to Working Groups on the same basis.
- 1.4 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.
- 1.5 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.
- 1.6 Committee membership is for one year, with the appointments made at the Annual Meeting, running to the following 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. 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 appoint members to 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. The political proportionalities on sub-committees and the nominated members are shown in Annex A to this report for completeness.

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

- 4.1 For 2026/27 Council is recommended to reestablish two working groups, the Constitution Working Group and the Carterton Area Strategy Working Group.

- 4.2** The Constitution Working Group is expected to play a key role in overseeing the Council's response to changes in regulations (e.g. the national planning scheme of delegation) and informing improvements to the Council's governance arrangements. This working group could also have a role in overseeing any future community governance review. For 2026/27 it is recommended that the membership is set at 7 members (previously 9) and it is suggested that group leaders are nominated where possible. The terms of reference attached at Annex B which Council is recommended to agree state that seats are appointed "on the basis of political balance".
- 4.3** The Carterton Area Strategy Working Group would continue 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. This Working Group is recommended to be re-established with 6 Members (previously 5 Members) plus the responsible Executive Member as ex officio Chair of the Working Group. The terms of reference attached at Annex C, which Council is recommended to agree, state that "the principle of political proportionality will be applied, subject to all political groups being represented on the Working Group".
- 4.4** Two other working groups from 2025/26 were the Local Plan Working Group and the Reorganisation and Devolution Working Group. Council is not recommended to reestablish these.
- 4.5** The Local Plan Working Group held numerous meetings during 2025/26 to ensure that the views of Members were fully taken into account in the development of a new Draft Local Plan. Council in July 2026 will consider the approval of a Regulation 19 Draft Local Plan for public consultation. Prior to this an all-member briefing will be held. It is considered that this working group has fulfilled its remit and does not need to be reestablished.
- 4.6** Similarly, the Reorganisation and Devolution Working Group does not need to be re-established for 2026/27, having fulfilled its original remit of overseeing proposals for local government reorganisation and devolution. The Government's decision on local government reorganisation in Oxfordshire is expected in July 2026, at which point other arrangements will be put in place to oversee the establishment of a shadow unitary authority and prepare the transition.

## **5. SUBSTITUTIONS**

- 5.1** Where a member is unable to attend a meeting of a committee, sub-committee or working group 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 but in some cases (planning, licensing, standards) will need to first have attended the requisite training.

5.2 Notification of a substitute member must be made to Democratic Services ([democratic.services@westoxon.gov.uk](mailto:democratic.services@westoxon.gov.uk)) 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. 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.

## 12. BACKGROUND PAPERS

12.1 None.

(END)

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## Annex A: Political Proportionalities on Committees, Sub-Committees and Working Groups

### Part 1: 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 district council elections held on 7 May 2026:

Liberal Democrat Group: 20  
 Conservative Group: 16  
 Labour and Co-Operative Group: 8  
 Green Party Group: 4  
 Non-Grouped\* (Reform UK): 1  
 Total: 49 Members

*A group comprises 2 or more members. Non-grouped members do not have an automatic entitlement to seats on committees but do stand to be offered any seats that remain unallocated once all groups have been allocated their full proportional entitlement of seats.*

**Table A: Initial committee seat allocations**

Committee	Seats	Lib Dem	Con	Lab & Co-op	Green	Total	Balance
Audit and Governance Committee	11	4	4	2	1	11	0
Licensing Committee	11	4	4	2	1	11	0
Overview and Scrutiny Committee	15	6	5	2	1	14	-1
Performance and Appointments Committee	5	2	2	1	0	5	0
Strategic Planning Committee	24	10	8	4	2	24	0
Total seats allocated (real entitlement) (rounded entitlement)	66	26 (26.94) (27)	23 (21.55) (22)	11 (10.78) (11)	5 (5.39) (5)	65	-1

All seats on all committees are allocated except for one seat on the Overview and Scrutiny Committee, which remains unallocated.

The Conservative Group is allocated one seat more than its overall proportional entitlement.

The Liberal Democrat Group is allocated one seat fewer than its overall proportional entitlement.

**Steps to allocate remaining seats (over-allocations are dealt with first):**

1. The Conservative Group gives up one seat, having the lowest proportional entitlement to its final seat on Audit and Governance Committee and Licensing Committee. Audit and Governance Committee is chosen. The Conservative Group now has its correct overall proportional entitlement of seats.
2. Of the two unallocated seats (Audit and Governance and Overview and Scrutiny), the Liberal Democrat Group gains the unallocated seat on the Audit and Governance Committee, having the stronger entitlement to that seat (0.49 compared to 0.12). The Liberal Democrat Group now has its correct overall proportional entitlement of seats.
3. The remaining unallocated seat on the Overview and Scrutiny Committee is allocated to the non-grouped (Reform UK) member. All seats have now been allocated and all groups have their full proportional entitlement of seats.

**Table B: Final committee seat allocations after adjustments**

Committee	Seats	Lib Dem	Con	Lab & Co-op	Green	Non-Grouped (Reform)	Total	Balance
Audit and Governance Committee	11	5	3	2	1	0	11	0
Licensing Committee	11	4	4	2	1	0	11	0
Overview and Scrutiny Committee	15	6	5	2	1	1	15	0
Performance and Appointments Committee	5	2	2	1	0	0	5	0
Strategic Planning Committee	24	10	8	4	2	0	24	0
Total seats allocated (real entitlement) (rounded entitlement)	66	27 (26.94) (27)	22 (21.55) (22)	11 (10.78) (11)	5 (5.39) (5)	1 N/A N/A	66 (64.65) (65)	0

**Part 2: Working Groups (for appointment by Council)**

Council is recommended to establish two working groups and to apply the principles of political proportionality in doing so, subject to all political groups being represented on the Carterton Area Strategy Working Group.

**Table C: Seat allocations on working Groups**

Working Group	Seats	Lib Dem	Con	Lab & Co-op	Green	Total	Balance
Constitution Working Group	7	3	2	1	1	7	0
Carterton Area Strategy Working Group	6	2	2	1	1	6	0
<i>Executive Member for Carterton Area Strategic Plan to be ex officio member and chair</i>							

**Part 3: Sub-Committee allocations (for appointment by committees)**

Seats on sub-committees are allocated to political groups by the appointing committee based on the same principles. Members of sub-committees must be members of the appointing committee (shown in brackets). The allocations on sub-committees are as follows:

**Table D: Sub-committee seat allocations**

Sub-Committee	Seats	Lib Dem	Con	Lab & Co-op	Green	Total	Balance
Development Management Sub-Committee (Strategic Planning Committee)	12	5	4	2	1	12	0
Miscellaneous Licensing (Licensing Committee)	5	2	2	1	0	5	0
Standards (Audit & Governance Committee)	5	2	2	1	0	5	0

(END)

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**Annex B**  
**TERMS OF REFERENCE**  
**CONSTITUTION WORKING GROUP 2026/27**

**1.0 CONSTITUTION**

The Constitution Working Group is constituted by resolution of Council. It is a non-Executive working group that reports to Council.

**2.0 PURPOSE**

The Constitution Working Group has been established to review the Constitution and ensure that it is complete, accurate, up to date, clear, lawful and fit for purpose. It will undertake this role by:

- I.1 Receiving and considering requests from the Monitoring Officer, Members, the Council or Committees to review specific parts of the Constitution;
- I.2 Reviewing areas in the Constitution to ensure that they are complete, accurate, up to date, clear, lawful and fit for purpose;
- I.3 Receiving and considering recommendations on proposed amendments and improvements from the Monitoring Officer, Members, the Council or Committees;
- I.4 Making recommendations on proposed amendments to the Constitution to the Council.

**3.0 REMIT**

Also, within the remit of the Constitution Working Group will be the responsibility for reviewing the arrangements in respect of recording of meetings and webcasting.

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

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

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

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

#### **4.0 MEMBERSHIP**

The Constitution Working Group shall comprise of 7 members, with seats being offered on the basis of political balance in accordance with the wishes of the political groups as indicated by political group leaders. Should a group leader not wish to appoint the entitlement of members to the working group, the seat may be offered to another member with the group leader's consent.

Other members will be invited to meetings as required on a case by case basis.

#### **5.0 CHAIR OF CONSTITUTION WORKING GROUP**

The Chair of the Constitution Working Group will be appointed at its first meeting of each municipal year.

#### **6.0 VOTING**

Voting at the Constitution Working Group will be by way of a simple majority of those present and voting, by way of a show of hands. Where the vote is equal, the Chair of the Working Group shall have a casting vote.

#### **7.0 QUORUM**

The quorum of a meeting of the Constitution Working Group will be 3 members from the membership of the working group. Substitute members will be permitted on the Constitution Working Group, with members being substituted by a member from the same political group.

#### **8.0 FREQUENCY**

The Constitution Working Group will meet as and when required. At least 7 calendar days' notice of meetings will be provided. All meetings will be held in private. Meetings will generally take place either remotely via Teams, or will be Hybrid meetings, or in person meetings.

#### **9.0 RECORD OF MEETINGS**

Recommendations of the Constitution Working Group will be reported to the next available Council meeting. Where applicable, notes of Constitution Working Group meetings will be agreed at the next suitable meeting of the Working Group, or

where there is no such meeting within the next 6 months or at all, by the next available Council meeting provided it is not a special meeting.

## **10.0 OFFICER SUPPORT**

The Constitution Working Group will be advised and supported by the Monitoring Officer and the Deputy Monitoring Officer and Business Manager for Democratic Services.

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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 6 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 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)

 <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 – 20 MAY 2026</b></p>
<p>Subject</p>	<p><b>ADOPTION OF THE COUNCIL’S CONSTITUTION AND UPDATED FINANCIAL PROCEDURE RULES</b></p>
<p>Wards affected</p>	<p>ALL</p>
<p>Accountable member</p>	<p>Councillor Alaric Smith, Executive Member for Finance &amp; 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 and Regulatory Services Email: <a href="mailto:Andrea.McCaskie@westoxon.gov.uk">Andrea.McCaskie@westoxon.gov.uk</a> Madhu Richards, Director of Finance Email: <a href="mailto:Madhu.Richards@westoxon.gov.uk">Madhu.Richards@westoxon.gov.uk</a></p>
<p>Report author</p>	<p>Madhu Richards, Director of Finance Email: <a href="mailto:Madhu.Richards@westoxon.gov.uk">Madhu.Richards@westoxon.gov.uk</a> Andrew Brown, Head of Democratic and Electoral Services Email: <a href="mailto:Andrew.Brown@westoxon.gov.uk">Andrew.Brown@westoxon.gov.uk</a></p>
<p>Summary/Purpose</p>	<p>To 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. To approve the revised Financial Procedure Rules March 2026 (Annex A).</p>
<p>Annexes</p>	<p>Annex A – Financial Procedure Rules March 2026 Annex B – Extract of Part 5A Council Procedure Rules: Rule 9 Duration of Meetings</p>
<p>Recommendation(s)</p>	<p>That the 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 <a href="#">Constitution</a>.</li> <li>2. Approve the updated Financial Procedure Rules attached as Annex A.</li> <li>3. Agree to exclude the Strategic Planning Committee and Development Management Sub-Committee from the duration of meeting rule, as shown in Annex B.</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	Not Applicable

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

- 1.1** Part 5A rule 2.2 of the Council's Constitution requires the Council to adopt its Constitution and Officer Scheme of Delegation for non-executive functions at the Annual Council Meeting.
- 1.2** 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.
- 1.3** 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.
- 1.4** This report recommends that Council approves the updated Financial Procedure Rules 2026 (FPR's), as reviewed by the Constitution Working Group and agreed by the Audit and Governance Committee on 19 March 2026. The updated Financial Procedure Rules are attached at Annex A.
- 1.5** Council is also recommended to exclude planning meetings from the rule limiting the duration of meetings, following the replacement of two area planning sub-committees with a single district-wide Development Management Sub-Committee.

## **2. ADOPTION OF THE CONSTITUTION**

- 2.1** The current version of the Council's Constitution for approval by Council can be found at the following link: [v2.18 of the Constitution](#).
- 2.2** Version 2.18 of the Constitution incorporates the changes to planning committees agreed by full Council on 25 March 2026, including merging the two area sub-committees into a single, district-wide planning sub-committee, which took effect at the start of the 2026/27 civic year.
- 2.3** The non-executive scheme of officer delegations for non-executive functions is set out in Part 4 of the Constitution. No changes are proposed. The only change to the Constitution that Council is asked to consider at the Annual Meeting is to the Financial Procedure Rules.

## **3. FINANCIAL PROCEDURE RULES (FPRS's)**

- 3.1** The FPR's were last reviewed in July 2015. There have been numerous organisational changes since 2015, the most recent being Publica Transition Phase 1 and Phase 2. The revised FPRs have been significantly amended to reflect these changes.
- 3.2** The first draft of the revised FPR's was reviewed by the Constitution Working Group (CWG) on 19 November 2025.

- 3.3 The updated FPRs were then considered by the Audit and Governance Committee (A&GC) at its meeting on 19 March 2026 because the Committee has responsibility for advising changes in respect of financial and contract rules. The FPR's were approved at that meeting.
- 3.4 Following the approval of the FPR's at the A&GC, it was realised that two paragraphs in the original FPR's were not included in the revised version of the FPR's taken through CWG and A&GC.
- 3.5 These two paragraphs have been added to Section F: Assets and are shown in red text in Annex A.
- 3.6 Annex A contains the final version of the FPR's March 2026 for approval by Council.

#### **4. DURATION OF MEETINGS RULE**

- 4.1 Council on 25 March 2026 agreed to replace the Lowlands and Uplands area planning sub-committees with a single district-wide Development Management Sub-Committee. In debate, Members highlighted that Council Procedure Rule 9 (in Part 5A of the Constitution) would need to be reconsidered, given the expected workload of the single sub-committee (at least in the short term). In addition, it would be inappropriate for a planning meeting to immediately move to a vote on an item under discussion after 3 hours have elapsed, given the need for planning applications to be properly considered and debated before being determined.
- 4.2 If a Development Management Sub-Committee agenda included too much business for the Sub-Committee to deal with in a single sitting, the Sub-Committee would have the option to adjourn at the end of an application and reconvene on the "overspill" date (the following Monday at 2pm) for the remaining business. In governance terms this would be a continuation of the same meeting rather than a separate meeting with its own agenda.
- 4.3 Council is recommended to exclude both the Strategic Planning Committee and the Development Management Sub-Committee from the "3 hour rule", as is already the case with other regulatory meetings (e.g. licensing).
- 4.4 The proposed amendment to Rule 9 is attached at Annex B, with changes shown in red text and strikethrough text.

#### **5. ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS**

- 5.1 Council may choose to ask the Constitution Working Group to consider specific constitutional issues and report back with proposed changes.
- 5.2 Council may choose not to approve the FPR's but this is not recommended as the existing version no longer reflects current organisational arrangements.
- 5.3 Council could choose not to exclude planning meetings from the duration of meetings rule but this is not recommended due to the need for the new committee structure to operate effectively and the risks associated with regulatory decisions being challenged.

#### **6. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS**

6.1 There are no direct financial implications arising from the recommendations in this report.

**7. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS**

7.1 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.

**8. RISK ASSESSMENT**

8.1 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.

**9. EQUALITIES IMPACT**

9.1 None.

**10. CLIMATE AND ECOLOGICAL EMERGENCIES IMPLICATIONS**

None.

**11. BACKGROUND PAPERS**

11.1 None.

(END)

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**WEST OXFORDSHIRE DISTRICT COUNCIL**  
**PART 5I: Financial Procedure Rules**

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## **I Introduction**

**I.1** Financial Procedure Rules ('FPR's), together with Contract Procedure Rules (CPR's) and other forms of guidance on procedure and conduct, provide the framework for managing West Oxfordshire District Council's ('the Council's') financial affairs, ensuring high integrity and accountability. They apply to every Member and Officer of the Council and anyone acting on behalf of the Council.

**I.2** To conduct its business efficiently the Council needs to ensure that there are sound financial management policies in place and that these are strictly adhered to. Part of this process is the establishment of FPR's that set out the financial policies of the Council.

**I.3** These FPR's are made pursuant of the Local Government Act 1972, Section 151 the Accounts and Audit Regulations 2003 (as amended) and all other enabling powers.

**I.4** The FPR's provide clarity over the accountabilities of individuals, ensures that the Council uses best practice when dealing with financial matters and that Council resources are used wisely.

**I.5** For the purpose of these FPR's, the description "Full Council" shall refer to the Full Council, made up of elected members, and the term 'Officer' or 'Officers' includes:

- all employees and agency staff engaged by the Council;
- all employees and agency staff engaged by either Publica Group Ltd, Cotswold District Council or Forest of Dean District Council who are authorised to act on behalf of the Council through "Shared Service Arrangements".

## **2 Procedure**

**2.1** The FPR's shall be complied with by all Officers and Members of the Council and those acting on behalf of the Council through Shared Service Arrangements. If job titles and roles differ between the Council and other entities delivering Shared Service Arrangements, the responsibilities defined in the FPR's shall be adopted by the most appropriate role (taking account of seniority) within each organisation's structure, agreed locally.

**2.2** Full access to financial systems and records shall be given to delegated Officers operating within Shared Service Arrangements in order to facilitate transactional processing and other finance related work, as required.

**2.3** The FPR's identify the financial responsibilities of Full Council, Executive and Executive Members, other Members, the Head of Paid Service (Chief Executive), the Monitoring Officer, the Chief Finance Officer, other Directors and Heads of Service and all other Officers.

**2.4** Directors and Heads of Service are responsible for ensuring that all Officers in their departments are aware of their responsibilities according to the FPR's and other internal regulatory documents and comply with them.

2.5 Executive Members and Senior Officers should maintain a written record where these responsibilities have been delegated to Officers, including seconded Officers and Officers working through Shared Service Arrangements.

2.6 Where responsibilities have been delegated or devolved to other responsible Officers, references to the Members or Senior Officers in the FPR's should be read as referring to them.

2.7 All Members and Officers have a general responsibility for taking reasonable action to provide for the security of the assets under their control, and for ensuring that the use of these resources is legal, is properly authorised and provides value for money. Nothing included in or omitted from these FPR's shall detract from this responsibility.

2.8 The Chief Finance Officer is responsible for maintaining a continuous review of the FPR's and advising Full Council and the Audit and Governance Committee of any material additions or changes necessary.

2.9 Should an instance of non-compliance with these FPR's be discovered the Chief Finance Officer may, after consultation with the Chief Executive, make a report to the Leader, Full Council and/or Executive, as appropriate. Non-compliance with FPR's may also lead to disciplinary action being taken.

# FINANCIAL PROCEDURE RULES

## A: FINANCIAL MANAGEMENT

### A1 Introduction

**A1.1** Financial management covers all financial accountabilities in relation to the running of the Council, including the Policy Framework and Budget.

**A1.2** Key processes and controls must be in place to ensure good financial management and help the Council conduct affairs in an efficient, effective and economic manner.

**A1.3** Monitoring systems must be in place to review compliance with financial standards and to ensure compliance with legal and corporate requirements for accountability.

### A2 Emergencies

**A2.1** Nothing in these FPR's or the CPR's shall prevent the Executive, the Senior Leadership Team comprising of the Chief Executive, Monitoring Officer, Section 151 Officer and Director of Place or the Managing Director or an Executive Director of Publica from incurring expenditure essential to meet any immediate needs created by an emergency, or which is referable to Section 138 of the Local Government Act 1972. This should be done in accordance with the Council's Constitution. Any such action shall be reported as soon as possible to the Executive, detailing the nature of the emergency, the action taken, the financial implications and any other consequences.

### A3 Full Council

**A3.1** The Full Council is responsible for:

- Adopting the Council's Constitution and Members' Code of Conduct and for approving the Policy Framework and Budget within which the Executive operates.
- Approving and monitoring compliance with the Council's overall framework of accountability and control. The framework is set out in the Council's written Constitution.
- Approving procedures for recording and reporting decisions taken. This includes decisions taken by the Council, the Executive, Committees and Officers. These delegations and details of who has responsibility for which decisions are set out in the Council's Constitution.

**A3.2** The Full Council (together with the Chief Financial Officer) has a statutory responsibility to ensure:

- The setting of the annual budget, including the allocation of financial resources to different services and projects, proposed reserves, the Council Tax Base and the setting of the Council Tax.

- The preparation of the annual Statement of Accounts, in accordance with the timescales set out in the Accounts and Audit Regulations.
- The publishing of the Statement of Accounts, and the External Auditor's Certificate, Opinion or Report each year following the year end to which they relate. The Council has given delegated authority for the Statement to be approved by Audit and Governance Committee or other approved Committee as per the Council's Constitution and signed by the person presiding at the Committee meeting at which the approval is given.
- The Statement of Accounts are made available for public inspection for 30 working days when an interested person, for example, business rate payers, Council Tax payers or those who pay fees and charges, may exercise their rights under the Local Audit and Accountability Act 2014 and the Local Audit (Public Access to Documents) Act 2017.
- The publication of the Annual Audit and Inspection letter received from the External Auditor.
- That public notice is given by advertisement of the conclusion of the audit and that the Statement of Accounts and the External Auditor's report are available for inspection.

#### **A4 Executive**

**A4.1** The Executive is responsible for discharging executive functions in accordance with the Policy Framework and Budget and for monitoring compliance with the agreed policy and related executive decisions.

**A4.2** Executive decisions can be delegated to a Committee of the Executive, an individual Executive Member, an Officer, a Joint Committee.

**A4.3** The Constitution contains a requirement to ensure that an individual Executive Member consults with relevant Officers before taking a decision within their delegated authority. In doing so, the individual Member must take account of legal and financial liabilities and risk management issues that may arise from the decision.

**A4.4** No Member shall ask an Officer to incur expenditure for which there is no appropriate provision in the Budget, unless in consultation as part of an emergency as detailed in paragraph A2.1.

**A4.5** A record shall be kept of the decision-making process.

#### **A5 Overview and Scrutiny Committee(s)**

**A5.1** The Council has an Overview and Scrutiny Committee, responsible for the scrutiny of Executive decisions before or after they have been implemented and for holding the

Executive to account. This Committee is also responsible for making recommendations on future policy options and reviewing the general policy and service delivery of the Council.

**A5.2** The Overview and Scrutiny Committee do not have authority over any financial activity, other than to support the work of the Committee itself but can make reports to Executive and Full Council concerning any matter.

## **A6 Audit and Governance Committee**

**A6.1** The Council has an Audit and Governance Committee, responsible for ensuring effective internal control and independent assurance mechanisms across all areas of the Council.

**A6.2** The Audit and Governance Committee is responsible for Internal Audit, External Audit provision, risk management, the signed approval of the Annual Statement of Accounts and the Corporate Governance Framework. This Committee does not have authority over any financial activity, other than to support the work of the Committee itself but can make reports to other Committees and Full Council concerning any matter.

## **A7 Standards Sub-Committee**

**A7.1** The Council has a Standards Sub-Committee, established from the membership of the Audit and Governance Committee, responsible for promoting and maintaining high standards of conduct amongst Members of the Council and co-opted Members on its Committees and Sub-Committees. In particular, it is responsible for advising the Council on the adoption of the Members' Code of Conduct, and for monitoring the operation of the Code.

**A7.2** The Standards Sub-Committee does not have authority over any financial activity, other than to support the work of the Committee itself but can make reports to other Committees and Full Council concerning any matter.

## **A8 Other Committees**

### **A8.1** Planning and Licensing Committees-

Planning regulation and licensing are quasi-judicial functions and are exercised through Development Control, Planning Sub-Committees Lowlands and Uplands and Licensing Committees within the Council, under powers delegated by Full Council. The terms of reference for these committees are set out in the Constitution.

### **A8.2** Joint Committees-

The Council can set up Joint Committees with other organisations to oversee the management of activities or facilities. The financial activity of Joint Committees is governed by their terms of reference. The Council's procedural and FPR's apply to Joint

Committees unless there has been specific agreement in line with the Constitution to operate under other rules.

#### **A9 Head of Paid Service (Chief Executive)**

**A9.1** The Head of Paid Service (Chief Executive) is responsible for the corporate and strategic management of the Council and fulfils the statutory role of Head of Paid Service. They must report to and provide information for Full Council, Executive, Overview and Scrutiny Committee, Audit and Governance Committee and any other Committees as required. They are responsible for establishing a framework for management direction, style and standards and for monitoring the performance of the organisation.

**A9.2** The Head of Paid Service (Chief Executive) is also responsible, together with the Monitoring Officer and/or other delegated Officer, for the system of record keeping in relation to all Full Council's decisions.

#### **A10. Monitoring Officer**

**A10.1** The Monitoring Officer is a statutory role within the Council. This role cannot be the Head of Paid Service or the Chief Finance Officer. The Monitoring Officer's role is defined in the Constitution, including responsibility for:

- Advising, as appropriate, Full Council on amendments to the Constitution or making such amendments as necessary to take account of decisions of the Council, a Committee, the Executive or Leader and changes of law or fact. They shall notify Members, the Head of Paid Service and other Officers as they consider appropriate.
- Contributing to the promotion and maintenance of high standards of conduct through the provision of support to the Standards Sub-Committee.
- Conducting investigations into matters referred via the Initial Assessment Process or arranging for such investigations to be made and making reports or recommendations in respect of them to the Standards Sub-Committee.
- After consultation with the Head of Paid Service and the Chief Finance Officer, reporting to Council (or Executive in relation to an Executive function), if they consider that any proposal, decision or omission has given rise to maladministration. Such a report will have the effect of stopping the proposal or decision being implemented until the report has been considered.

#### **A11 Chief Finance Officer (Section 151 Officer)**

**A11.1** Section 151 of the Local Government Act 1972 requires that every local authority in England and Wales should make arrangements for the proper administration of their financial affairs and shall secure that one of their Officers has responsibility for the administration of those affairs. This Officer must be a member of a specific accounting body.

**A11.2** The Chief Finance Officer is therefore a statutory role of the Council, with statutory duties in relation to the financial administration and stewardship of the Council. They (or their designated deputy) shall have the right and duty to advise Full Council, Executive, Committees and Senior Leadership Team on priorities in relation to resources and capital expenditure. This statutory responsibility cannot be overridden.

**A11.3** The Chief Finance Officer is responsible for:

- The proper administration of the Council's financial affairs.
- Determining the Council's accounting records, including the form of accounts and supporting accounting records and its accounting control systems, in compliance with the Accounts and Audit Regulations 2003.
- Providing financial information and advising on the corporate financial position of the Council as required.
- Ensuring that the Annual Statement of Accounts are prepared in accordance with CIPFA's Code of Practice on Local Authority Accounting in the United Kingdom.
- Signing the Annual Statement of Accounts and certifying that it presents a true and fair view of the financial position of the council at the financial year end.
- Preparing the Medium-Term Financial Strategy and the Annual Revenue Budgets and Capital Programmes, within the Policy Framework.
- Reporting to Full Council (under the requirement of Section 25 of the Local Government Act 2003), when it is considering its Budget, council tax and housing rents (if applicable) for the new financial year. This 'Section 25' report to include the Chief Finance Officer's opinion on the robustness of the estimates and adequacy of reserves.
- Advising the Council on the level of reserves needed for meeting estimated future expenditure, in accordance with the statutory requirement for billing authorities to maintain financial reserves (under Sections 32 and 43 of the Local Government Finance Act 1992).
- Treasury Management.
- Advising the Executive or Full Council about whether a decision is likely to be considered contrary to or not wholly in accordance with the approved Budget.
- Providing regular reports to the Executive on the Council's finances and financial performance.
- Monitoring compliance with the FPR's and CPR's and reporting, where

appropriate, breaches of these rules to the Executive and/or Full Council.

- Formally reviewing the FPR's and CPR's every five years and reporting the revised Rules to Full Council for approval.
- Maintaining a continuous review of the FPR's and CPR's and making any non-material changes to the Rules, as considered necessary, or as part of that review.
- Advising the Audit and Governance Committee of any material additions or changes necessary to the FPR's.
- Issuing advice and guidance to underpin these rules for Members and Officers to follow.

**A11.4** Section 114 of the Local Government Finance Act 1988 requires:

- The Chief Finance Officer to nominate a properly qualified Officer to deputise should they be unable to perform the Chief Finance Officer duties personally.
- The Council to provide the Chief Finance Officer with sufficient and suitably qualified Officers, accommodation and other resources, including legal advice where necessary, in order to carry out the Chief Finance Officer duties.

## **A12 Directors and Heads of Service**

**A12.1** Directors and Heads of Service are responsible for the delivery of their own service(s) and for the day- to- day management of their service(s) budgets. Spending and income generation should be in accordance with service budgets and performance monitored against budget.

**A12.2** Each Director or Head of Service is responsible for:

- Complying with the FPR's and CPR's and other internal regulatory documents and ensuring that all Officers within their service(s) are aware of the existence and content of these Rules.
- Advising Executive Members of the financial implications of all proposals and ensuring that the financial implications have been agreed by the Chief Finance Officer.
- Consulting with the Chief Finance Officer or delegated Deputy and seeking approval on any matter liable to affect the Council's finances materially (defined as in excess of £10,000), before any commitments are incurred.
- Ensuring that all systems and controls within their service(s) are operated to prevent, minimise and detect any opportunity for fraud, theft or other irregularity. They should ensure the accountability and control of Officers and the security,

custody and control of all other resources within the service(s).

### **A13 Officers**

**A13.1** All Officers acting on behalf of the Council are responsible for:

- Complying with the FPR's and CPR's and any other internal regulatory documents of the Council.
- Keeping accurate and comprehensive records to support transactions they undertake on the Council's behalf. These records must be in accordance with the accounting systems and policies established by the Chief Finance Officer.
- Avoiding conflicts of interest and ensuring compliance with the employees' code of conduct.

### **A14 Internal Audit**

**A14.1** The Accounts and Audit Regulations 2015 (England) requires that the Council must undertake an adequate and effective internal audit of its accounting records and its system of internal control, in accordance with the proper practices in relation to internal control.

**A14.2** The Chief Finance Officer is responsible for ensuring that arrangements are put in place to ensure financial stewardship, probity and compliance with laws and regulations within the Council.

**A14.3** The Head of Internal Audit role and the Internal Audit function is provided by South West Audit Partnership Internal Audit Services. The Head of Internal Audit is responsible for providing a written report to those charged with governance, which includes an opinion on the adequacy and effectiveness of the Council's control environment under the CIPFA Code of Practice for Internal Audit in Local Government and the Accounts and Audit Regulations 2015.

**A14.4** The Council's Internal Audit function is responsible for reviewing and reporting on corporate and departmental internal control arrangements, both financial and operational, as appropriate. This function can be provided by a suitably qualified external body (for example a shared Internal Audit Service).

**A14.5** Internal Audit shall provide positive assurance when financial controls are effective and recommendations for improvement where they are not. They shall advise all levels of management on the operation of financial and operational controls to help prevent things going wrong.

**A14.6** Internal Audit are responsible for the investigation and reporting of all suspected irregularities, at the request of the Chief Finance Officer, Monitoring Officer, the Chief Executive or a Director. The Counter Fraud and Enforcement Unit may also be instructed to carry out investigations of irregularity. Where there is the possibility of

fraud, Internal Audit may support an investigation lead by the Counter Fraud Manager.

## **A15 External Audit**

**A15.1** The Council's External Auditor is responsible for considering whether the Council has proper arrangements in place for:

- Giving an opinion on the Council's financial statements.
- Assessing how it secures economy, efficiency and effectiveness in its use of resources (the Value for Money statement); looking at how the Council is prioritising resources and improving efficiency and productivity.

## **B: FINANCIAL PLANNING, BUDGET PREPARATION AND BUDGET MONITORING**

### **B1 Introduction**

**B1.1** Full Council is responsible for agreeing the Council's Policy Framework and Budget, which will be proposed by the Executive. In terms of financial planning, the key elements are the corporate plan, the annual revenue budget, the capital programme and the Medium-Term Financial Strategy.

**B1.2** The Policy Framework comprises a number of statutory plans and strategies that are listed in the Council's Constitution.

**B1.3** The budget is the financial expression of the Council's plans and policies. It reflects Full Council, Executive and Committee priorities and gives authority to Budget Holders to incur expenditure or collect income. It should take due account of the risks and opportunities facing the Council.

**B1.4** The revenue budget must be constructed to ensure that resource allocation properly reflects the service plans and priorities of the Council. Budgets are needed so that the Council can plan, authorise, monitor and control the way money is allocated and spent. It is illegal for the Council to budget for a deficit.

**B1.5** Medium term financial planning covering a minimum period of five years, which incorporates both revenue and capital plans, involves a planning cycle in which Members, Chief Executive, Directors and Budget Holders plan for significant events and changes to spending and income. This allows for measured and appropriate action to be taken each year when setting detailed budgets and avoids the need for urgent or undesirable action.

### **B2 Full Council**

**B2.1** Full Council is responsible for the approval and adoption of its annual Budget in February of each year prior to the start of the next financial year.

**B2.2** This includes:

- The allocation of financial resources to services and projects.
- The control of capital expenditure.
- The approval of the Medium-Term Financial Strategy.
- The control of the council's borrowing requirement.
- Setting the rate of Council Tax.
- Setting the Council Tax base (unless delegated under the constitution)
- The approval of the Council Capital, Investment and Treasury Management Strategies
- The approval of the Council Pay Policy

**B2.3** Full Council is responsible for approving procedures for agreeing variations to approved budgets, plans and strategies forming the Policy Framework, unless otherwise delegated under the constitution.

**B2.4** Full Council is responsible for setting the level at which the Executive, Executive Members and Officers may reallocate budget funds from one service to another (see virement rules, Section C).

### **B3 Executive**

**B3.1** The general format of the annual Budget will be approved by Executive, on the advice of the Chief Finance Officer.

**B3.2** The Executive is responsible for:

- Co-ordinating the development of the Budget and Policy Framework and submitting budget proposals to Full Council in February prior to the start of the next financial year.
- Taking in-year decisions on resources and priorities in order to deliver the Budget and Policy Framework within the financial limits set by Full Council.
- Monitoring financial performance against the Budget.

### **B4 Chief Finance Officer**

**B4.1** The Chief Finance Officer is responsible for ensuring that a revenue budget is prepared on an annual basis and a Medium-Term Financial Strategy is prepared on a minimum five-year basis for consideration by the Executive, before submission to Full Council in February prior to the start of the next financial year.

**B4.2** The Chief Finance Officer is responsible for:

- Determining the format and the timetable for the Budget, to be agreed by Executive.
- Supplying the financial information that needs to be included in policies, strategies and performance plans in accordance with statutory requirements and agreed timetables.
- Providing guidance to Officers on budget preparation.
- Advising Full Council on Executive budget proposals in accordance with their responsibilities under Section 151 of the Local Government Act 1972. This advice is to be presented to Full Council at its budget setting meeting in February, as part of their 'Section 25' report setting out their opinion on the robustness of the estimates and adequacy of reserves.
- Ensuring that expenditure is committed only against an approved budget and that all Officers responsible for committing expenditure comply with the FPR's and other

relevant guidance.

- Establishing a framework of budgetary management and control, ensuring that financial performance information is monitored sufficiently frequently to allow corrective action to be taken if targets are not likely to be met.
- The preparation of Budget Monitoring reports, to be reported to Executive, reflecting significant variations to income and expenditure budgets (in excess of £10,000) and the overall financial position, on a minimum quarterly basis.
- Ensuring that appropriate and timely information is provided on receipts and payments, in order to allow budgets to be monitored effectively.
- Ensuring that systems are in place to measure activity and collect accurate financial information for use in local financial performance indicators.
- Complying with all legal requirements and CIPFA's Code of Practice on Local Authority Accounting and CIPFA's Service Reporting Code of Practice for Local Authorities.

## **B5 Directors and Heads of Service**

**B5.1** Directors and Heads of Service should manage their budgets responsibly and prudently and not create future commitments without sufficient approved budget.

**B5.2** Directors and Heads of Service are responsible for:

- Contributing to the development of the Policy Framework, budgets and performance plans within their areas of responsibility. Budget estimates should be prepared in line with guidance issued by the Chief Finance Officer and have regard to known spending patterns, legal requirements and agreed corporate and/or service plans.
- Contributing to the development of corporate and service targets, objectives and performance information in their areas of responsibility.
- Developing their services' performance plans in line with statutory requirements and corporate guidance.
- Achieving the targets, objectives and levels of performance as set out in the corporate plans (including achievement of budgetary targets within their areas of responsibility).
- Complying with the accounting guidance provided by the Chief Finance Officer and ensuring that income and expenditure is properly recorded and accounted for in their service areas. Income and expenditure should not be miscoded as a means of applying unauthorised virement.
- Monitoring income and expenditure within their approved budgets and reporting to

the Chief Finance Officer significant variations to budget (in excess of £10,000). They should also take the necessary action required to improve the financial position.

**B5.3** Budget responsibilities may be delegated to Service Managers within their given area of responsibility. Any such scheme of delegation should be documented and the Budget Holder made aware of their levels of authority and the contents of the FPR's. Adequate training and support should be provided to budget holders to enable them to carry out their financial responsibilities and internal controls should be established to ensure that budgets are properly monitored.

## **B6 Budget Holders and Other Officers**

**B6.1** Each delegated budget holder and Officer shall be responsible for the sound financial management and budgetary control of their delegated area. This will include the monitoring and control of all financial and finance related systems and the monitoring and control of access to computerised financial records. Significant variations to budgets, in excess of £10,000, should be reported to the Chief Finance Officer and their Director or Head of Service.

## **B7 Preparation of Capital Programme**

**B7.1** Capital expenditure involves acquiring or enhancing fixed assets with a long-term value to the Council, such as land, buildings, and major items of plant and equipment or vehicles. Capital assets shape the way services are delivered for the long-term and create financial commitments for the future in the form of financing costs and revenue running costs. Capital expenditure may include loans and grants which are used by others for capital purposes.

**B7.2** The Chief Finance Officer is responsible for defining whether expenditure is classed as capital or revenue expenditure, having regard to Government regulations and accounting requirements.

**B7.3** The Council can set a "de minimis" level for treating capital expenditure as revenue, to avoid unnecessary work in identifying potential capital spend. The current "de minimis" level is set at £10,000. Expenditure falling within the definition of capital expenditure will be charged to revenue if it is for £10,000 or less.

**B7.4** The Chief Finance Officer is responsible for ensuring that a Capital Programme is prepared on an annual basis for consideration by Executive, before submission to Full Council for approval as part of the annual Budget setting process.

**B7.5** Each Director or Head of Service will prepare a business case for each new item to be included in the Capital Programme, including details of the scheme, link to the Council Priorities, the capital budget requirement, a project plan, associated revenue expenditure and any other details requested by the Chief Finance Officer.

**B7.6** No capital scheme shall commence which will increase the revenue expenditure of

the Council until such revenue provision has been approved.

**B7.7** The Government places strict controls on the financing capacity of the Council. This means that capital expenditure should form part of an Investment Strategy and should be carefully prioritised in order to maximise the benefit of scarce resources.

**B7.8** New capital schemes in year should be approved as follows:

- Amounts not exceeding £150,000 – by Executive
- Amounts in excess of £150,000 – by Full Council.

This approval is subject to the availability of the approved budget.

**B7.9** As part of the capital programme, an asset management plan shall be maintained by a designated Director or Head of Service and a Capital Strategy shall be maintained by the Chief Finance Officer.

**B7.10** Once a capital project has been approved, a Director, or delegated Officer, will be accountable for the delivery of the scheme and must comply with the Council's CPR's, FPR's and any other internal regulatory documents.

## **B8 Resource Allocation**

**B8.1** Where there is a mismatch between available resources and required resources, service needs should be prioritised and resources fairly allocated.

**B8.2** The Chief Finance Officer is responsible for:

- Developing and maintaining a resource allocation process that ensures due consideration of the Council's Policy Framework.
- Advising on methods available for accessing additional resources and assessing their financial implications.
- Assisting in the allocation of resources to budget holders.

## **B9 Increases in Estimates**

**B9.1** Other than by virement or supplementary estimate, expenditure estimates may not be increased as a result of increased income, unless the service is designated as a trading service by the Chief Finance Officer, in consultation with the relevant Director and Executive Member. In these circumstances expenditure estimates approved by Full Council may be increased as a result of increased income, in line with the virement rules set out in the FPR's.

## **B10 Carry Forward of Budget**

**B10.1** Carry forward of planned underspend of revenue budgets into the following

financial year will only be allowed with the agreement of the Chief Finance Officer, in order to meet the needs of approved service delivery. All applications shall be submitted to the Chief Finance Officer in accordance with the agreed year end timetable.

**B10.2** Chief Finance Officer approval is subject to evidence that the underspend is as a result of timing, has been committed for the same purpose as originally intended, and will be spent in the new financial year. The Chief Finance Officer will report agreed carry forwards to the Executive each year.

**B10.3** All other carry forward requests, including budget under spends that have been carried forward in previous financial years, will be subject to Executive approval at the Financial Outturn meeting held after the year end (unless otherwise delegated under the Constitution).

## **B11 Maintenance of Reserves**

**B11.1** The Chief Finance Officer has a statutory obligation under the Local Government Act 2003 to report on the adequacy of the Council's reserves to Executive and Full Council; at the time Full Council considers its budget for the coming year.

**B11.2** Reserves can be maintained for three main purposes:

- A working balance to help cushion the impact of uneven cash flows and avoid unnecessary temporary borrowing (This forms part of general reserves).
- A contingency to cushion the impact of unexpected events or emergencies (This also forms part of general reserves).
- A means of building up funds to meet known or predicted requirements (Earmarked reserves).

**B11.3** The Chief Finance Officer has delegated authority to approve in year transfers to and from earmarked reserves to support the activities of the Council.

**B11.4** The transfer to and from general reserves shall be the responsibility of Full Council. As part of the annual budget approval process, Full Council may delegate the amount by which such funds may be utilised and approved by Executive in meeting unforeseen expenditure.

## **C: SCHEME OF VIREMENT**

### **C1 Introduction**

**C1.1** The scheme of virement is intended to enable the Executive, Directors and Heads of Service and Budget Holders to manage budgets with a degree of flexibility within the overall Policy Framework determined by Full Council, and therefore to optimise the use of available resources.

**C1.2** Virement is the switching of resources between approved budgets at a service or cost centre level. This transfer of budgetary provision may be used if additional expenditure is required on an existing budget, providing that an equal expenditure saving or additional income can be made on another budget, subject to the Virement Rules.

### **C2 Full Council**

**C2.1** Full Council is responsible for agreeing procedures for virement of expenditure between budget headings. The virement scheme is administered by the Chief Finance Officer within the guidelines set by Full Council. Any variation from this scheme requires the approval of Full Council.

**C2.2** Virement in excess of £150,000 are deemed to change the Budget and Policy Framework and require the approval of Full Council.

### **C3 Budget Variations within a Service**

**C3.1** Action to correct actual or projected variations in budgeted income or expenditure within an approved cost centre / service is delegated to the relevant Director, Head of Service or Budget Holder. These variations should not have a financial impact on the approved net budget on the cost centre / service.

### **C4 Virement Rules / Limits**

**C4.1** The prior approval of the relevant Executive Member and the Chief Finance Officer is required for any virement, of whatever amount, where it is proposed to vire as a result of a fortuitous increase in income to a cost centre not designated as Trading. The rules below cover the delegated virement limits.

**C4.2** The following rules apply to virement between services:

#### **C4.2.1** Revenue budgets:

Amounts up to £10,000 –

Approval by relevant Director(s) or Head of Service(s). The Chief Finance Officer

should be informed of this virement.

Amounts over £10,000 but not exceeding £25,000 –

Approval by relevant Director(s) or Head of Service(s) and the Chief Finance Officer. Relevant Executive Member(s) to be informed of this virement.

Amounts over £25,000 but not exceeding £50,000 –

Approval by Chief Finance Officer in consultation with Relevant Executive Member(s).

Amounts over £50,000 but not in excess of £150,000 – Approval  
of Executive.

Amounts in excess of £150,000 –

Approval of Full Council, or as delegated in the Constitution.

#### **C4.2.2 Capital Schemes:**

Amounts up to £50,000 –

Approval of relevant Director(s) or Head of Service(s), with the agreement of the Chief Finance Officer. Executive Member(s) to be informed.

Amounts over £50,000 but not exceeding £150,000 – Approval  
by Executive

Amounts in excess of £150,000 –

Approval of Full Council, or as delegated in the Constitution.

**C4.3** Virement that is likely to have a financial impact on the level of service activity falling under the responsibility of another Director should only be implemented with the approval of each Director or Executive Member concerned.

**C4.4** Virement must not be aggregated or disaggregated in order to avoid the Virement Rules.

**C4.5** No virement relating to a specific financial year will be made after 31st March in that year.

**C4.6** Where an approved budget is a lump sum budget or contingency intended for

allocation during the year, its allocation will not be treated as a virement, provided that:

- the amount is used in accordance with the purposes for which it has been established.
- the Executive or Full Council has approved the basis and the terms, including financial limits, on which it will be allocated. Individual allocations in excess of the financial limits should be reported to the Executive or Full Council as required.

**C4.7** The virement must not contravene any statutory requirement.

**C4.8** All virement must be properly documented and approved. A record of all virement should be maintained by the Chief Finance Officer and reported to the appropriate Executive Member.

## **D: RISK MANAGEMENT AND INSURANCE**

### **D1 Introduction**

**D1.1** Risk involves uncertainty whereby an event or effect deviates from what is expected. Risks cover situations which may result in loss, damage, injury, failure to achieve objectives or a missed opportunity. It includes corporate and strategic risks. All organisations, whether they are in the private or public sectors, face risks to reputation, people, property and continued operations.

**D1.2** Risk management is the planned and systematic approach to the identification, evaluation and control of risk. Its objectives are to secure the organisation's opportunities and assets and to ensure its continued financial and organisational well-being. Risk management is, therefore, an integral part of good business practice.

**D1.3** It is essential that robust systems are developed and maintained for identifying and evaluating all significant opportunities and risks to the Council as an integral part of management. This should include the active participation of all those associated with the planning and delivery of services.

**D1.4** The Council's Risk Management Policy and Strategy sets out criteria for risk assessment and guidance on how it should be managed.

### **D2 Executive**

**D2.1** The Executive is responsible for:

- Implementing the council's Risk Management Policy and Strategy.
- Promoting a culture of risk management awareness throughout the Council

### **D3 Audit and Governance Committee**

**D3.1** The Audit and Governance Committee is responsible for:

- Reviewing the effectiveness of risk management processes.
- Approving the Council's annual Risk Management Strategy
- Ensuring that risk management procedures are satisfactorily carried out.
- Ongoing monitoring and review of the Risk Management Strategy.

### **D4 Chief Finance Officer**

**D4.1** The Chief Finance Officer is responsible for:

- Preparing the Risk Management Policy and Strategy for Audit and Governance Committee.
- Promoting the culture of Risk Management throughout the Council.
- Advising the Executive on appropriate insurance cover for known insurance risks and assets owned and/or used in connection with the Council's activities.
- The negotiation, and where appropriate, settlement, of insurance claims, in consultation with the Monitoring Officer, Head of Legal and other Officers as appropriate.
- Ensuring that all appropriate Officers are included in a suitable fidelity guarantee insurance.
- Reviewing annually, or at any such other period considered necessary, all insurances, in consultation with Directors and other Officers as appropriate.

#### **D5 Directors and Heads of Service:**

**D5.1** Directors and Heads of Service are responsible for risk management and the regular review of risk and opportunity within their services, having regard to advice from the Chief Finance Officer and other specialist Officers (e.g. Health & Safety Advisor).

**D5.2** Directors and Heads of Service are responsible for:

- Actively managing opportunities and risks in their area of responsibility.
- Providing prompt notification to the Chief Finance Officer for all new risks, properties, services or vehicles which require to be insured and of any alterations affecting existing insurances. This should include any areas of responsibility undertaken in respect of an external organisation, whether or not linked to the Council's activities.
- Providing notification to the Chief Finance Officer in writing of any loss, liability or damage or any event likely to lead to a claim. Further notification should be given to the Chief Finance Officer immediately on receipt of any insurance claim.
- Consulting with the Chief Finance Officer, the Head of Legal and the Monitoring Officer concerning the terms of any indemnity which the Council is requested to give.
- Ensuring that all Officers: -
  - are aware of their responsibilities for risk management and insurance.
  - receive adequate support and training to carry out their responsibilities.

- comply with the Council's standards of financial management.
- are personally protected from risk.

## **D6 Budget Holders and Other Officers**

### **D6.1 Budget Holders and Officers are responsible for:**

- Identifying opportunities and risks in their service areas.
- Assessing the likelihood of their occurrence and evaluating the possible impact. This involves arranging them in order of priority, recording the risks and judging the potential financial cost, lost time, inconvenience or upheaval, disruption to service, bad publicity or loss of service quality.
- Taking steps to minimise potential losses. Effective action will represent a judgement between the likely risk and the cost or effort required to safeguard against it.
- Notifying the Chief Finance Officer promptly of all new risks, properties or vehicles which require insurance and of any alterations affecting existing insurance.
- Notifying the Chief Finance Officer immediately of any loss, liability or damage which may lead to a claim against the Council, together with any information or explanation required by the Chief Finance Officer or the Council's insurers.
- Recording any incident which may result in a loss.
- Consulting the Chief Finance Officer, Head of Legal and the Monitoring Officer on the terms of any indemnities which the Council is required to give.
- Ensuring that Officers, or anyone covered by the Council's insurance, do not admit liability or make any offer to pay compensation which may prejudice the assessment of liability in respect of an insurance claim.

## **E: INTERNAL CONTROLS AND AUDIT**

### **E1 Introduction**

**E1.1** Internal control refers to the systems of control devised by management to help ensure the Council's objectives are achieved in a manner which promotes economical, efficient and effective use of resources and that the Council's assets and interests are safeguarded.

**E1.2** The Council faces a wide range of financial, administrative and commercial risks, both from internal and external factors. Internal controls are necessary to help manage these risks and to monitor progress towards its strategic objectives.

### **E2 Internal Audit**

**E2.1** The Accounts and Audit Regulations 2011 require that the Council must undertake an adequate and effective internal audit of its accounting records and of its system of internal control, in accordance with proper practices.

**E2.2** The internal audit function should operate in accordance with the International Professional Practices Framework of the Institute of Internal Auditors further guided by interpretation provided by the UK Public Sector Internal Audit Standards ('PSIAS'), the Global Internal Audit Standards and the CIPFA's Code of Practice for Internal Audit in Local Government in the United Kingdom, the Chartered Institute of Internal Auditors (UK and Ireland) Standards for the Professional Practice of Internal Auditing, and with any other statutory obligations and regulations.

**E2.3** Internal Audit shall provide an independent, objective, assurance and consulting activity for the review of the Council's system of internal control.

**E2.4** The Head of Internal Audit is responsible for providing a written report to those charged with governance, which includes an opinion on the adequacy and effectiveness of the Council's control environment under the CIPFA Code of Practice for Internal Audit under the Global Internal Audit Standards in the Local Government Application Note.

**E2.5** The Head of Internal Audit has the right to meet the Chair of the Audit and Governance Committee in private.

**E2.6** Internal Audit shall have direct access to the Head of Paid Service, the Chief Finance Officer, the Monitoring Officer, all levels of Management and Elected Members.

**E2.7** Internal Audit shall have full and complete access to all information, records, facilities and Officers relevant to the performance of an audit review.

### **E3 External Audit and Inspection**

**E3.1** Public Sector Audit Appointments ('PSAA') is the body responsible for appointing External Auditors to each local authority in England and Wales. The basic duties of the

External Auditors are defined in the Local Audit and Accountability Act 2014.

**E3.2** The External Auditor's main objectives are to review and report on the financial aspects of the Council's corporate governance arrangements, the financial statements and the arrangements to manage its performance.

**E3.3** External Audit is responsible for considering whether the Council has proper arrangements in place for:

- Securing financial resilience; reviewing the Council's financial governance, financial planning and financial control processes.
- Challenging how it secures economy, efficiency and effectiveness; looking at how the Council is prioritising resources and improving efficiency and productivity.

**E3.4** The Council may, from time to time, be subject to audit, inspection or investigation by other external bodies, such as HMRC, all of whom have statutory rights of access.

#### **E4 Audit and Governance Committee**

**E4.1** The Audit and Governance Committee provides a broad base audit role across all areas of the Council, while promoting and ensuring effective governance, internal control and assurance mechanisms.

Audit and Governance Committee is responsible for:

- Reviewing internal and external reports and assessments in respect of corporate governance.
- Considering the Head of Internal Audit's annual report and opinion and annual internal audit plan and the level of assurance it gives over the council's corporate governance arrangements.
- Monitoring the operational Internal Audit plan and the audit planning process; ensuring that internal audit work is planned with due regard to risk, materiality and supports the council's corporate aims and priorities.
- Consulting with PSAA on the appointment of the Council's External Auditor.
- Consideration and review of the External Audit Annual Report to those charged with governance (ISA 260) and all associated reports and other documents.
- Reviewing all matters relating to External Audit, including audit and inspection planning, action points and reports.
- Monitoring and review of actions required arising out of External and

Internal Audit recommendations.

- Ensuring effective liaison between External and Internal Audit and any other inspection agency.
- Reviewing and signing approval of the audited annual statement of accounts and annual governance statement, including the statement of the system of internal financial control in accordance with statutory requirements and timescales.

## **E5 Chief Finance Officer**

**E5.1** The Chief Finance Officer is responsible for:

- Advising and assisting the Council to put in place a control environment which provides reasonable assurance of effective and efficient operations, financial stewardship, probity and compliance with laws and regulations.
- Ensuring that an adequate and effective Internal Audit Service is maintained, with the authority to access all assets, records, documents, correspondence and control systems of the Council, and such records belonging to third parties, such as contractors, when required.
- Ensuring that effective procedures are in place to investigate promptly any suspected fraud or irregularity.
- Ensuring that all External Auditors and Inspectors are given access at all reasonable times to premises, Officers, documents and assets which they consider necessary for the purposes of their work.
- Working with the appointed External Auditors and Inspectors and advising the Audit and Governance Committee, Executive, Directors and Heads of Service on their responsibilities in relation to External Audit and inspection.
- Ensuring there is effective communication between External and Internal Audit.

## **E6 Directors and Heads of Service**

**E6.1** Each Director and Head of Service is responsible for:

- Establishing sound arrangements for planning, appraising, authorising and controlling their operations, in accordance with the Code of Corporate Governance and the Annual Governance Statement.
- Achieving continuous improvement, economy, efficiency and effectiveness within services.
- Implementing processes to check that established controls are being complied

with and to evaluate their effectiveness.

- Reviewing existing controls and establishing new controls where necessary, in order to reflect changes within the Council. They shall consult with Internal Audit on any proposed new systems, before implementation.
- Ensuring that Internal Auditors are given access to all records and assets of the authority, in accordance with their authority as set out above.
- Ensuring that all External Auditors and Inspectors are given access at all reasonable times to premises, Officers, documents and assets which they consider necessary for the purposes of their work.
- Considering and responding promptly to recommendations in audit reports. Implementing agreed actions arising from audit recommendations in a timely and efficient manner.
- Notifying the Chief Finance Officer and the Head of Internal Audit immediately of any suspected fraud, theft, irregularity, improper use or misappropriation of the Council's property or resources.
- Ensuring that, as far as possible, the same Officer is not responsible for receiving or paying money and rendering accounts or issuing receipts for the same.

## **E7 Preventing Fraud and Corruption**

**E7.1** The Council has an Anti-Fraud and Corruption Policy / Strategy and maintains a culture which will not tolerate fraud or corruption. The Council's expectation of propriety and accountability is that Members and all Officers at all levels will lead by example in ensuring adherence to legal requirements, rules, procedures and practices.

**E7.2** The Council also expects that individuals and organisations (e.g. service providers, contractors and suppliers) that it comes in contact with, will act towards the Council with integrity and without thoughts or actions involving fraud and corruption.

**E7.3** The Chief Finance Officer is responsible for the development and maintenance of an Anti-Fraud, Corruption and Whistle-blowing Policy.

**E7.4** The Monitoring Officer is responsible for ensuring that all legislation, including the Public Interest Disclosure Act 1988, the Bribery Act 2010 and the Fraud Act 2006, is adhered to.

**E7.5** Each Director and Head of Service is responsible for ensuring that the systems operated within their control seek to prevent or minimise the opportunity for fraud, corruption or irregularity to arise. And that all Officers are aware of and comply with the Council's Anti-Fraud and Whistle Blowing Policies.

**E7.6** Whenever any matter arises which involves, or is thought to involve, irregularities

concerning cash, stores or other property of the Council, or any suspected irregularity in the exercise of the functions of the Council, the Director or Head of Service has a duty to immediately notify the Chief Finance Officer and the Monitoring Officer, who shall take such steps as they consider necessary by way of investigation and report.

**E7.7** All Members and Officers must be aware of the maintenance of the Register of Interests, which should be updated annually or more frequently if other changes occur. Any offer of hospitality or gifts must be recorded, whether accepted or refused.

## **E8 Ex-Gratia / Maladministration Payments**

**E8.1** A payment is sometimes made to compensate someone for loss or damage incurred through no fault of the Council. Most usually, this is to an Officer who has suffered loss or damage in the course of their duties but can be to a member of the public for a minor loss within the influence of the Council (such as thefts from secured lockers at Leisure Centres) This is funded through the Council's insurance arrangements.

**E8.2** Compensation payments under the local complaints procedure up to £5,000 shall only be made following an investigation by the Chief Finance Officer and a Director or Head of Service and/or the Monitoring Officer, and with the approval of at least two of those Officers.

**E8.3** Compensation payments in excess of £5,000 shall only be made following a report from one of the three Officers named in Financial Rule E8.2, above and with the following approval:-

- Amounts £5,001 to £50,000 – by Executive Member
- Amounts £50,001 to £150,000 – by Executive
- Amounts in excess of £150,000 – by Full Council

## **F: ASSETS**

### **F1 Introduction**

**F1.1** The Council holds assets in the form of property, vehicles, equipment, furniture, cash and other items worth many millions of pounds. It is important that assets should be safeguarded and used efficiently in the delivery of services. Assets should be used to achieve the approved policies and objectives of the Council with the minimum of waste, inefficiency or loss.

**F1.2** This involves ensuring that appropriate assets are acquired, in line with the Council's Procurement Strategy; that they are recorded and kept securely and are disposed of effectively and economically when no longer required.

### **F2 Full Council**

**F2.1** Full Council is responsible for deciding the extent of the Property Portfolio and for agreeing acquisitions and disposals. Approval is delegated to Executive for acquisitions and disposals not exceeding £1,000,000.

**F2.2** Assets no longer required should be disposed of in accordance with the law and the rules and policies of the Council, so as to maximise benefits.

### **F3 Executive**

**F3.1** The Executive is responsible for approving terms for land / property acquisitions and disposals, as above 2.1

### **F4 Chief Executive (or other delegated Officer)**

**F4.1** The Chief Executive (or other delegated Officer) is responsible for:

- Signing contracts for the sale or purchase of land, for which the disposal/acquisition has been agreed by the Executive or Full Council.

### **F5 Head of Assets and Legal Services (or other delegated Officer)**

**F5.1** The Head of Assets, or other delegated Officer is responsible for:

- Maintaining a terrier / asset register of all properties and assets owned by the Council, in a form approved by the Chief Finance Officer. This shall record the purpose for which the property is held, its location, its extent and plan reference, purchase details, particulars of nature of interests and rents payable and particulars of tenancies granted.

- Advising Members, the Chief Finance Officer, Executive, Full Council and other Officers on property-related issues.
- Processing all authorised acquisitions and disposals of land and property.
- The maintenance of Council-owned property including open-spaces. Such maintenance work to be carried out within the terms of contracts for responsive maintenance to Council properties.
- in the case of non-housing capital building contracts, consulting with the relevant Executive Member and the Chief Finance Officer, where the contingency sum in the contract is likely to be exceeded. FPR's in respect of budget approval and /or virement are to be followed.

**F5.2** The Head of Assets (or other delegated officer) has the authority to approve the following transactions in respect of the Council's land and property:

- Grant of Licences up to 12 months
- Grant of Licences to Alter
- Grant of Landlord's Consents
- Grant of Wayleaves under Statutory Powers
- Enforcement of the terms and conditions of any commercial lease or agreement

The authority is subject to no unusual or contentious terms. A register of decisions will be kept

**F5.3** The Head of Assets (or other delegated Officer), in consultation with the relevant Executive Member(s), the Director with responsibility for Assets and the Head of Legal Services has authority to approve all transactions with a value up to £50,000 per transaction relating to the Council's properties within their existing classifications; including:

- Acquisitions and Disposal of Land and Property
- Grant of Licences for more than 12 months
- Rent Reviews, Agreement of New Leases and Lease Renewals
- Assignment of Leases, deeds of variation, surrender of leases
- Grant of Tenancy at Wills
- Grant of Easements

The authority is subject to no unusual or contentious terms. A register of decisions will be kept

**F5.4** The Head of Legal Services (or other delegated Officer) shall have custody of all title deeds under secure arrangements agreed with the Chief Executive.

**F5.5** The Head of Legal Services (or other delegated Officer) in consultation with the relevant Executive Members and relevant Ward Member(s) and the relevant Director, has authority, in the case of the resale of former Council houses, to give the Council's consent

in all cases under Section 157(1) of the Housing Act 1985 where consent is obligatory and in other cases approved by the Executive; and authority to approve applications for the sale of former Council houses in Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty.

**F5.6** The Head of Legal Services (or other delegated Officer) has the authority to instigate any investigations he/she considers necessary in particular cases regarding the lease of Council-owned commercial premises.

## **F6 Chief Finance Officer (Section 151)**

**F6.1** The Chief Finance Officer in consultation with the Executive Member for Finance, the Head of Legal Services and the Head of Assets has authority to approve transactions with a value between £50,000 and the key threshold limit:

- Acquisitions and Disposal of Land and Property
- Grant of Licences for more than 12 months
- Rent Reviews, Agreement of New Leases and Lease Renewals
- Assignment of Leases, deeds of variation, surrender of leases
- Grant of Tenancy at Wills
- Grant of Easements

**F6.2** The Chief Finance Officer in consultation with the Executive Members for Finance and the Economy has authority to approve leases at Marriotts Walk Witney up to the key decision threshold.

The authority is subject to no unusual or contentious terms. A register of decisions will be kept

**F6.2** The Chief Finance Officer is responsible for:

- Ensuring that assets are valued in accordance with CIPFA's Code of Practice on Local Authority Accounting in the United Kingdom.
- Maintaining a property database for all land, properties, plant and machinery, and moveable assets currently owned and used by the Council.
- Managing the risk implications of the Property Portfolio, particularly in terms of insurance cover.
- Co-ordinating the security of the Council's administrative and operational offices.

## **F7 Directors, Heads of Service and Budget Holders**

**F7.1** Directors, Heads of Service and Budget Holders are responsible for:

- Drawing up contingency plans for the security of assets and continuity of service in the event of disaster or system failure.

- Ensuring that lessees and other prospective occupiers of Council land or property are not allowed to take possession or enter the land until a lease or agreement has been established. The lease or agreement should be in a form approved by the Head of Assets, in consultation with the Chief Finance Officer and the Head of Legal, where appropriate.
- Ensuring the proper security and safe custody of all buildings, vehicles, equipment, furniture, stock, stores, money and other property belonging to the Council.
- Where land or buildings are surplus to requirements, preparing a report containing a recommendation for the disposal of the land, in consultation with the Head of Assets and the Chief Finance Officer.
- Passing title deeds of Council property to the Head of Legal who is responsible for the custody of all title deeds on behalf of the Council.
- Ensuring that Council assets are not taken, borrowed or used by a Member or Officer for their personal use without proper authority.
- Ensuring, in accordance with arrangements agreed by the Chief Finance Officer that all assets are correctly identified and insured.
- Notifying the Chief Finance Officer and the Director or Head of Assets of any proposals to acquire or dispose of Council property.
- Arranging for the valuation of assets for accounting purposes to meet requirements specified by the Chief Finance Officer.
- Ensuring that all Officers under their management are aware that they have a personal responsibility with regard to safeguarding the Council's assets and information, including the requirements of the Data Protection Acts and software copyright legislation. This should include confidentiality of information, whether held in manual or computerised records.

## **F8 Information and Communication Technology (ICT)**

**F8.1** All ICT equipment, irrespective of its individual value, shall be procured by, or with the prior approval of the Director or Head of Service responsible for ICT Services (or their delegated Officer), particularly where the equipment has a strategic value or requires network access.

**F8.2** This Director or delegated Officer shall maintain a register of all ICT equipment above the value of £500 owned by the Council, including its location and serial number.

**F8.3** Certain equipment to be determined by the Director or Head of Service responsible for ICT, such as cameras, mobile phones, etc shall be procured by them and recorded in

the ICT inventory.

**F8.4** The Council's internal IT policy and guidance should be followed, and in particular, no unofficial or unlicensed software shall be used on the Council's computer equipment, under any circumstances.

**F8.5** Computer games supplied as part of licensed software shall not be played in Council time.

## **F9 Stocks and Stores**

**F9.1** Disposable items such as stationery, goods for sale or materials may be held in store. They should be properly controlled and accounted for to ensure they are used only for Council purposes.

**F9.2** Stocks shall not be in excess of normal requirements except in special circumstances, with the approval of the Director or Head of Service, who shall keep a written record and justification of such circumstances.

**F9.3** Each Director or Head of Service shall be responsible for the care and custody of the stocks and stores within their service(s).

**F9.4** Directors or Heads of Service shall arrange for periodical test examinations of stocks and ensure that all stocks are checked at least once a year, where appropriate, as determined by the Chief Finance Officer. This is to be under the supervision of Officers without direct responsibility for the custody of the stocks or stores being checked.

**F9.5** The Chief Finance Officer shall be entitled to receive from each Director or Head of Service such information as they require in relation to stocks or stores, for the accounting, costing and financial records at the financial year end.

**F9.6** Adjustments in respect of stock deficiencies and surpluses shall be subject to the approval of the Chief Finance Officer, or in the case of major items, the Executive.

**F9.7** Private individuals or companies shall not be permitted to purchase items previously acquired by the Council unless they:

- Are sold through a retail outlet incidental to the provision of a specific service (e.g. Leisure centre or Museum shop), or
- Are obsolete or surplus to requirements and are sold as a means of disposal, in accordance with the Council's disposal policies.

**F9.8** Individual Members and Officers of the Council must not use the auspices of the council to purchase works, goods or services for their personal use.

## **F10 Petty Cash and Cash Floats**

**F10.1** Maximum limits for cash holdings shall be agreed with the Chief Finance Officer and

shall not be exceeded without their express permission.

**FI0.2** The Chief Finance Officer may provide petty cash advance accounts or cash floats for such Officers as may need them for the purpose of defraying petty cash or other expenses. Petty cash accounts shall be maintained in the imprest system and shall be controlled by the Officer designated by the Director concerned.

**FI0.3** Payments from any such account shall be limited to minor individual items of expenditure up to a maximum of £100. The Chief Finance Officer has discretion to allow larger payments in exceptional circumstances.

**FI0.4** All payments shall normally be supported by a receipted voucher and proper VAT receipts where appropriate. However, the Chief Finance Officer has discretion to allow payments to be obtained without obtaining receipts in exceptional circumstances.

**FI0.5** Payments in reimbursement of travelling or subsistence expenses shall not be paid out of petty cash accounts.

**FI0.6** An Officer responsible for a petty cash or cash float shall, if so requested, give the Chief Finance Officer a certificate as to the state of such a float.

**FI0.7** Change floats are not to be used for any other purpose than for providing change, with the exception of cash advances in special circumstances, subject to the approval of the Chief Finance Officer. Such approval should be recorded.

**FI0.8** When an Officer responsible for such an account leaves the employment of the Council/Shared Service employer, or ceases to be entitled to hold an advance, their Director or Head of Service shall ensure that they account to them for the amount advanced.

## **FI 1 Intellectual Property**

**FI 1.1** Intellectual Property is a generic term that includes inventions and writing. If these are created by an Officer during the course of employment, as a general rule they belong to the Employer. There is a variety of legislation covering different types of intellectual property.

**FI 1.2** Certain activities undertaken by the Council may give rise to items which are patentable e.g. the development of software. These are collectively known as Intellectual Property.

**FI 1.3** Directors and Heads of Service are responsible for implementing the Council's intellectual property procedures and for putting controls in place to ensure that Officers do not carry out private work in the Council's time.

**FI 1.4** Officers should be made aware of the Employer's rights with regard to intellectual property.

## **G: TREASURY MANAGEMENT**

### **G1 Introduction**

**G1.1** Many millions of pounds pass through the council's books each year and must be carefully managed in a way which balances risk with return, but with the overriding consideration being the security of the Council's funds.

**G1.2** The general policy objective is that the Council should invest prudently the surplus funds held on behalf of the community, giving priority to security and liquidity of the funds.

**G1.3** The Council has adopted CIPFA's Code of Practice for Treasury Management in Local Authorities. All of the Council's borrowings and investments must be carried out in accordance with this code.

### **G2 Full Council**

**G2.1** Full Council is responsible for approving the Treasury Management Strategy, as well as the Investment Strategy and the Capital Strategy, as part of the budget setting process. The strategies are prepared in accordance with CIPFA's Code of Practice for Treasury Management in Local Authorities and the Prudential Indicators as part of the Prudential Code.

### **G3 Audit and Governance Committee**

**G3.1** The Committee is responsible for:

- Proposing the Treasury Management Strategy, Capital Strategy and Investment Strategy to Full Council in accordance with advice from the Chief Finance Officer.
- Implementing and monitoring performance against the Treasury Management Strategy.
- Delegating responsibility for borrowing, investment and financing to the Chief Finance Officer.

### **G4 Chief Finance Officer (Section 151)**

**G4.1** The Chief Finance Officer is responsible for:

- Controlling all money in the hands of the Council.
- Acting in accordance with the CIPFA's Code of Practice for Treasury Management in Local Authorities.

- Reporting to the Audit and Governance Committee a proposed Treasury Management Strategy for the coming financial year at or before the start of the financial year.
- Implementing and monitoring the Council's Treasury Management Strategy.
- Reporting to the Audit and Governance Committee on treasury management activity and prudential indicators and the exercise of their delegated treasury management authority. One such report will comprise an annual report on treasury management outturn, for presentation by 30th September of the succeeding financial year.
- Ensuring that all investment and borrowing is made in the name of the Council.
- Ensuring that all securities that are the property of the council and the title deeds of all property in the Council's ownership are held securely.
- Acting as the Council's registrar of stocks, bonds and mortgages and maintaining records of all borrowing and investment of money by the council.
- Arranging for all trust funds to be held, where possible, in the name of the Council. All Officers acting as Trustees by virtue of their official position, shall deposit securities, etc. relating to the trust with the Chief Finance Officer unless the deed otherwise provides.
- Where funds are held on behalf of third parties, arranging for their secure administration, approved by the Chief Finance Officer, and maintaining written records of transactions.
- Ensuring that all trust funds are operated within any relevant legislation and the specific requirements of each trust.

## **G5 Banking Arrangements**

**G5.1** The Chief Finance Officer is responsible for:

- Operating bank accounts as they consider necessary. No bank accounts may be opened in the Council's name, or closed, without the prior approval of the Chief Finance Officer.
- Instructing the Council's bankers to prohibit an overdrawn position on the aggregate bank accounts of the Council beyond the level set out in the facilities agreement between the Council and its bankers.
- Ensuring that an up-to-date list of all authorised bank signatories on the Council's bank accounts is maintained and made available to the Council's bankers.

- Designated Officers are permitted to act as authorised bank signatories.
- Ensuring that an up-to-date list of Officers holding Business Charge Cards, Corporate Credit Cards or Government Procurement cards on behalf of the Council is maintained, showing individual approved credit limits.
- Advising on secure arrangements for banking and cash handling.
- Authorising the provision of change floats at the request of the Directors or Heads of Service (see Petty Cash FPR's).
- Ensuring that designated Officers are given access to the bank account details of each of the Councils being served by the Shared Service, to facilitate transactional processing and other finance related work, as required.

#### **G5.2** Directors and Heads of Service are responsible for:

- Ensuring that banking and cash handling is carried out in accordance with FPR's.
- Ensuring that Officers are properly trained and aware of their responsibilities.
- Ensuring that Officers are personally protected against risk.
- Ensuring that loans are not made to third parties and that interests are not acquired in companies, joint ventures or other enterprises without the approval of the Council, following consultation with the Chief Finance Officer.

#### **G5.3** Budget Holders are responsible for:

- Ensuring that all Officers are aware of the controls required over banking and cash handling and follow instructions thereon.
- Cash in excess of these limits should be banked before the end of the day. Cash should not be held at an Officer's home as this may negate the Council's insurance cover.
- Holding change floats issued to the service by the Chief Finance Officer and accounting for them when required to do so.
- Ensuring that keys to safes and other receptacles used for holding cash are always kept secure by the Officer responsible. Loss of keys must be reported to the Chief Finance Officer as soon as possible.
- Ensuring that, where money passes from one Officer to another, there are procedures in place to evidence the transfer, the amount and the certification of the

Officers involved.

- Ensuring that Council money is not kept with or confused with unofficial funds, e.g. tea, lottery or pools funds.
- Ensuring that payments are not made from cash received.
- Implementing documented procedures for recording, receipting and banking money. Banking should be carried out as frequently as is necessary to keep the amount of money within insurance limits. Each deposit to the bank should be accompanied by a properly completed bank paying-in slip showing:
  - the name and title of the Officer making the banking.
  - the total deposited, analysed in denominations of cash and cheques.
  - the name of the cheque payees and a debtor's reference, where this is available, on the reverse of the slip (also on the reverse of the cheque where payment is by cheque).

N.B. Cheques received to a value in excess of £10,000 must be banked at the earliest opportunity but in any event within three days of receipt.

- Reconciling income records to the Council's financial information system, checking that all money received has reached the correct budget head. Discrepancies should be investigated and corrected immediately.

## **G6 BACS Payments and Cheques**

**G6.1** The payment of all monies from the Council, with the exception of sums payable from advance accounts or business credit cards, shall be by BACS or other instrument drawn on the Council's bank account by the Chief Finance Officer, including cheques when payment by BACS is not possible or appropriate.

**G6.2** All BACS transmissions, irrespective of value, will be supported by an authorisation form signed by the Officer responsible for producing the payment, plus either the Chief Finance Officer or another authorised bank signatory.

**G6.3** All individual cheques drawn for an amount in excess of £25,000 shall be countersigned by another authorised Officer, who shall be an authorised bank signatory to the bank account.

**G6.4** All cheque stocks shall be ordered only on the authority of the Chief Finance Officer, who shall make proper arrangements for their safe custody.

**G6.5** All cheques drawn on the Council's main bank accounts shall bear the facsimile signature of the Chief Finance Officer or other Officer authorised to do so.

**G6.6** All manually prepared cheques for an amount in excess of £5,000 shall be countersigned by another authorised Officer, who shall be an authorised bank signatory to the bank account.



## **H: FINANCIAL SYSTEMS AND ACCOUNTING PROCEDURES**

### **H1 Introduction**

**H1.1** Sound systems and procedures are essential to an effective framework of accountability and control. They are needed to ensure that accounting records can be relied upon to present a true and fair view of the Council's financial activity and that management information is appropriate, accurate and timely.

**H1.2** The Council must operate within legal requirements and adopt best practice guidance. The Council will follow the CIPFA Code of Practice on Local Authority Accounting and the Service Reporting Code of Practice for Local Authorities.

### **H2 Chief Finance Officer (Section 151)**

**H2.1** The Chief Finance Officer has a statutory and professional responsibility for ensuring that the Council's financial systems are sound and for making arrangements for the proper administration of the Council's financial affairs, including: -

- Selecting suitable accounting policies that comply with legislation and best practice guidance and ensuring that they are applied consistently.
- Determining the accounting systems and procedures, form of accounts and supporting financial records.
- Ensuring that delegated Officers are given access to the financial records of each of the councils being served by Shared Service Arrangements to facilitate transactional processing and other finance related work, as required.
- Issuing advice, guidance and procedures for Officers and others acting on the Council's behalf.
- Establishing arrangements for the audit of the Council's financial affairs.
- Approving any new financial system to be introduced and any changes to be made to existing financial systems.
- Producing timetables for accounting tasks such as the production of budgets and final accounts and the collection or submission of other financial information for processing (e.g. Accounts Payable deadlines).
- Ensuring that all suspense and holding accounts are controlled and reconciled on a monthly basis.
- Ensuring that all bank accounts are controlled and reconciled to the main accounting system regularly (at least monthly) to confirm that all transactions have been processed into the Council's accounts.

**H2.2** The Chief Finance Officer has a statutory responsibility for ensuring that the annual Statement of Accounts is prepared in accordance with the CIPFA Code of Practice on Local Authority Accounting and the Service Reporting Code of Practice for Local Authorities.

### **H3 Directors, Heads of Service and Budget Holders**

**H3.1** Each Director, Head of Service or Budget Holder shall ensure that all financial and computerised systems for which they are responsible are adequately controlled and comply with the requirements laid down by the Chief Finance Officer. Any proposed changes to these systems / procedures or any new systems / procedures must be also approved by the Chief Finance Officer.

**H3.2** Directors, Heads of Service and Budget Holders are responsible for:-

- The proper operation of financial processes in their areas of responsibility and ensuring that all Officers under their management are aware of, and properly operate, the financial systems relevant to their area of work.
- Establishing and maintaining sound financial processes within their areas of management.
- Documenting systems and ensuring that Officers are properly trained in their use.
- Ensuring that financial transactions are recorded in a timely and accurate manner and are processed into the main accounting system using correct accounting codes. Transactions should not be processed to incorrect accounting codes as a way of avoiding virement rules.
- Using only their own accounting codes unless they have the express written permission of another Budget Holder to use theirs.
- Properly recording the nature and value of income, expenditure and assets and referring to original documentation where possible.
- Ensuring that income and expenditure are accounted for separately and are not set off against each other.
- Accounting for revenue and capital income and expenditure separately.
- Maintaining a complete audit trail allowing financial transactions to be traced from the accounting records to the original documentation and vice versa.
- Ensuring that vouchers and documents with financial implications are not destroyed, except in accordance with arrangements under Data Protection legislation, approved by the Chief Finance Officer.
- Implementing organisational structures that provide adequate segregation of duties to

minimise the risk of fraud, error or other malpractice. In particular, ensuring that Officers charged with the duty of examining and checking the amounts of cash transactions (or cash equivalents) shall not themselves be engaged in any of these transactions.

- Establishing an effective scheme of delegation, identifying Officers authorised to act on their behalf in respect of financial transactions, determining the limits of their authority and ensuring that the scheme operates effectively.
- Supplying a written record of authorised Officers within their area of responsibility, with specimen signatures and delegated limits, to the Chief Finance Officer, and ensuring they are up to date. Directors shall still remain responsible for the activities of delegated functions.
- Implementing and documenting effective contingency arrangements in a disaster recovery plan, including back-up procedures, to allow systems to resume operation quickly in the event of an interruption in service. Wherever possible, back-up information should be securely retained in a fireproof location, preferably off-site, or in an alternative location within the building.
- Ensuring that computer and other systems are registered in accordance with Data Protection legislation and that Officers are aware of their responsibilities under this and the Freedom of Information legislation.
- Carrying out accounting tasks to meet the standards and timescales set by the Chief Finance Officer or their delegated Deputy.

#### **H4 Officers**

**H4.1** Each nominated Officer shall ensure that all financial and finance related systems (for example register of disabled facilities grants, housing benefit payments etc) are reconciled to the Council's main financial management system quarterly, unless more frequent reconciliation is required by the Chief Finance Officer.

**H4.2** Any amendments to a prime record should be made in ink and initialled by the Officer making it. Correcting fluid, or any other means of obliteration, shall not be used to amend prime financial records.

#### **H5 Orders for Work, Goods and Services**

**H5.1** Requisitions and official orders shall, in addition to any requirement under the CPR's, be in a form approved by the Chief Finance Officer and are to be authorised only by Officers designated for that purpose.

**H5.2** Requisitions and official orders shall be issued for all works, supplies or services to be supplied to the Council, except for supplies of public utility services, periodical payments such as rent or business rates, for petty cash purchases or such other

exceptions as the Chief Finance Officer may approve.

**H5.3** Requisitions or official orders shall clearly indicate the nature and quantity of the work or services required and any relevant contract or agreed prices.

**H5.4** Each requisition and order shall conform to the guidelines contained in the Council's CPR's.

**H5.5** Prior to placing an order, Officers shall ensure that provision has been made in the budget for the cost of the works, goods or services to be supplied. Where applicable, these should comply with relevant legislation and prescribed procedures.

**H5.6** All goods and services shall only be ordered by an authorised Officer, in accordance with written delegations and procedures.

**H5.7** All orders for goods and services must be approved by budget holders before being issued to the supplier. The approval limits will normally be assigned in accordance with the following levels of authority:

- Authorised Officer – Up to £2,000, subject to individual approved limit
- Authorised Budget Holder –Up to £10,000, subject to individual approved limit
- Head of Service up to £50,000, subject to individual approved limit
- Director up to £100,000, subject to individual approved limit, and countersigned by Chief Finance Officer or Deputy Chief Finance Officer.
- Chief Finance Officer or Deputy Chief Finance Officer up to £250,000
- Chief Finance Officer, Deputy Chief Finance Officer, Chief Executive or Head of Paid Service - above £250,000
- Each Director or Head of Service will agree the appropriate approval limit for individual Officers within their service with the Chief Finance Officer or Deputy Chief Finance Officer, based on their level of responsibility and/or their budget amounts.

**H5.8** All ICT equipment, irrespective of its individual value, shall only be procured by, or with the prior approval of the Director responsible for ICT Services (or their delegated Officer), particularly where the equipment has a strategic value or requires network access.

**H5.9** All goods and services received shall be checked, to ensure that they are in accordance with the order, are for the correct quantity and quality standards and that any work has been completed satisfactorily. Proper entries shall be made in inventories

or stores records, where appropriate.

**H5.10** All orders should be checked to ensure prices, calculations, trade discounts, other allowances and credits are correct.

**H5.11** All expenditure, including VAT shall be accurately recorded against the correct allocated budget and any exceptions corrected.

**H5.12** All appropriate evidence of the transaction and payment documents shall be retained and stored for the defined period, in accordance with the Council's document retention schedule.

## **H6 Payment of Accounts**

**H6.1** The payment of all monies from the Council, except for sums payable from advance accounts or business credit cards (if applicable), shall be by BACS or other instrument drawn on the Council's bank account by the Chief Finance Officer, including cheques when payment by BACS is not possible or appropriate.

**H6.2** Payment will only be made if the budget holder is satisfied that the requirements of FPR's H5.9 and H5.10 have been met. All payments should be made to the correct organisation /individual, for the correct amount.

**H6.3** VAT invoices must not be altered. If the amount of the invoice is incorrect, either a replacement or a credit note shall be requested

**H6.4** Purchase invoices received into a department shall be passed without delay to the Accounts Payable team, Financial Services, to be examined as considered necessary. For this purpose, Financial Services are entitled to make such enquiries and to receive such information and explanation as they may require.

**H6.5** Payment will not be made on the basis of a statement or a reminder account.

**H6.6** Payments shall be made within 30 days of receipt by the Council or within any mutually agreed terms, in order to avoid the possibility of penalty interest becoming payable.

**H6.7** Any penalty interest becoming payable under the Late Payment of Commercial Debts (Interest) Act 1998 shall be charged back to the appropriate budget head unless, in the view of the Chief Finance Officer, unreasonable delays were occasioned by another Officer.

**H6.8** A Director must consult with the Chief Finance Officer before entering into any mutual payment terms with a supplier. All such agreements must be made in writing.

**H6.9** Prepayment for goods and services should be avoided where possible, in order to minimise risk to the Council. If a prepayment is unavoidable then it should be approved by the Chief Finance Officer or their nominated representative.

## **H7 Payments to Officers and Members**

**H7.1** The interpretation and application of pay scales, conditions of service and other related matters shall be the responsibility of the Head of Paid Service (Chief Executive), with whom Directors shall confer, as necessary, in connection with their application to Officers in their areas of responsibility.

**H7.2** The Chief Finance Officer is responsible for ensuring that budget provision exists for all existing and new Officers and for making all payments of salaries and wages to all Officers and Members, in accordance with agreed terms and conditions and timescales.

**H7.3** The Chief Finance Officer is responsible for the maintenance of proper national insurance, income tax and other statutory pay records and for the accurate and timely payment of pension contributions and other deductions to third parties.

**H7.4** Chief Finance Officer, shall approve and the arrangements for payments of salaries and wages to all Officers, including the process for payments for overtime and for payment of allowances to Members.

**H7.5** Directors, Heads of Service or Budget Holders must notify the HR Team, as early as possible of all appointments, dismissals, resignations, absences from duty, transfers and proposed changes of Officers, together with such other information as is necessary to maintain adequate personnel records for the Council.

**H7.6** No new appointments or changes to arrangements for existing Officers are permitted without adequate budget provision. All appointments shall be made in accordance with the council's rules and approved establishments, grades and scales of pay.

**H7.7** Directors, Heads of Service and/or budget holders are responsible for the monitoring of spending against approved employee-related budgets, ensuring that the employee-costs budget is not exceeded without appropriate authority and that it is managed to enable the agreed level of service to be provided.

**H7.8** All Officers and Members shall notify the Human Resources Service of any discrepancy between what they expected to be paid and what they have received, including payments made in error. In the event of an overpayment the recipient will normally be asked to refund the Council over the same time period for which the error was made. If the Council makes an underpayment it will be corrected as soon as is reasonably practical, each case being agreed individually. Failure to report an overpayment may result in disciplinary action.

## **H8 Travel and Subsistence Claims**

**H8.1** Claims for payment of allowances, travelling and subsistence should follow the process approved by the Council in consultation with the Chief Finance Officer.

**H8.2** Claims shall normally be submitted monthly and always by the end of April following

the financial year end. Officers are responsible for ensuring that journeys made and expenses claimed have been properly incurred and supporting VAT receipts are obtained. All claims must be authorised by an Officer's line manager.

**H8.3** The Council reserves the right not to pay any travel and/or expense claims that are not submitted in a timely manner, without good reason. Line Managers are responsible for approving or not approving all claims. In the case of any queries, Line Managers should consult with their Director or Head of Service.

## **H9 Value Added Taxation**

**H9.1** The Chief Finance Officer is responsible for advising Directors and Heads of Service and Members, in the light of guidance by appropriate bodies and relevant legislation as it applies, on all taxation issues that affect the Council. Written advice shall be made available to all relevant Officers.

**H9.2** The Chief Finance Officer is responsible for maintaining the Council's tax records, making all tax payments, receiving tax credits and submitting tax returns by their due date as appropriate.

**H9.3** The Chief Finance Officer or their authorised representative shall be responsible for liaising with HM Revenue and Customs on all VAT related matters and for submitting and signing the necessary returns/claims in a timely manner.

**H9.4** VAT must be correctly claimed on expenditure (Input Tax) and valid tax invoices retained by the Council

**H9.5** VAT must be correctly charged on income from works, goods and services supplied by the Council (Output Tax) and a valid VAT invoice or VAT receipt issued to any party outside the Council, in accordance with the form approved by the Chief Finance Officer.

**H9.6** Under no circumstances shall an Officer or Member use the auspices of the Council to purchase goods or services for their own private purposes to avoid paying VAT. To do so may result in disciplinary action.

## **H10 Trading Accounts / Business Units**

**H10.1** It is the responsibility of the Chief Finance Officer to advise on the establishment and operation of trading accounts and business units. These shall be accounted for in accordance with CIPFA's Service Reporting Code of Practice.

**H10.2** The Chief Finance Officer shall be consulted if a business unit wishes to enter into a contract with a third party, where the contract exceeds the remaining life of their main contract with the Council. In general, such contracts should not be entered into unless they are capable of being terminated within the main contract period without penalty. A service designated as a trading service may increase expenditure estimates approved by the Council, in consultation with the relevant Director and Executive Member and the Chief Finance Officer as a result of increased income, in line with the virement rules set

out in the FPR's.

**H10.3** A trading account or business unit for the provision of sports, recreation or cultural activities may increase its fees and charges during the year in order to remain in line with competitors and demand, in consultation with the relevant Executive Member.

## **H11 Journals**

**H11.1** All journal entries and other daily input into the Financial Management system (Business World Agresso) may only be processed by authorised Officers, with the approval of the Chief Finance Officer. This will normally be restricted to Officers within, Financial Services.

**H11.2** Journals shall only be processed within the general ledger of the council. No journals are permitted between different company / Council general ledgers.

**H11.3** The Head of Finance is responsible for ensuring that a monthly report of all journals raised on the finance system is produced and retained for audit purposes. This report shall be checked and signed as agreed by a delegated senior Officer.

## **I: INCOME**

### **II Introduction**

II.1 The Council seeks to maximise its income to enable it to meet its financial objectives. The Local Government Act 2003 enables authorities to charge for discretionary services. Sources of income need to be identified and fees and charges authorised at an appropriate level.

### **II Executive**

II.1 The Executive is responsible for: -

- Setting fees and charges for services, approved as part of the annual budget setting process.
- Approving procedures for the write off of bad debts.
- Approving the write off of bad debts in excess of the approved Chief Finance Officer limit, under Financial Rule 19

II.2 Statutory fees and charges shall be set in accordance with the relevant legislation and the prescribed notice period for changes to fees and charges shall be given.

II.3 Non statutory fees and charges may be increased or reduced during the year by the Director. Head of Service or Budget Holder, in order to remain in line with competitors and demand, in consultation with the relevant Executive Member.

### **III Chief Finance Officer (Section 151)**

III.1 The Chief Finance Officer is responsible for: -

- Agreeing arrangements made for the collection of income due to the Council and approving the procedures, systems and documentation for its collection.
- Ensuring that all claims for funds, including grants are made by the due date.
- Agreeing the arrangements for ordering and supplying all receipt forms, books or similar items and satisfying themselves regarding the arrangements for their control.
- Operating the approved procedures for the write off of bad debts (Financial Rule 19).
- Recommending to Executive the fees and charges to be set for all services.

### **IV Directors and Heads of Service**

IV.1 Each Director or Head of Service is responsible for: -

- Recommending to the Chief Finance Officer the fees and charges to be set for goods or services falling within their control, apart from those charges fixed on a statutory or nationally agreed basis.
- This shall not apply to ad-hoc charges of a minor nature where a flexible pricing policy has been agreed, charges associated with partnership working which are set on a cost recovery basis, or rechargeable works.
- Informing the Chief Finance Officer and relevant Executive Member of the particulars of all new sources of income arising from the work of their service, as soon as it becomes known.
- The identification, prompt collection, control and monitoring of all income due to the council within their area of responsibility.

## **15 Budget Holders**

### **15.1 Budget Holders are responsible for: -**

- Identifying all activities in their areas of management for which charges should be made, to whom, when, how much and whether VAT should be added.
- Maximising income within the Council's policies and legislation.
- Maintaining a record of all income due to the Council, including details of contracts, leases, grants and other arrangements.
- Ensuring that all income generated by their service is accounted for and that proper records are maintained, using systems and documentation approved by the Chief Finance Officer.
- Ensuring that all Officers under their management are aware of, and operate, the internal controls that exist in their area.
- Where money is to be collected by debtor account, ensuring that the details of work done, goods supplied, services rendered or other amounts due, are correctly recorded and the debtor accounts rendered promptly.
- Assisting in the collection of debts that they have originated by providing further information requested by the debtor and by pursuing the debt on the Council's behalf and taking prompt action to recover debts, in conjunction with the Chief Finance Officer, whilst having regard for the cost of collection. Debtor accounts should be reviewed regularly to identify unpaid accounts and recovery action required.
- Where responsibility for the collection of a debt has not been passed to the Chief Finance Officer, establishing and initiating appropriate recovery procedures, including legal action, where necessary, for debts which have not been paid promptly.

- Ensuring that at least two Officers are present when post is opened so that money received by post is properly identified, recorded and accounted for.
- Securing all income to safeguard against loss or theft and ensuring the security of cash handling.
- Ensuring that income is paid fully and promptly into the appropriate Council bank account in the form in which it is received and that appropriate details are recorded on the paying-in slip to provide a complete audit trail.
- Ensuring that no expenditure is paid from income received.
- Reconciling income systems with the Council's main accounting system monthly to ensure that all income received has reached the correct budget head and investigating where there is a discrepancy.
- Monitoring levels of income received and outstanding to establish trends and anomalies which should be investigated.
- Notifying the Chief Finance Officer of outstanding income relating to the previous financial year as soon as possible after 31st March, in line with the financial year end timetable.

## **16 Officers**

**16.1** Personal cheques must not be cashed from Council money nor cash advances taken against credit card transactions out of any money held on behalf of the Council.

## **17 Accounts Receivable (Debtors invoices)**

**17.1** A Budget Holder or delegated Officer must authorise all debtors' invoices for amounts less than £5.00, and all credit notes raised, irrespective of value.

**17.2** VAT must be properly recorded. Failure to do so may result in the Council being unable to reclaim VAT and, in some circumstance, a penalty payment imposed by HMRC.

**17.3** Cash payments must be checked on receipt. In situations where electronic receipting is not available, an official, sequentially numbered receipt must be issued for a cash payment at the time of its receipt. A receipt must be issued for other forms of payment if requested by the payer. The transfer of all money between Officers must be documented and the recipient should sign a receipt.

**17.4** Payments received in "Full and Final Settlement" shall only be accepted and accounted for if they are sufficient to clear fully the appropriate debt, unless with the approval of the Chief Finance Officer, Monitoring Officer or Head of Legal.

## **18 Debt Recovery Procedures**

**18.1** Once raised, a debtor's invoice may not be cancelled except by full payment, the issue of a credit note or by its formal writing off. A credit note can only be issued to correct a factual inaccuracy or administrative error in the calculation and/or billing of the original debt, or to recognise that an overpayment of housing benefit is being recovered from an on-going benefit entitlement.

**18.2** There must be proper documented systems for the payment of outstanding debtors' invoices, including milestones and timelines, which shall be followed by delegated Officers.

**18.3** Outstanding debts that are to be pursued through legal proceedings are to be dealt with following the Council's debt recovery procedures.

**18.4** Interest can be charged on unpaid debts, in accordance with the Debt Recovery Policy.

**18.5** Solicitor fees incurred in the recovery of unpaid debt can be charged to the debtor, in accordance with Debt Recovery Policy.

## **19 Write off of unrecoverable Debts**

**19.1** The limits on the Council to write off individual debts are:-

- The Chief Finance Officer can write off any debt for which a bankruptcy or liquidation notice has been received.
- The Chief Finance Officer can write off any debt of a deceased person who has a nil estate.
- The Chief Finance Officer can write off any other individual debt to a maximum amount of £5,000, where the amount is unlikely to be recovered or where proceedings are inappropriate or unjustified. This authority cannot be delegated.
- All other individual debts, in excess of £5,000 can only be written off with the approval of Executive or other delegated Committee.

**19.2** The value of irrecoverable debts written off will be charged back against the cost centre / service from which the original invoice was raised, thus cancelling the original credit to the service. This can be overwritten in exceptional circumstances, with the approval of the Chief Finance Officer.

**19.3** A record will be maintained by the appropriate teams (Accounts Receivable for Corporate Debt and Revenues and Benefits for Council Tax and Business Rates) of all bad debts written off under delegated approval given by FPR's above.

**19.4** The Chief Finance Officer can delegate the waiving of standard off-street car park charge notices to the Director or Head of Service responsible for Car Parking, who shall maintain records detailing the reason and amounts waived. This authority cannot be delegated further. The records shall be made available to the Chief Finance Officer or Executive on request.

## **J: COUNCIL TAX AND NON-DOMESTIC RATES**

### **J1 Introduction**

**J1.1** The Council collects large amounts of money for its own purposes, for other authorities and, in the case of Non-Domestic Rates, for the Government.

**J1.2** The rules that apply to the collection of these sums are set out in legislation, regulation and good practice guidance. There are documented procedures and a timetable for tax calculation, billing, refunds, recovery and enforcement that accord with statutory requirements and the Council's own regulations.

### **J2 Chief Finance Officer**

**J2.1** The Chief Finance Officer is responsible for the collection and recovery of Council Tax and Non-Domestic Rates. They should ensure that accounting procedures are in place to support the correct treatment and presentation of transactions in the Council's accounts.

### **J3 Head of Revenues and Benefits**

**J3.1** The Head of Revenues and Benefits is responsible for the day-to-day management of the Council Tax and Non-Domestic Rates systems. They should ensure that:

- All transactions, records and accounts are calculated accurately, completely and promptly. They should be supported by evidence and handled only by authorised Officers.
- Adequate separation of duties is in place to enable the work of one Officer to be checked by another.
- Accounting procedures reflect the correct treatment and presentation of transactions in the Council's accounts.

## **K: COUNCIL TAX SUPPORT and HOUSING BENEFIT**

### **K1 Introduction**

**K1.1** The Council is responsible for paying Council Tax Support and Housing Benefit to entitled claimants. It is also responsible for guarding against fraud and investigating where it is suspected. The Council receives subsidy from the Government to pay for most of the Benefits. It has to demonstrate sound administration and accurate payment to prove its entitlement to subsidy.

**K1.2** All benefit transactions must be legitimate, appropriate and in accordance with relevant verification framework regulations.

### **K2 Chief Finance Officer (Section 151)**

**K2.1** The Chief Finance Officer is responsible for the payment of Council Tax Support and Housing Benefit. They should ensure that accounting procedures are in place to support the correct treatment and presentation of transactions in the Council's accounts and subsidy claims.

### **K3 Head of Revenues and Benefits**

**K3.1** The Head of Revenues and Benefits is responsible for the day-to-day management of the Council Tax Support and Housing Benefit systems. They should ensure that:

- All transactions, records and accounts are calculated accurately, completely and promptly. They should be supported by evidence and handled only by authorised Officers.
- Adequate separation of duties is in place to enable the work of one Officer to be checked by another.
- Overpayments are dealt with in accordance with the Council's policy and recovery is efficient and effective.
- All fraud prevention and detection is in accordance with statute, professional guidance and the Council's FPR's and other policies.

## **L: EXTERNAL ARRANGEMENTS**

### **LI PARTNERSHIPS**

#### **LI.1 Introduction**

**LI.1.1** The Council provides a distinctive leadership role for the community and brings together the contributions of a variety of stakeholders. It must also act to achieve the promotion or improvement of the economic, social and environmental well-being of its area.

**LI.1.2** Partnerships play a key role in delivering community strategies and delivering the shared vision of services, based on user needs.

**LI.1.3** A partner is defined as being either an organisation (public or private) undertaking, part funding or participating in a project or a body whose nature or status gives it a right or obligation to support the project.

**LI.1.4** This section of the FPR's sets out the financial implications of working in partnership with external organisations.

#### **LI.2 Executive**

**LI.2.1** The Executive is responsible for approving delegations, including frameworks for partnerships. The Executive is the focus for forming partnerships with other local public, private, voluntary and community sector organisations to address local needs.

**LI.2.2** The Executive can delegate functions, including those relating to partnerships, to Officers. These are set out in the Scheme of Delegation that forms part of the Council's Constitution. Where functions are delegated, the Executive remains accountable for them to Full Council.

**LI.2.3** The Chief Executive or delegated Officer shall represent the Council on partnership and external bodies, in accordance with the Scheme of Delegation.

#### **LI.3 Chief Finance Officer (Section 151)**

**LI.3.1** The Chief Finance Officer is responsible for: -

- Ensuring that the accounting arrangements to be adopted relating to partnerships and joint arrangements are satisfactory.
- Promoting and maintaining the same high standards of conduct with regard to financial administration in partnerships that apply throughout the Council.
- Considering the overall corporate governance arrangements and legal issues when arranging contracts with external bodies.

- Ensuring that the risks have been fully appraised before agreements are entered into with external bodies. They should advise on effective controls to ensure that resources are used efficiently and effectively.
- Ensuring that all funding notified by external bodies is received and properly recorded in the Council's accounts.

#### **L1.4 Directors and Heads of Service**

**L1.4.1** Directors and Heads of Service are responsible for: -

- Ensuring that appropriate approvals are obtained before any negotiations are concluded in relation to work with external bodies.
- Carrying out risk management appraisals, prior to entering into an arrangement with an external body, in accordance with procedures specified by the Chief Finance Officer.
- Ensuring that partnership agreements do not impact adversely on the services provided by the Council.
- Ensuring that partnership agreements and arrangements are properly documented, and information provided to the Chief Finance Officer to enable a note to be entered into the council's Statement of Accounts concerning material items.
- Maintaining a register of all contracts entered into with external bodies, in accordance with procedures specified by the Chief Finance Officer.

### **L2 EXTERNAL FUNDING**

#### **L2.1 Introduction**

**L2.1.1** External funding can be an important source of income to the Council, but funding conditions need to be carefully considered to ensure that they are compatible with the aims and objectives of the Council.

**L2.1.2** The Council shall seek to maximise its resources by attracting external funding where appropriate. However, in some instances, available funding may be linked to tight specifications and may not be sufficiently flexible to link to the Council's strategies.

#### **L2.2 Chief Finance Officer (Section 151)**

**L2.2.1** The Chief Finance Officer is responsible for: -

- Ensuring that any match funding requirements are considered prior to entering into an external agreement and that adequate future revenue budgets are in place to meet these requirements.
- Ensuring that all funding notified by external bodies is received and properly recorded in the Council's accounts.
- Ensuring that all audit requirements are met.

## **L2.3 Directors and Heads of Service**

**L2.3.1** Directors and Heads of Service are responsible for ensuring that: -

- Funds are acquired only to meet the priorities approved in the Policy Framework by the Council.
- Any match funding requirements are considered prior to entering into an external agreement and consulting with the Chief Finance Officer to ensure that adequate future revenue budgets are in place to meet these requirements.
- Key conditions of funding and any statutory requirements are complied with and that the responsibilities of the Accountable body are clearly understood.
- All claims for funds are made by the due date and income received in accordance with the agreement.
- The project progresses in accordance with the agreed project outline and that all expenditure is properly incurred and recorded in the Council's accounts.

## **L3 WORK FOR THIRD PARTIES**

### **L3.1 Introduction**

**L3.1.1** Current legislation enables the council to provide a range of services to other bodies. Such work may enable a Service area to maintain economies of scale and existing expertise. Arrangements should be in place to ensure that any risks associated with this work are minimised and that such work is within current legislation.

**L3.1.2** Contracts for the work should be drawn up using guidance provided by the Head of Legal and the Chief Finance Officer to the Council. The proposals should be costed properly in accordance with guidance provided by the Chief Finance Officer.

**L3.1.3** Guidance with regard to the financial aspects of third-party contracts and the maintenance of the contracts register should be followed.

### **L3.2 Executive**

**L3.2.1** The Executive is responsible for approving contractual arrangements for any work carried out by the Council for third parties or external bodies in addition to the normal business. This responsibility can be delegated to the Senior Leadership Team (Directors) of the Council.

### **L3.3 Chief Finance Officer (Section 151)**

**L3.3.1** The Chief Finance Officer is responsible for issuing guidance with regard to the financial aspects of third-party contracts and the maintenance of the contract register.

### **L3.4 Directors and Heads of Service**

**L3.4.1** Directors and Heads of Service are responsible for ensuring that: -

- Approval is obtained before any negotiations for the work are concluded.
- Contracts operate to the benefit of the Council and do not impact adversely upon the services provided for the Council.
- No contract is subsidised by the Council.
- The Service area has the appropriate expertise to deliver the contract.
- Appropriate insurance arrangements are put in place.
- Wherever possible, payment is received in advance of the delivery of the service to the third party.
- The Council is not put at risk from any bad debts.
- All contracts are properly documented and appropriate information given to the Chief Finance Officer to enable a note to be entered into the Statement of Accounts.

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## Annex B - Extract of Part 5A Council Procedure Rules: Rule 9 Duration of Meetings

### RULE 9: Duration of Meetings


Where any meeting of the Council, a Committee or Sub-Committee, has lasted 3 hours, the person presiding will interrupt the meeting and any Member speaking shall stop speaking. The person presiding shall, without discussion, take a vote on whether or not the Members of the meeting wish it to continue.

Unless a majority of members present vote for the meeting to continue, then the person presiding shall, without further discussion, take a vote on the item under discussion and then the meeting shall stand adjourned. The remaining business will be considered at a time and date fixed by the Chair of the Council or Committee at that time, or, if they do not fix a time and date, at the next meeting of the Council or Committee.

If the majority of Members present vote to continue the meeting, then a further vote on whether or not to continue the meeting will take place on an hourly basis thereafter.

This Council Procedure Rule does not apply to meetings dealing with matters arising under the Licensing Act 2003 and the Gambling Act 2005, **Committee or Sub-Committee meetings dealing with planning applications**, Committee meetings dealing with staff appointments or staff appeals and Standards Sub-Committee meetings dealing with code of conduct determinations.

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 <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 - 20 MAY 2026</b></p>
<p>Subject</p>	<p><b>RECOMMENDATIONS OF THE INDEPENDENT REMUNERATION PANEL</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>Andrea McCaskie, Director of Governance and Regulatory Services Email: <a href="mailto:andrea.mccaskie@westoxon.gov.uk">andrea.mccaskie@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>Summary/Purpose</p>	<p>To consider recommendations made to Council by the Independent Remuneration Panel.</p>
<p>Annexes</p>	<p>Annex A – Report of the Independent Remuneration Panel</p>
<p>Recommendation(s)</p>	<p>That the Council considers the recommendations from the Independent Remuneration Panel, which are to;</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Agree to introduce a 0.25x Special Responsibility Allowance for the Vice-Chair of the Development Management Sub-Committee;</li> <li>2. Note that the Special Responsibility Allowances for the Chairs of Strategic Planning Committee and Development Management Sub-Committee will be reviewed in the autumn as part of the full review of allowances;</li> <li>3. Note that the amount paid as the Vice-Chair’s Special Responsibility Allowances will be reviewed in the autumn as part of the full review of allowances, in respect to the amount.</li> <li>4. Note that following changes at national level, from the 11 May 2026, Councillors have been able to opt into the Local Government Pensions Scheme, and that pensions may be payable on a member’s basic and/or special responsibility allowance. The members allowances scheme will be updated accordingly.</li> </ol>

Corporate priorities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Working Together for West Oxfordshire</li> </ul>
Key Decision	NO
Exempt	NO
Consultees/ Consultation	Independent Remuneration Panel Director of Finance Director of Governance

## **1. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**

- 1.1** As part of West Oxfordshire District Council's decision to combine its two planning sub-committees into one committee, the Independent Remuneration Panel (IRP) were asked to review Special Responsibility Allowances paid to the Chairs and Vice-Chairs of the Council's planning committees.
- 1.2** The IRP met on Monday 20 April on the request of full Council and recommended that the Council introduce an SRA of 0.25x for the Vice-Chair of the Development Management Sub-Committee.

## **2. BACKGROUND**

- 2.1** Members of the Council are paid an allowance in recognition of their work, which is intended to partially compensate them for their time. As the role of a Councillor is a public service rather than a form of employment, the allowance is not intended to be set at the level of a salary.
- 2.2** By law, the Council is required to appoint an IRP, which recommends the level of allowances payable for Councillors over a specific timeframe. The IRP is made up of at least three persons who are suitably skilled members of the public and who are also independent of the Council.
- 2.3** The Local Government Act 2000 and the Local Authorities (Members' Allowances) (England) Regulations 2003 require local authorities to appoint Independent Remuneration Panels to consider and make recommendations on their Allowances Schemes. The Government's "Guidance on Consolidated Regulations on Local Authority Allowances" outlines the main statutory provisions and gives non-statutory guidance.
- 2.4** The IRP is required to recommend the levels of the basic allowance (paid to all councillors), SRAs, and travel, subsistence, co-optees' and dependent carer allowances. The Council is required to have regard to these recommendations.
- 2.5** The current Scheme was adopted by Full Council on 22 March 2023 and remains in place until 1 April 2027. The Independent Remuneration Panel will meet in autumn 2026 to undertake a fuller review of the scheme and to make recommendations about a new scheme from 1 April 2027.

## **3. SUMMARY OF RECOMMENDATIONS**

- 3.1** The IRP considered a report from the Head of Democratic and Electoral Services and benchmarking data from other South-East Councils, provided by South East Employers. The report of the IRP highlights the issues discussed and the recommendations resulting from this.

**3.2** The IRP made the following recommendations, which are explained in detail in the report at Annex A;

**3.2.1** That Council agrees to introduce a 0.25x Special Responsibility Allowance for the Vice-Chair of the Development Management Sub-Committee

**3.2.2** Note that the Special Responsibility Allowances for the Chairs of Strategic Planning Committee and Development Management Sub-Committee will be reviewed in the autumn as part of the full review of allowances;

**3.2.3** That Council notes that the amount paid as the Vice-Chair's Special Responsibility Allowances will be reviewed in the autumn as part of the full review of allowances, in respect to the amount.

**3.3** The IRP also discussed and noted that changes at a national level meant that Councillors were now able to opt into the Local Government Pension Scheme. It was noted that the members allowances scheme would need to be updated accordingly and that officers would be communicating this to members. A recommendation to note this has been included in the report, to raise awareness of the change amongst members.

#### **4. ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS**

**1.1.** Council is required to "have regard" to the recommendations of the IRP but may choose to not agree the recommendations with reasons, therefore not making alterations to the current Scheme.

#### **5. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS**

**1.2.** 0.25x the Basic Allowance is £1,464, this is subject to the uplift for 2026/27, which has not yet been agreed. This will be funded from the existing budget for Members allowances. The reduction from two to one planning sub-committees saves a Special Responsibility Allowance of 1.25x basic, currently £7,320.

#### **6. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS**

**6.1** The Council is required by The Local Authorities (Members' Allowances) (England) Regulations 2003 to make a scheme for the allowances to be paid to Members before the beginning of each year. A scheme must include provisions for paying a basic allowance, special responsibility allowances, dependants' carers' allowance, travelling and subsistence allowance and co-optees' allowance. A scheme may make provision for an annual adjustment of allowances by reference to such index but may not rely on an index for a period of more than four years.

#### **7. RISK ASSESSMENT**

**7.1** There are no risks associated with this report.

#### **8. EQUALITIES IMPACT**

**1.3.** There are no equality impacts associated with this report.

**9. SUSTAINABILITY IMPLICATIONS**

**1.4.** This report is exempt from requiring a sustainability impact assessment.

**1.5. BACKGROUND PAPERS**

**1.6.** None.

(END)

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## **Annex A- Report of the West Oxfordshire District Council Independent Remuneration Panel**

West Oxfordshire District Council's Independent Remuneration Panel (IRP) met on Monday 20 April on the request of full council. The context to this meeting was related to changes that the Council had made to its structure of Planning Committees, merging the two area planning sub-committees into a single Development Management Sub-Committee. The Council's IRP met to discuss any changes to Special Responsibility Allowances (SRAs) that would be relevant to consider in the context of this change.

### **Chair's allowance/ one member/ one special responsibility allowance SRA rule**

The Independent Remuneration Panel noted that the Council does not operate a "one member, one SRA" rule, which is something that many councils operate. Officers explained to the IRP that a reason for not having a one member/one SRA rule was due to the structure of operating two planning sub-committees under a "parent" committee. Due to this, existing practice is for the chair of one of the two sub-committees to also chair the 'parent' committee, both roles which attract an SRA. The IRP recommended that the Council ask the IRP to review this going forward, with a view of potentially introducing a one member/ one SRA rule.


The IRP considered the responsibility and workload of the Chair and Vice-Chair of the new Development Management Sub-Committee. The amount of responsibility that the single sub-committee would hold would increase compared to the existing structure. However, the IRP concluded that while the workload for the chair may increase due to the committee restructure, it was insufficiently clear at this stage whether this would be to such a degree as to warrant a change to the SRA (currently set at 1.25x basic allowance). The IRP therefore recommends that this be looked at in the autumn, when it is due to review the full scheme. At this point it will be clear what impact the changes to the national scheme of delegation, and to the committee restructure, would have to the workload of the committee chairs. If the IRP decide to recommend increasing the Chair's allowance, it could also consider recommend backdating to the start of the civic year. This also allows the IRP to review this in tandem with the review on whether to adopt a one member/ one SRA rule.

The IRP noted that in the new committee structure it would be advisable for the Chair of the Development Management Sub-Committee and the chair of the "parent" Strategic Planning Committee to not be the same person. This is because the 24-

Member Strategic Planning Committee acts as the review body for decisions taken by the 12-Member Sub-Committee. However, the IRP also noted that the Council will need to review this model in view of expected national changes which will cap the size of a planning meeting at a maximum of 13 members.

### **Vice-Chair's allowances**

The IRP noted that the vice-chairs of planning meetings do not currently receive an SRA, whereas the vice-chairs of Council and the Overview and Scrutiny Committee do. Considering the increased workload and/or responsibility for the sub-committee, the Independent Remuneration Panel considered it appropriate to recommend that the Vice-Chair of the Development Management Sub-Committee be paid an SRA of 0.25x basic allowance effective from the start of the 2026/27 civic year. For completeness, this amount will be reviewed in the autumn, alongside the Chair's allowance.

 <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>FULL COUNCIL – 20 MAY 2026</b></p>
<p>Subject</p>	<p><b>STRATEGIC PARTNERSHIP UPDATE</b></p>
<p>Wards affected</p>	<p>All</p>
<p>Accountable member</p>	<p>Councillor Andy Graham - Leader of the Council Email: andy.graham@westoxon.gov.uk</p>
<p>Accountable officer</p>	<p>Giles Hughes – Chief Executive Email: giles.hughes@westoxon.gov.uk</p>
<p>Report author</p>	<p>Mark Pritchard – Head of Communications and Corporate Strategy Email: mark.pritchard@westoxon.gov.uk</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>None</p>
<p>Recommendation(s)</p>	<p>That the Council resolves to:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>I. Note the contents of the Strategic Partnerships Report</li> </ol>
<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/</p>	<p>None</p>

Consultation	
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## **1. BACKGROUND**

- 1.1** West Oxfordshire District Council recognises that 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 into to Government and other organisations that have an influence over our district.
- 1.2** The Leader of the Council, Councillor Andy Graham, is the Executive Member responsible for strategic partnerships including Oxfordshire Joint Leaders Committee, South East Councils, Local Councils Network (previously District Councils Network) Publica and Ubico.
- 1.3** Local Government Reorganisation (LGR) was announced in November 2024 as part of the English Devolution White Paper which set out the intention to reorganise two-tier areas of local government into unitary authorities across England. This significant shift in the way local government operates, both nationally and locally, has had impact across our strategic partnerships with many having to review how they operate.

## **2. LOCAL GOVERNMENT PARTNERSHIPS**

### *Oxfordshire Leader's Joint Committee*

- 2.1** The Oxfordshire Leader's Joint Committee (OLJC) is made up of the leaders of the six local councils in Oxfordshire. It exists to deliver the aims of the Strategic Vision for Sustainable Development in Oxfordshire, that have been adopted by all six partner councils. It does this by overseeing the delivery of projects that the councils of Oxfordshire are seeking to deliver collaboratively in the fields of economic development and strategic planning.
- 2.2** The Joint Committee meets six times each year to discuss issues facing Oxfordshire's future, most often in a non-decision-making capacity. West Oxfordshire District Council has long been a member of the committee and as Leader of the Council Cllr Andy Graham represents West Oxfordshire's interests at this strategic level. He also serves as the vice-chair of the committee.
- 2.3** The Oxfordshire Infrastructure Strategy (OxIS) is a key strategic aim of the OLJC looking ahead to the infrastructure needs of the council to 2050. The OxIS is important to enable Oxfordshire can meet the needs of growing communities, support climate action and environmental recovery, attract and coordinate investment, deliver high-quality joined-up services. The Stage 2 Project Prioritisation Report Consultation was delivered in March 2026. A final draft of the strategy being presented to the committee in April 2026.
- 2.4** Another strategic priority of the OLJC is to be the first generation to leave the environment in a better state than we found it. Phase I of the Oxfordshire Local Area Energy Plan is now complete, providing a countywide evidence base for the transition to net zero, including baseline analysis, stakeholder engagement, and countywide energy modelling. Work is underway on a West Oxfordshire-specific energy plan, focusing on local priorities and stakeholder input. In addition, the Committee continues to oversee the roll out of electric

vehicle charging infrastructure and works closely with the Zero Carbon Oxfordshire Partnership and the Oxfordshire Local Nature Partnership.

*Local Government Association, Local Council Network and South East Councils*

- 2.5** The Local Government Association is the national membership body for all local authorities across England and serves to strengthen local government. West Oxfordshire District Council is a member along with 314 other English Councils. As a member the LGA provides training and support and lobbies on behalf of the sector along with other services. The Leader of the Council attended this year's Annual Conference to engage with peers alongside putting forward West Oxfordshire District Council as a member council in strategic discussions regarding local government.
- 2.6** The Local Councils Network (formerly the District Council Network) is a cross-party network providing a single national voice for member council. The network is made up of 169 councils including West Oxfordshire District Council. It is a special interest group of the Local Government Association that provides a single voice for all District services. The Leader of the Council is a member of the Executive Member Board and advocates on behalf of West Oxfordshire and District Council's more widely at a national level.
- 2.7** 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 endeavouring 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 organisation is currently analysing how LGR will impact it moving forward and will considering how it can best represent the voice of local government in the South East and maximise its sphere of influence. The Leader of the Council is a member of the Executive Forum for South East Councils and plays a role in helping to shape its agenda.

*Local Government Reorganisation in Oxfordshire*

- 2.8** West Oxfordshire District Council has been working closely with Cherwell District Council, South Oxfordshire District Council, Vale of White Horse District Council and West Berkshire Council (an existing unitary council) to develop and submit a proposal for reorganising local government in Oxfordshire and West Berkshire. This proposal was for two unitary councils covering Oxfordshire and West Berkshire.
- 2.9** The Council worked with these partner councils to engage local residents in this process. This allowed residents and businesses to help shape the proposal and they were also encouraged to engage with the government consultation.
- 2.10** Ahead of the government's decision on LGR in Oxfordshire, West Oxfordshire District Council is working closely with all the Oxfordshire councils, plus West Berkshire Council,

to plan for the implementation of the structure the government decides to take forward. This planning will look to ensure the smooth transition of services to the new councils.

- 2.11 The Leader of the Council has worked closely with the other council leaders and Chief Executives in Oxfordshire across this period to effectively manage the process on behalf of West Oxfordshire residents and businesses.

### **3. OXFORD GROWTH COMMISSION**

- 3.1 Neale Coleman CBE was appointed by Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government (MHCLG) as Chair of the Oxford Growth Commission in May 2025. His role is to support the delivery of infrastructure, housing and employment to unleash Oxford and Oxfordshire's economic power as part of the Oxford to Cambridge Growth Corridor.
- 3.2 The Oxford Growth Commission released its interim report in December 2025. The interim report reflects early findings and priorities for coordinated spatial, housing, economic and infrastructure planning across the county. The report recognises that county is one of the fastest-growing UK economies, driven by knowledge-intensive sectors, the University of Oxford's research ecosystem and major innovation assets such as Harwell. The report details early findings on how to accelerate sustainable and inclusive economic growth across Oxford and Oxfordshire.
- 3.3 The report identifies priority opportunity areas for new development, including land around the reopened Cowley Branch Line, Oxford Central and West End, Oxford and Kidlington stations, and existing strategic allocations such as Salt Cross, Eynsham and the proposed new town at Heyford Park. The Commission intends to work in partnership with Homes England to accelerate up to ten sites capable of delivering new homes within eighteen months.
- 3.4 The report calls for a joined-up spatial and investment strategy across the county, supported by decisions on local government reorganisation and the development of new spatial development strategies. Stronger coordination and partnership between central government, local authorities, infrastructure bodies and delivery partners is identified as essential to unlocking Oxfordshire's full economic potential.
- 3.5 West Oxfordshire have been a key partner in these conversations and hosted a delegation from the Growth Commission in 2025 while they were developing their report. This visit highlighted the potential of West Oxfordshire and advocated for key improvements the Council would like to see such as infrastructure investment. On top of the visit the Council has engaged more widely with the Commission, holding a number of key meetings over the year.

### **4. LOCAL DELIVERY PARTNERSHIPS**

*Publica*

- 4.1 West Oxfordshire District Council is a key partner and shareholder in Publica, a Teckal company West Oxfordshire District Council jointly owns with a number of other local councils. Publica delivers a significant number of services on behalf of the Council in partnership with other authorities across the area.
- 4.2 In November 2024 a number of council services transferred back to direct council employment. There were further transfers in July 2025 and in April 2026. These transfers enabled the Council to have more control over service delivery. Publica remains the delivery partner for a large number of council services and no further significant service moves are expected ahead of any LGR related changes.
- 4.3 Over the last year the Council has worked closely with the Publica senior management the other shareholder council's on restructuring Publica since services were brought back into the councils. This has been to enable Publica to continue to deliver good services for the Council.
- 4.4 There has also been work to review the funding of Publica. The Publica partnership agreed to adopt a re-based cost model from 2026/27 following Phase 1 and 2 of the Publica Review. This new cost model ensures that the funding provided to Publica is proportionate to the services received by each council in the partnership. This was reflected in the 2026/27 budget and has resulted in a saving to West Oxfordshire.
- 4.5 The Council remains committed to working in close partnership with Publica and partner councils to deliver the LGR transition and continue the effective delivery of services during this period.

#### Ubico

- 4.6 West Oxfordshire District Council is a key partner and shareholder in Ubico, a Teckal company West Oxfordshire District Council jointly owns with a number of other local councils. Ubico delivers a significant number of waste collection and environmental services on behalf of the Council.
- 4.7 Work has continued with Ubico to explore how to deliver better and more efficient services. The progress of this has been reflected in new electric vehicles and through the 2026/27 budget. West Oxfordshire remains one of the top areas in the country for recycling rates and operates a very successful collection service.
- 4.8 In January 2026 the Executive approved the Waste and Environmental Services Programme to explore future working arrangements for delivering waste services across Oxfordshire in partnership with Oxfordshire councils.
- 4.9 This work is ongoing and the Council will continue to work in partnership with Ubico and the other Oxfordshire councils on further developing these proposals and preparing for LGR.

## 5. ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS

1.1. 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.

## **6. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS**

1.2. The Council pays the following annual fees for membership of the organisations listed in this report where they are required:

1.3. Local Government Association - £13,429.57

1.4. Local Councils Network - £3,384

1.5. South East Councils – £1,845

## **7. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS**

1.6. None

## **8. RISK ASSESSMENT**


1.7. 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.

## **9. EQUALITIES IMPACT**

1.8. None from this report

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 <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 – 20 MAY 2026.</b></p>
<p>Subject</p>	<p><b>AUDIT AND GOVERNANCE COMMITTEE ANNUAL REPORT</b></p>
<p>Wards affected</p>	<p>NONE</p>
<p>Accountable member</p>	<p>Councillor Carl Rylett – Chair of the Audit and Governance Committee Email: <a href="mailto:carl.rylett@westoxon.gov.uk">carl.rylett@westoxon.gov.uk</a></p>
<p>Accountable officer</p>	<p>Andrea McCaskie – Director of Governance and Regulatory Services Email: <a href="mailto:andrea.mccaskie@westoxon.gov.uk">andrea.mccaskie@westoxon.gov.uk</a></p>
<p>Report author</p>	<p>Mathew Taylor – Democratic Services Officer Email: <a href="mailto:mathew.taylor@westoxon.gov.uk">mathew.taylor@westoxon.gov.uk</a></p>
<p>Summary/Purpose</p>	<p>To provide Council with a report on the activities of the Audit and Governance Committee for the municipal year 2025/26.</p>
<p>Annexes</p>	<p>None.</p>
<p>Recommendation(s)</p>	<p>That Council resolves to: I. Note the report.</p>
<p>Corporate priorities</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <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>Audit and Governance Committee</p>

## **1. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**

- 1.1** It is considered good practice for an annual report on the work of the Audit and Governance Committee to be produced and presented to Council. Furthermore, the Committee has a responsibility under Part 3C of the Constitution to provide such a report. This reporting process enables the Committee to demonstrate the work undertaken in the year in discharging its responsibilities as laid out in the Council's Constitution.
- 1.2** This report contains a summary of the work of the Committee in the key areas of responsibility to date. The summary includes, Committee responsibilities, actions and decisions, themes of discussions from members and officers.

## **2. BACKGROUND**

- 2.1** Part 3C of the Council's Constitution, "Committee Functions", sets out the Committees that Council will establish to discharge certain functions (though Council retains the right to concurrent and overriding exercise of all functions). The Audit and Governance Committee is one such Committee.
- 2.2** Part 1A.8 of the Council's Constitution states: "The Council has an Audit and Governance Committee responsible for overseeing the audit function, annual accounts and the work of the internal auditors, promoting and maintaining high standards of conduct of members and through its Standards Sub-Committee, determining standards matters".
- 2.3** In order to discharge its responsibilities, the Audit and Governance Committee comprises eleven Members. Members are appointed at Council in accordance with the regulations regarding political proportionality. For the 2025/26 municipal year, the Chair of the Committee was elected as Councillor Carl Rylett, the Vice-Chair was elected as Councillor Ruth Smith. The other Members of the Committee were Councillors Joy Aitman, Andrew Beaney, David Jackson, Edward James, David Melvin, Elizabeth Poskitt, Nigel Ridpath, Sandra Simpson, Alex Wilson. No Executive Members can sit on the Audit and Governance Committee.
- 2.4** Membership of the Audit and Governance Committee may also include up to two independent non-elected persons, without voting rights. The Committee has opted to include such Members, and these are currently Richard Deuttenburg and (from 3 December 2025) Victoria Field.
- 2.5** The current size of 11 Members, the addition of two independent persons and the rule that Executive Members cannot be members of the Audit and Governance Committee resulted from a self-assessment exercise which reported to Council on 19 March 2024.
- 2.6** Key officers who regularly bring reports to the Committee are: Madhu Richards (Director of Finance (S151), Lucy Cater (Assistant Director SWAP), Emma Cathcart (Assistant Director – Counter Fraud and Enforcement Unit ('CFEU')), Cheryl Sloan (Assistant Director – Workforce Strategy and Transformation), Georgina Dyer (Head of Finance), Andrew Brown (Head of Democratic and Electoral Services), Kate Seeley (Investigation and Enforcement Manager CFEU), John Chorlton (Chief Technology Officer) and Andrea

McCaskie (Director of Governance and Regulatory Services). The Council's External Auditor, Bishop Fleming, also periodically reports to the Committee.

- 2.7 In discharging its responsibilities as set out in the Councils' Constitution the Audit and Governance Committee has met on five occasions in the municipal year on: 26 June 2025, 25 September 2025, 27 November 2025, 22 January 2026 and 19 March 2026. This report summarises the work of the Committee at those meetings.

### 3. WORK OF THE COMMITTEE BY TOPIC AREA FOR THE MUNICIPAL YEAR 2025/26

- 3.1 The work of the Committee can be broadly categorised under the following headings: Finance; Internal Audit; External Audit; Risk Management; Corporate Governance and Counter Fraud. Detail of the work of the Committee, grouped under these headings, is given in sections 4 to 9 of the report.

### 4. FINANCE

- 4.1 Members were required to review and approve the **Statement of Accounting Policies** ('the Policies') to be included in the 2024/25 Statement of Accounts. Members approved the policies in advance of the preparation of the Statement of Accounts 2024/25 which represented best practice. The Policies outlined the relevant accounting principles, bases, conventions, rules and practices applied by the Council in preparing and presenting financial statements and were prepared largely from the Chartered Institute of Public Finance & Accountancy ('CIPFA') guidance, adjusted as appropriate to be suitable for the Council and had been reviewed to ensure they align with the latest CIPFA Code of Practice on Local Authority Accounting (The Code) supported by International Financial Reporting Standards (IFRSs) and International Accounting Standards (IASs). It had been recommended by the Council's External Auditor, Bishop Fleming, that members formerly approve the draft policies as this demonstrated that those charged with governance had the opportunity to consider and review policies in advance of the process.

The Committee noted that changes in the Policies were minimal, but those areas highlighted by officers and considered by the Committee included:

- An accumulated absence reserve for TUPE employees. This was a notional amount based on unused annual leave prior to year end and was reviewed annually.
- The UBS Fund realised capital loss, which was now recognised in the accounts. The Committee clarified that this was funded through earmarked reserves with no net impact on revenue budget or 2024/25 outrun position. This position was outside of the Council's control.
- The new requirement in IFRS 16 for the treatment of leases that had been reflected in the Policies.

The Committee resolved to approve the draft accounting policies for 2024/25 and note the necessary amendments.

- 4.2 **Treasury Management Outrun** updates were received and noted by the Committee for

Quarter 4 of 2024/25, Quarter 1 of 2025/26, mid-term for the period 1 April 2025 to 30 September 2025 and Quarter 3 of 2025/26. The updates advised the Members of the Committee of the treasury management activity and the performance of internal and external fund managers and included prudential indicators.

In noting the reports, members discussed the following:

- The performance of long-term investments, market conditions and cash reserves.
- The Council's compliance with Prudential Indicators, noting that these were largely complied with. The exception was observed as being on interest rate exposure, however the Committee did not view this as a concern.
- Guidance on future balance of portfolios held by newly established unitary authorities was expected from Central Government.
- The benchmarking information sources in reports were confirmed to be from Arlingclose, the Council's Treasury Advisors.
- The potential timescales for a requirement of the Council to seek external borrowing for projects.
- The treatment of realised capital gains and losses at the point of Local Government Reorganisation.
- Ethical investments that were included in Treasury Management Strategy.

**4.3 Budget Strategy Papers** for Capital, Investment and Treasury Management were presented to the Committee for noting in relation to the 2026/27 budget setting process.

On the recommendation of the predecessor external auditor, the Council's Constitution had been amended to update the Terms of Reference of the Audit and Governance Committee to include the review of the three strategies presented as part of the annual budget setting process.

The Committee noted that:

- The Treasury Management Strategy now included an ethical investment approach. The management of this was with Arlingclose, the Council's Treasury Advisors, and the Committee requested that Arlingclose attend future Committee training sessions so this approach could be further explored. The Committee noted the balance between ethical investment and a requirement for returns to fund services.
- Sources and the need for external borrowing were discussed, with the Committee noting that active lending markets were not the Council's preference should borrowing be required.
- The Council's position on procurement of plant, in particular waste vehicles, in light of LGR, was explored. The Committee noted that an Overview and Scrutiny Task and Finish Group had been involved in recent

work in this area with projects designed to be LGR resilient.

- 4.4** Members were required to review and approve the Council's **Finance Procedure Rules 2026 (FPR)** for adoption by full Council. The FPR had not been reviewed for some time and were updated in light of the Publica transitions and LGR. The FPR was required to be reviewed and approved by the Committee following an initial review by the Council's Constitution Working Group.

The Committee complemented the clarity of the FPR and suggested that all Members would benefit from reading them. The Committee also focused on financial levels for virements and ex-gratia payments which were explored with Officers who highlighted the differing approval levels required for differing financial values in these cases.

## **5. INTERNAL AUDIT**

- 5.1** Throughout the year the Committee received four Internal Audit Progress Reports at its meetings in September, November, January and March. In addition, the Annual Opinion was received by the Committee, and, at the request of Members, an External Quality Assessment (EQA) report was brought to the Committee on the work of SWAP on internal audits. At the final meeting of the Committee, the Internal Audit Plan 2026/27 was brought for approval with the Internal Audit Charter and Mandate 2026/27.

- 5.2** The **Internal Audit Annual Opinion 2024/25** presented to the Committee was a summary of work undertaken by Internal Audit during 2024/25 and gave an overall opinion on levels of assurance resulting from the work. The Committee was advised that effective internal audit must be undertaken by relevant authorities taking into account public sector internal auditing standards and guidance.

The Head of Internal Audit (SWAP Assistant Director's) Annual Opinion on the adequacy and effectiveness of internal controls within the Council was that a "reasonable" assurance level was given for the internal controls in place in the areas where audit activity had taken place. The Committee received assurance that, where operational control issues were raised in the audit reports, the risks associated with these were being actively managed by management. This opinion contributed to the assurances available to the Head of Paid Service and the Council and underpinned the Council's own assessment of the effectiveness of its internal controls. The Internal Audit Annual Opinion must be taken into account when completing the Annual Governance Statement and Annual Statements of Accounts.

Members discussed: the potential operational risks associated with volatile employee levels due to LGR; priority one open actions around human resources; The Climate Change Operational Audit due to form part of the 2025/26 opinion; The availability of data protection training for members and employees; and how the Council monitored s.106 monies received and spent.

- 5.3** **Internal Audit Progress Reports** were brought to all meetings of the Committee to enable monitoring of the work of Internal Audit and ensure that it remained effective.

The Committee noted that significant audits had taken place on the Counter Fraud Enforcement Unit (CFEU), with a reassuring and impressive result. The Committee received audits on the payroll controls of both the Council and Publica, giving “mid-reasonable” and “mid-substantial” opinions respectively. The Committee welcomed that procurement card policies and procedures had been implemented. The Committee considered the report on ICT disaster recovery in the revenue and benefits systems which resulted in a “low substantial” opinion. In general terms the Committee had no concerns on Internal Audit work in their meetings.

- 5.4 At the request of members, and organised by the Monitoring Officer, the Committee received the **SWAP Internal Audit External Quality Assessment (EQA)** report. This report was considered the “audit of the auditor” and had been undertaken on SWAP by the Devon Assurance Partnership. It was noted that such an exercise should be undertaken at least once every five years. The Committee noted that SWAP had received an assessment of, “generally conforms”, which was the highest possible rating for such a report.
- 5.5 The **Internal Audit Plan 2026/27 (the Plan)** gave the Committee the upcoming programme of risk-based assurance and consultancy work planned for Internal Audit for the year. The Plan had been designed and consulted on in January and February 2026. The Committee were advised that the Plan was now linked to the Council’s Priorities and Risk Register which would improve reporting to the Committee in the future.

In addition to approving the plan, the Committee also approved the **Audit Charter and Mandate** which granted the Council’s Internal Audit Function authority to provide the Committee, and Senior Management, assurance, advice, insight and foresight.

## 6. EXTERNAL AUDIT

- 6.1 The Council’s External Auditor, Bishop Fleming, reported two items to the Committee in the year.
- 6.2 **The Annual Report – Value for Money Arrangements and Recommendations 2024/25**, gave the Committee the External Auditor’s report and findings on the arrangements in place at the Council to achieve value for money as required under the National Audit Office (NAO) Code of Audit Practice.

The report focused on criteria such as: financial sustainability; governance; and improving economy, efficiency and effectiveness. The Committee noted that no significant weaknesses in arrangements were identified by the External Auditor. The Committee was informed that some improvement recommendations had been made to the Council’s Senior Leadership Team (‘SLT’) to which the External Auditor was comfortable that all responses had been received.

Members of the Committee queried the position of the External Auditor on the Council’s decision not to undertake a peer review, despite LGR and the Publica reorganisation. The External Auditor advised that they were comfortable with this decision with good practice for peer reviews to be taken once every five years.

**6.3** The Committee received the **Final 2024/05 Audit Findings Report (ISA260) and Statements of Account** from Bishop Fleming. This summarised the work of the External Auditor of the Council's accounts as required under International Standards of Audit (UK) (ISAs) and the NAO Code of Audit Practice.

In summary, the External Auditors testing and review had not identified any significant issues, all considerations had been discussed with the Council's SLT and an opinion on the accounts of "unqualified" was given.

In addition to noting the report of the External Auditor the Committee approved the Statements of Accounts for 2024/25 including the Annual Governance Statement. Councillor Carl Rylett, Chair of the Audit and Governance Committee, signed the Letter of Representation on behalf of the Committee and the Council to Bishop Fleming to enable the opinion to be issued.

**6.4** The Committee was also provided with the **External Audit Plan 2025/26** at the final meeting of the municipal year. The representative of Bishop Fleming was unable to attend the meeting however the Committee raised no questions and noted the report.

## **7. RISK MANAGEMENT**

**7.1** The Committee was presented with the Strategic Risk Register for the Council at two meetings and considered the Risk Policy and Opportunity Management Strategy.

### **7.2 Strategic Risk Register, Risk Policy and draft Risk and Opportunity Management Strategy**

The Committee was charged with approving the latest version of the Council's Risk and Opportunity Management Strategy ("the Strategy"). The Committee is also responsible for reviewing the Council's Strategic Risk Register at regular intervals.

The Risk and Opportunity Management Strategy set out the Council's approach to risk and opportunity management including defining these concepts, setting the Council's risk appetite and defining roles and responsibilities in this area. The Committee noted that there had been no significant changes to the Strategy, with the exception of changes in some roles and responsibilities due to services being transferred back to the Council. The Council's current risk appetite was noted as being "creative and aware". The Committee considered this appetite as appropriate for the Council.

Over the municipal year the Committee discussed and explored the following in the Council's Strategic Risk Register:

- The "red risks" on the Register, such as: Financial stability of the Council; English Devolution White Paper; NPPF and the 5-year housing land supply.
- The appropriateness of the risk level attributed to General Data Protection Regulations and cyber-attacks.
- The process of reviewing the Strategic Risk Register internally was discussed. The Committee established that SLT and risk owners regularly reviewed and updated the register.

- Members raised several potential new or increased areas of risk that they felt merited reassessment on the Risk Register.
- The Committee requested that officers map the identified risks with the current risk appetite of the Council in future reports.
- The increased risk to members who use their own devices was discussed. As a result of this discussion an agenda item on Cyber Security was brought to the Committee in September 2025.

## 8. CORPORATE GOVERNANCE

8.1 The work of the Committee in Corporate Governance can be seen below.

8.2 The latest version of the **Local Code of Corporate Governance** (“the Code”) for adoption by the Committee and the Council was presented to the Committee. The development of the Code is considered best practice for all local authorities.

The document set out the framework and overarching principles of governance for the Council. The Code had been reviewed following the publication of the addendum in May 2025 of “Delivering Good Governance in Local Government Framework”, though the Committee noted that the Council was already majority compliant.

In relation to the Code, Members queried: recruitment; communication procedures with employees to ensure good governance; and the availability and source of key performance indicators in officer reports.

Documents associated with the Code are discussed at section 8.3.

8.3 The Committee approved the **Annual Governance Statement (AGS) 24/25 & Annual Governance Action Plan (AGAP) 2025/26**. Regulation 4 of the Accounts and Audit Regulations 2011 required the Council to produce the AGS which sets out the Council’s governance arrangements. The Audit and Governance Committee is charged with overseeing governance and as such is required to approve this document. The AGS is backward looking, detailing the governance arrangements which were in place for the previous financial year (2024/25). The AGS also shows the progress which was made against the AGAP for 2024/25.

The AGAP is a forward-looking document that set out the areas of improvement and focus for the current financial year (2025/26). The AGAP contained eight key actions: New service delivery; Council Constitution; business continuity; procurement; LGR/devolution; service plans; financial management; Council specific policies.

The Committee approved the two documents for sign-off by the Chief Executive and the Leader of the Council and agreed to receive updates on progress against the key actions in the AGAP at future meetings. The Committee noted eight key actions were contained in the Action Plan, including three carried over from the previous year. However, progress had been made on all carried-over actions.

At the final meeting of the year, the Committee received an update on the progress against the 2025/26 AGAP. The Committee noted that the majority of the actions had been

completed, and that good progress had been made on those that were as yet not complete. Incomplete actions would be carried over to the 2026/27 plan which would be brought to the Committee at its first meeting in the new municipal year in June. Members explored the Council's process of policy development and observed that by the end of the next financial year management intended to have a full suite of policies in place with assigned "owners" and review dates to ensure that these are continuously reviewed.

- 8.4** The Committee received an update on the number and status of Code of Conduct complaints received and considered by the Council's Monitoring Officer in the period 1 September 2024 to 31 March 2025 through the **Annual Summary of Member Code of Conduct Complaints**. The Committee is responsible for promoting high standards of ethical behaviour, including by developing, maintaining and monitoring the Members' Code of Conduct and as part of this it is required to receive a report, at least annually from the Council's Monitoring Officer with such a summary.

The Committee noted that the number of complaints received in the period was relatively low (5) and all had been concluded and resolved at the assessment stage. The Standards Sub-Committee therefore did not need to meet within the reporting period.

The Committee queried training on complaint procedures for parish and town councils and requested more guidance on the registration and declaration of interests, which Democratic Services were requested to action.

- 8.5** The Committee approved and adopted the Council's **Whistleblowing Policy** and, in so doing, authorised the Director of Governance and Regulatory Services, in consultation with the Head of the Counter Fraud and Enforcement Unit, Head of Legal Services and Leader of the Council, to make future minor amendments. The new policy updated and replaced the existing Whistleblowing Policy with minor amendments to highlight key legislation, clarify the roles and responsibilities of members, officers and other parties and to improve clarity and understanding.

The Committee expressed a wish to ensure adequate training was available for those receiving whistleblowing reports. Members also queried procedures for occasions when they received reports and were advised to contact the Monitoring Officer in such cases.

- 8.6** The Committee noted the **Annual Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman ('the Ombudsman') Letter and Complaints Statistics** for the period 1 April 2024 to 31 March 2025. The information is provided to give insight into the Council's approach to complaints, and for consideration as part of the Council corporate governance processes. The Ombudsman is available for complaints where the Council's own internal complaints procedure has been exhausted. The letter detailed complaints which had been escalated to the Ombudsman in the period.

The Committee noted that there had been thirty-four complaints in total. Eleven complaints escalated to the Ombudsman, six of these had been immediately dismissed, four went to preliminary hearings, and one complaint had been investigated and subsequently upheld.

8.7 In accordance with the Committee's responsibility to promote standards and secure adequate training for all Members of the Council, it was presented with a report of **Member learning and development activities for 2025/26**. The Committee noted that attendance at learning and development sessions had been reasonable, however this had decreased following the summer. A Member development and training survey had been undertaken to explore potential reasons for this decrease and this was explored by the Committee. In addition, the Committee was provided with the **proposed Member induction programme for 2026/27** and feedback on this was welcomed. In the discussion Members suggested that the timing of the annual planning training should be changed and enquired as to the availability of the record of training completed which was confirmed to be with Democratic Services. In general, the training provision was praised by Members and Officers were encouraged to continue to promote the offering.

## 9. COUNTER FRAUD

9.1 The Committee received two updates on counter fraud activities in the year. These updates also included the updated **Fraud Risk Strategy 2025, Fraud Compliance Report, Fraud Response Plan** and specific updates in relation to the **Regulation of Investigatory Powers Act 2000 (RIPA) and the Investigatory Powers Act 2016 (IPA)**.

The Committee noted that the Council has a duty to prevent and counter fraud, the most common crime in the UK, and, as the body charged with governance, it was appropriate for the Committee to receive regular updates on the Council's counter fraud activity.

The Fraud Risk Strategy had been updated and reviewed to ensure that it reflected current risks, legislation, government standards and the CFEU approach. The strategy identified areas of high-risk to local government and appropriate responses to those risks.

The Fraud Compliance Report summarised the activities in fraud risk mitigation that the CFEU has committed to.

The Fraud Response Plan provided a quick reference guide for employees, contractors, councillors, members of the public and third-party organisations regarding the reporting of fraud, theft or corruption.

As part of the discussion members considered areas of non-compliance including data-analytics. Members asked for more detail on third party and contractors' access to, and awareness of, the Whistleblowing Policy, which had been previously approved and adopted. Additional background was requested on recruitment vetting

A detailed discussion took place on the considerations that officers would consider in a decision to pursue a case of fraud. As part of the exploration officers gave the example of the successful prosecution of a former employee with polygamous employment which was noted to be a good result for the CFEU and had demonstrated good internal and external approaches to fraud.

In the annual counter fraud update, the Committee noted that the key focus for counter fraud activity in the 2026/27 year was to be around awareness. To enhance awareness work

streams were being established for employees, Members and residents. Member discussion focussed on the website which was available and was considered a valuable tool to all in West Oxfordshire to raise awareness of fraud. The website can be found at:

[www.cfeu.org.uk/glassjar](http://www.cfeu.org.uk/glassjar).

## **9.2 Cyber Security**

An update was brought to the Committee on the Council's actions on Cyber Security. The detail of the report and minutes for this item are exempt from publication, due to the likely disclosure of exempt information as described in paragraph 7 of Schedule 12A of the Local Government Act 1972, and are therefore not included in this report.

## **10. ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS**

**10.1** The Chair of the Audit and Governance Committee could not report back to Council on the work of the Committee in the year. This would not be considered good governance practice and contrary to the Constitution.

## **11. CONCLUSIONS**

**11.1** The report summarises the work of the Audit and Governance Committee for the municipal year 2025/26. The report demonstrates the breadth of work the Committee has undertaken to discharge its responsibilities in the areas of finance, audit, internal and external audit, risk management, corporate governance and counter fraud and enforcement.

## **12. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS**

**12.1** There are no financial implications arising from this report.

## **13. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS**

**13.1** There are no legal implications arising from this report.

## **14. RISK ASSESSMENT**

**14.1** The Audit and Governance Committee has a role in overseeing the Council's risk management arrangements but there are no risk implications arising directly from this report.

## **15. EQUALITIES IMPACT**

**15.1** There are no equalities implications arising from this report.


## **16. SUSTAINABILITY IMPLICATIONS**

**16.1** None.

## **17. BACKGROUND PAPERS**

**17.1** None

(END).

 <b>WEST OXFORDSHIRE DISTRICT COUNCIL</b>	<b>WEST OXFORDSHIRE DISTRICT COUNCIL</b>
<b>Name and Date of Committee</b>	<b>COUNCIL – 20 MAY 2026</b>
<b>Subject</b>	<b>APPOINTMENT OF DIRECTOR OF PLACE</b>
<b>Wards Affected</b>	All
<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>	Giles Hughes, Chief Executive Officer. Email: <a href="mailto:Giles.Hughes@westoxon.gov.uk">Giles.Hughes@westoxon.gov.uk</a>
<b>Report Author</b>	Kathryn Dowell, Strategic People Lead Email: <a href="mailto:kathryn.dowell@westoxon.gov.uk">kathryn.dowell@westoxon.gov.uk</a>
<b>Purpose</b>	<p>Following the interview process and the subsequent conditional appointment of Daniel Taylor to the position of Director of Place, via a secondment from Essex County Council to West Oxfordshire District Council, it was agreed that the salary for this role would be £104,722 per annum, plus the applicable pending pay award.</p> <p>In accordance with the Council’s Pay Policy, Full Council retains the authority to approve any new appointment to a post where the total remuneration package (including all payments and benefits in kind) exceeds £100,000</p> <p>Please note that the Director of Place does not hold statutory responsibilities and, as such, this appointment did not require approval via the Performance and Appointments Committee.</p>
<b>Annex</b>	Annex A – Job Description, Director of Place.
<b>Recommendations</b>	That Council Resolves to: Confirm the salary for the Director of Place as £104,722 per annum, plus the applicable pending pay award.

Corporate Priorities	<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>
Key Decision	NO
Exempt	NO
Consultees/ Consultation	Director of Governance and Regulatory Services Director of Finance Head of Legal

## 2. BACKGROUND

- 2.1 The Council's Director of Place role is due to become vacant as the current postholder has been appointed to the position of Chief Executive, commencing 1 June, following the retirement of the existing Chief Executive.
- 2.2 The Director of Place role does not carry statutory responsibilities and therefore does not require approval by the Performance and Appointments Committee. However, given its status as a Director-level post and its strategic importance within the Council's senior leadership structure, the recruitment process included both stakeholder engagement and Member interview panels.
- 2.3 As is standard practice following a resignation, a review of the role and its requirements was undertaken. The Chief Executive, working alongside Publica's Recruitment Team, completed a full review of the Job Description to ensure it remained aligned with the Council's strategic priorities and operational needs.
- 2.4 The updated Job Description is provided at Appendix A.
- 2.5 The timetable for the recruitment process was as follows:
- Applications closed on 29 March 2026;
  - Shortlisting and technical interviews held 14 and 21 April 2026 (please see below);
  - Council consideration, 20 May 2026

The interview panels were as follows:

14 April 2026	First Stage Interviews	Giles Hughes Phillip Martin Andrea McCaskie Cheryl Sloane
21 April 2026	Stakeholder Panel Interviews	Andrea McCaskie Madhu Richards Frank Wilson
21 April 2026	Member Panel Interviews	Cllr Andy Graham – Chair Cllr Duncan Enright Giles Hughes Phillip Martin

## 3. MAIN POINTS

- 3.1 The Director of Place is a key role for the Council with responsibilities for a number of the Council's key priorities. The role will be part of the Council's Senior Leadership Team, working closely with the Chief Executive, the Director of Governance and Regulatory Services, the Director of Finance, Publica locality leads, elected members, and partners to help the Council deliver on its priorities in the current challenging environment.

3.2 The successful candidate following comprehensive interviews was Daniel Taylor who has requested that his appointment be part of a secondment (start to be confirmed) from Essex County Council to the West Oxfordshire District Council. The secondment between Essex County Council and West Oxfordshire District Council will conclude on the Local Government Reorganisation Vesting Day, which is currently anticipated to be 31 March 2028.

#### **4. ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS**

4.1 Full Council may decide not to approve the proposed salary of £104,722, which would prevent the appointment from progressing and require alternative arrangements to be considered.

4.2 The salary for the Director of Place is commensurate with its peers, aligning with the remuneration of the Council's other Director-level posts and in recognition of the competitive jobs market for this senior role.

4.3 Delaying the recruitment of the Director of Place would require a redistribution of the role's strategic and operational responsibilities across the remaining Senior Leadership Team. While this could deliver short-term savings, it would also reduce dedicated capacity for place-based services, economic development, and major projects, and may impact the Council's ability to deliver a number of its corporate priorities and implement Local Government Reorganisation.

#### **5. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS**

5.1 It was agreed that the salary for this position would be £104,722 per annum plus a pending pay award pending.

5.2 As per the Council's Pay Policy, Full Council will retain the decision to make any new appointment of an Officer where the pay (incorporating all payments and benefits in kind) exceeds £100,000.

5.3 The salary for the Director of Place is commensurate with its peers, aligning with the remuneration of the Council's other Director-level posts and in recognition of the competitive jobs market for this senior role.

#### **6. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS**

6.1 There are no specific legal implications arising from the appointment to the Director of Place role.

6.2 The post does not carry statutory responsibilities, and therefore the appointment does not require approval via the Performance and Appointments Committee however as this salary is over £100,000 per annum, no appointment can be made without the formal approval of Full Council.

6.3 The recruitment process has been undertaken in accordance with the Council's constitutional requirements, relevant employment legislation, and established HR policies, ensuring fairness, transparency, and compliance with all applicable regulations.

#### **7. RISK ASSESSMENT**

7.1 The primary risk associated with not appointing a Director of Place is a reduction in strategic capacity across key service areas, including economic development, regeneration, and major

projects. Failure to fill the post could place additional pressure on the remaining Senior Leadership Team and may impact the Council's ability to deliver on a number of its corporate priorities effectively. A failure to recruit would also, by reducing senior management capacity, compromise the Council's ability to prepare for Local Government Reorganisation.

**7.2** There is also a risk of reduced organisational resilience if the role is left vacant for an extended period. These risks have been mitigated through a robust recruitment process, ensuring that the proposed appointment is made in accordance with the Council's governance framework and employment policies.

## **8. EQUALITIES IMPACT**

**8.1** The recruitment is following best practice with a fair, equal and transparent process, reducing bias and designed to select the strongest candidate on merit.

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

**9.1** None.

## **10. BACKGROUND PAPERS**

**10.1** None

(END)

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WEST OXFORDSHIRE  
DISTRICT COUNCIL

**Role Description and Employee Specification**

<b>Job Title:</b>	Director of Place	<b>Location:</b>	Witney
<b>Department:</b>	Place	<b>Service:</b>	Governance
<b>Reports to:</b>	Chief Executive	<b>Working Hours:</b>	37 hours per week
<b>Salary:</b>	£95,202- £104,722 per annum	<b>Peer Group:</b>	TBC
<b>Business World Post Number:</b>	New Post	<b>Job Group:</b>	Director
<b>Contract Type:</b>	Fixed Term	<b>Direct Reports:</b>	Climate Change Manager • Housing Delivery Programme Manager • Leisure Strategy Manager • Community Wellbeing Manager Economic Development Manager Waste Manager


<b>Overall purpose of the Post:</b>	<p>Together with the Chief Executive Officer and other Directors, to lead the corporate direction of the council on delivering efficient and effective services to customers, that are aligned to the council's ambitions and strategic priorities. To think and plan strategically contributing to the overall leadership and management of the Authority.</p> <p>Lead, manage and deliver the services within the Directorate, ensuring rigorous performance, risk and financial management.</p> <p>Continually review the range of services in the Directorate, bringing forward proposals to increase their efficiency, reduce their net cost and/or increase income on an ongoing basis.</p> <p>To work collaboratively across Council services and with external partners such as Publica and Ubico</p>
<b>Key Tasks and Responsibilities:</b>	<p>1) Accountable for the following range of council services and employees:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Economic Development</li> <li>• Climate Change</li> <li>• Strategic Housing</li> <li>• Communities</li> <li>• Leisure Strategy</li> <li>• Major Projects</li> <li>• Commercial Strategy</li> <li>• Waste</li> </ul> <p>Please note that these may be subject to change due to the needs of the organisation.</p>

	<p>2) Lead and manage an effective and forward-thinking team to ensure efficient and successful strategic and operational management.</p> <p>3) Promote employee engagement, learning and development and support the development of effective policies and services in response to the changing demands imposed by legislation, government intervention and service demands.</p> <p>4) Work as part of the Council's Corporate Management Team (CMT), providing strong, visible and collective leadership across the Council and its partners through compelling communication of our vision and values. Building a culture of high performance and inspiring colleagues to support the delivery of the council's strategic priorities.</p> <p>5) Act as the council's principal policy advisor on all services within the Directorate, providing guidance and support to the Chief Executive, Executive and Members.</p> <p>6) To attend meetings of the Executive, Council, Overview and Scrutiny Committees and other Committees and working groups, providing necessary briefings as required.</p> <p>7) To represent the Council at meetings with partners and other public and private sector agencies, voluntary groups and individuals at a local, regional and national level as required, helping to influence policies and strategies relevant to West Oxfordshire and the service.</p> <p>8) Ensure that the work of the Directorate is of a high quality and achieves its objectives by effective planning, performance, risk and financial management.</p> <p>9) Directly responsible for the proportion of the appropriate capital and gross revenue expenditure relating to the activities of the Directorate are managed, monitored and reviewed in accordance with corporate guidance and timetables, working closely with the Finance and Performance teams, as well as Service budget holders.</p> <p>10) To ensure a system of continuous review is embedded within the Directorate and to promote and foster an organisational culture in which challenge, innovation and creative solutions are the norm.</p> <p>11) Act as project sponsor or other programme executive role on appropriate projects as allocated by the Chief Executive.</p> <p>2) Any other duties that are commensurate with the level and grade of this post.</p> <p>The responsibilities outlined are not intended to totally encompass or define all tasks that may be required of the post-holder. The post-holder will be required to undertake duties commensurate to the grade of this position.</p>
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<p><b>Essential Requirements – Knowledge, Qualifications, Skills, Abilities and Experience:</b></p>	<p><b>Knowledge &amp; qualifications</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Knowledge and understanding of relevant service legislation and best practice</li> <li>• Educated to degree level in a relevant field or equivalent through senior management experience in an appropriate discipline Experience</li> <li>• Senior leadership experience, leading teams and responsibility for budgets and resources</li> <li>• Substantial experience of developing strategies and or managing projects and translating them into effective outcome changes for place and communities</li> </ul>
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	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• In-depth knowledge and experience of all aspects of service requirements, and an ability to shape the service to meet future challenges.</li> <li>• Proven ability to identify and drive forward opportunities, defining strategy and developing partnerships.</li> <li>• Experience in operating effectively within the democratic process, with the political acumen and skills to develop productive working relationships with Councillors and central government that command respect, trust and confidence Skills &amp; abilities</li> <li>• Experience must be sufficient in breadth and depth to enable the post holder to operate at the highest level of the organisation, providing strategic vision, direction, financial performance, leadership and management</li> <li>• Can demonstrate horizon scanning and future thinking to take advantage of opportunities, manage potential threats whilst continuously improving standards of service</li> <li>• Highly developed analytical, problem solving and negotiating skills with the ability to produce practical and creative solutions to ensure the achievement of corporate and strategic objectives.</li> <li>• Highly developed networking and influencing skills</li> <li>• Ability to tailor leadership style to respond to a variety of different situations and challenges</li> <li>• Personal integrity and positive role model of the behaviours and culture of the council</li> </ul>
<b>Desirable Requirements Qualifications, Skills and Abilities:</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Membership of relevant professional organisation</li> <li>• Relevant Management Qualification</li> </ul>
<b>General Accountabilities:</b>	<p>Safeguarding – The Council is committed to meeting its statutory and moral duties to safeguard and promote the welfare of children, young people under 18 years of age and adults at risk who are the recipients of its services and/or activities.</p> <p>The post holder is responsible for maintaining a safe work environment and ensuring as far as reasonably practicable that safe working practices are adopted by employees within this work environment.</p> <p>Work in compliance with the Codes of Conduct, Regulations and policies of the council.</p> <p>To support the response to a major incident, including taking up a designated role within the emergency management framework.</p> <p>To support the Chief Executive/Returning Officer in administering election responsibilities</p>
<b>Special Conditions:</b>	<p>You will be expected to work reasonable additional hours in line with the needs of the service.</p> <p>There may be a requirement to work at other locations to meet the needs of the business.</p> <p>BPSS check</p> <p>Full UK Driving Licence.</p> <p>Ability to travel / access to a vehicle for work purposes.</p>

	Politically restricted postholders are restricted from canvassing on behalf of a political party or for a person who is, or seeks to be, a candidate for election to a local authority, the House of Commons, or the European Parliament.		
<b>Date Reviewed:</b>	06/03/2026	<b>Reviewed By:</b>	Phil Martin
<b>Checked by HRBP</b>	Kathryn Dowell	<b>Date of Issue:</b>	

 <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 – 20 MAY 2026</b></p>
<p>Subject</p>	<p><b>APPOINTMENT OF ELECTORAL REGISTRATION OFFICER AND RETURNING OFFICER</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 Email: <a href="mailto:Giles.Hughes@westoxon.gov.uk">Giles.Hughes@westoxon.gov.uk</a></p>
<p>Report author</p>	<p>Andrew Brown. Head of Democratic and Electoral Services Email: <a href="mailto:Andrew.Brown@westoxon.gov.uk">Andrew.Brown@westoxon.gov.uk</a> Sharon Ellison, Electoral Services Manager Email: <a href="mailto:Sharon.Ellison@westoxon.gov.uk">Sharon.Ellison@westoxon.gov.uk</a></p>
<p>Summary/Purpose</p>	<p>To appoint an Electoral Registration Officer and Returning Officer.</p>
<p>Annexes</p>	<p>None</p>
<p>Recommendations</p>	<p>That Council resolves to:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>I. Appoint the Director of Governance and Regulatory Services, Andrea McCaskie, as Electoral Registration Officer and Returning Officer, with effect from 1 June 2026.</li> </ol>
<p>Corporate priorities</p>	<p>Working Together for West Oxfordshire</p>
<p>Key Decision</p>	<p>NO</p>
<p>Exempt</p>	<p>NO</p>
<p>Consultees</p>	<p>Performance and Appointments Committee Director of Governance and Regulatory Services</p>

## 1. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

- 1.1. Council is recommended to appoint an Electoral Registration Officer and Returning Officer with effect from the retirement of the current Chief Executive on 1 June 2026.

## 2. BACKGROUND

- 2.1. Under section 8 of the Representation of the People Act 1983, and section 35 (1) of the Representation of the Peoples Act 1983, the Council is required to appoint one of its officers to act as **Electoral Registration Officer** and also to appoint one of its officers as **Returning Officer** for the District Council.
- 2.2. Following the announcement that the current Chief Executive, Giles Hughes, is leaving the Council at the end of May 2026, the Performance and Appointments Committee on 4 February 2026 considered the arrangements for recruiting a new Chief Executive and appointing to the statutory roles they hold.
- 2.3. Council on 26 February 2026 appointed Phil Martin as the Council's next Chief Executive and designated the statutory role of Head of Paid Service, on the recommendation of the Performance and Appointments Committee.
- 2.4. The Performance and Appointments Committee on 4 February 2026 also resolved to: *Recommend to Council, subject to consultation with the Director of Governance and Regulatory Services (Monitoring Officer), to designate the Director of Governance and Regulatory Services (Monitoring Officer) as the Council's Returning Officer and Electoral Registration Officer from 1 June 2026 and undertake a role evaluation to ensure this additional responsibility is appropriately remunerated.*
- 2.5. The roles of Electoral Registration Officer and Returning Officer for the District council, as extended by various Acts of Parliament or Statutory Orders, cover such duties as:
- i. Returning Officer for parish and town councils in the District for the elections and for the conduct of parish polls;
  - ii. Acting Returning Officer for Parliamentary Elections where designated by the appropriate Government Minister (currently for the Witney Constituency);
  - iii. Deputy Returning Officer for County Council elections in relation to divisions within Oxfordshire
  - iv. Local Counting Officer in relation to national and regional referendums

## 3. RETURNING OFFICER AND ELECTORAL REGISTRATION OFFICER

- 3.1. The day-to-day work in support of Electoral Registrations and in running elections is carried out by the Electoral Services Team, led by Sharon Ellison a highly experienced Electoral Registration and Elections Manager.
- 3.2. For elections, the statutory and independent responsibility of the role of the Returning Officer is recognised by the payment of fees for the specific duties involved in each election. The fees constitute payments for a separate employment and in most cases are eligible for superannuation purposes. The fees are paid as part of the election account for each election and all costs, including employer's superannuation costs, are recovered from the body responsible for the assembly to which candidates are being elected, or for which a poll or

referendum is being carried out.

- 3.3. In Oxfordshire, the fees for local authority elections are set by the County Council, updated each year in relation to the national local government pay settlement, and all districts in the County apply the agreed fee scale. For elections to the UK National Parliament fees are prescribed in Fee Orders made by the relevant Government Minister, with the consent of Treasury Commissioners.
- 3.4. The fees are regarded as a special responsibility payment in relation to the independent duties carried out by the Returning Officer. They are personal to the Returning Officer and in addition to salary.
- 3.5. One other important issue is that of insurance. As the duties of Returning Officer for local authority elections derive from an extension of the core role of the officer concerned, and the duties as Acting Returning Officer for UK Parliamentary Elections are a specified extension of that role, it is appropriate that the Returning Officer and staff appointed by the Returning Officer in support of the role are covered for insurance purposes by the employing local authority. Such cover is part of the standard local government insurance available from the principal local authority insurers and is included in the cover offered by the Council's current insurers, Travelers.

#### **4. SCOPE OF RECOMMENDATION**

- 4.1. The recommendation at the top of this report, which Council is asked to agree encompasses the following:
  - i. In terms of the Representation of the People Act 1983 and all related legislation, Andrea McCaskie, is appointed as Electoral Registration Officer for the District.
  - ii. In terms of section 35 (1) of the Representation of the People Act 1983 and all related legislation, Andrea McCaskie is appointed as Returning Officer, with authority to act in that capacity for elections to the district council and parish and town councils, and for parish polls, within the district.
  - iii. The Returning Officer is also appointed or authorised to act in respect of all related electoral, poll or referendum duties, including in relation to County Council elections, elections for national and regional polls or referendums.
  - iv. The Electoral Registration Officer and the Returning Officer is authorised to appoint a deputy or deputies in relation to these roles, either on a standing appointment basis or for specific periods or specific elections, and either for all purposes or for specific purposes.
  - v. In relation to the duties of Returning Officer or any other electoral, referendum or polling duties arising from such appointment or arising from the appointment of the Electoral Registration Officer, the Returning Officer shall be entitled to be remunerated in accordance with the scale of fees approved by the Oxfordshire County Audit and Governance Committee for local elections, or the relevant scale of fees prescribed by a Fees Order in respect of national and regional Parliament elections, polls or referendums.
  - vi. In all cases where it is a legal requirement or normal practice to do so, fees paid to

the Returning Officer shall be superannuable, and the Council shall pay the appropriate employer's contribution to the superannuation fund, recovering such employer's contribution from central government or other agencies where this can be done.

- vii. In relation to the conduct of local authority elections and polls, and elections to the United Kingdom Parliament, and all other electoral duties where the Council is entitled by law to do so, the Council shall take out and maintain in force insurance indemnifying the Council and the Returning Officer against legal expenses reasonably incurred in connection with the defense of any proceedings brought against the Council or the Returning Officer and/or the cost of holding another election in the event of the original elections being declared invalid (provided that such proceedings or invalidation are the result of the accidental contravention of the Representation of the People Acts or other legislations governing the electoral process, or accidental breach of any ministerial or other duty by the Returning Officer or any other person employed by or officially acting for him in connection with the election or poll).

## **5. ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS**

- 5.1. The Council has a statutory duty to make appoint a suitably qualified senior officer to these statutory roles. No other options have been identified.

## **6. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS**

- 6.1. The Representation of the People Act 1983 makes provision for a scale of expenses to be fixed for the purpose of determining the Returning Officer's expenditure.
- 6.2. The Director of Governance and Regulatory Services will be paid a small additional allowance for taking on the responsibility of being Electoral Registration Officer. This cost can be met from within existing budgets.
- 6.3. Payments for the responsibilities of the Returning Officer at local elections are remunerated separately as part of the overall costs of running elections.
- 6.4. Parliamentary elections have their own fees and charges, set by The Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government (MHCLG) and appropriate expenditure on these elections is reclaimed through central government.

## **7. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS**

- 7.1. As set out in the report under the Representation of the People Act 1983 the Council is required to appoint an Electoral Registration Officer and a Returning Officer for the District Council. Any failure to do so could lead to the Council being challenged for failing to meet its statutory duties.
- 7.2. Regulation 4 of The Parish and Community Meetings (Polls) Rules 1987 requires that, in the event of a parish poll being required, the Council shall appoint an officer of the Council to be Returning Officer.

## **8. RISK ASSESSMENT**

8.1. As set out in the report, the Council is legally obliged to designate an officer as Electoral Registration Officer and Returning Officer.

8.2. The responsibilities are personal and carry significant risk to the individual. Indemnity insurance is provided in all cases to mitigate the risk of a legal challenge.

## 9. EQUALITIES IMPACT

9.1. The Council's employment policies and practices are consistent with equalities legislation.

## 10. CLIMATE AND ECOLOGICAL EMERGENCIES IMPLICATIONS

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

## 11. BACKGROUND PAPERS

11.1. None

(END)

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