WEST OXFORDSHIRE DISTRICT COUNCIL

Minutes of the meeting of the

Overview and Scrutiny Committee

Held in the Committee Room 1, Council Offices, Woodgreen, Witney, Oxfordshire OX28 1NB at 5.30 pm on **Wednesday, 8 July 2026**

PRESENT

Councillors: Andrew Beaney (Chair), Adam Clements, Steve Cosier, Rachel Crouch, Sarah Evans, Liam Mackenzie, Stuart McCarroll, Paul Marsh, Hannah Massie, Michele Mead, Carl Rylett, Simon Watson, Sandra Simpson, Sarah Veasey and Elizabeth Poskitt

Officers: Andrew Brown (Head of Democratic and Electoral Services), Andrea McCaskie (Director of Governance and Regulatory Services), Ana Prelici (Senior Democratic Services Officer), Chris Hargraves (Head of Planning), Phil Shaw (Planning Services Transformation Lead) and Andrew Thomson (Planning Policy Manager)

Other Councillors in attendance: Sandra Coleman and Nick Field-Johnson

142 Apologies for Absence and Temporary Appointments

Apologies were received from;

- Cllr Genny Early who was substituted by Cllr Sandra Simpson
- Cllr David Melvin who was substituted by Cllr Elizabeth Poskitt
- Cllr Alex Wilson who was substituted by Cllr Sarah Veasey

143 Declarations of Interest

There were no declarations of interest.

144 Minutes of Previous Meeting

Cllr Paul Marsh proposed agreeing the minutes, this was seconded by Cllr Cosier.

The minutes were agreed unanimously.

The Overview and Scrutiny Committee resolved to:

Approve the minutes of the Committee meeting held 3 June 2026.

145 Chair's announcements

The Chair proposed reordering the agenda so that agenda items 5. Participation of the Public and 6. Regulation 19 Draft Submission Local Plan for Public Consultation be taken last. This was agreed by the Committee.

146 Participation of the Public

Nick Jones, Chief Executive Officer of the Chipping Norton Skatepark Trust, spoke on behalf of the proposed Chipping Norton Community Sports and Social Hub and local football, rugby and cricket clubs.

He outlined proposals for a fully funded sports and social hub on land gifted by the Field Reads Trust, including a 3G pitch, grass pitches, clubhouse and a range of sports, recreational and community facilities. He advised that the project had received community support and that developers had indicated a commitment to fund the scheme based on the existing Local Plan allocation of 1,200 homes.

Mr Jones objected to Policy CN3 in the Regulation 19 Draft Local Plan, arguing that while it referred to the hub as a benefit of development, it did not provide sufficiently robust requirements to secure its delivery or funding. He expressed concern that the proposed reduction in housing numbers from 1,200 to 750 dwellings would create a funding shortfall and suggested either increasing the allocation or increasing developer contribution rates. He also requested that the hub be identified as a priority within the Infrastructure Delivery Plan, supported by a costed funding strategy, and that the policy include stronger wording requiring developer contributions to be secured and ring-fenced.

In response to a question, Mr Jones confirmed that the proposed hub would serve not only Chipping Norton but also the surrounding villages and wider area. The Chair thanked the speaker for his contribution.

147 Approval of Regulation 19 Draft Submission Local Plan for Public Consultation

The purpose of the item was for Members to consider the proposed pre-submission draft West Oxfordshire Local Plan 2043 including the timetable for formally publishing the draft plan in accordance with legislative requirements.

The Committee considered the Regulation 19 Draft Local Plan and received a presentation from officers addressing questions submitted in advance of the meeting. Members were advised that the Plan would cover the period 2025 to 2043 and included a spatial strategy, housing and employment allocations, development management policies, area strategies and a delivery and monitoring framework. Subject to approval, the Plan would be published for public consultation before being submitted for examination later in the year.

The Executive Member for Planning and Infrastructure thanked officers, the Local Plan Working Group and her predecessor for their work in preparing the Plan and emphasised the importance of the pre-decision scrutiny process undertaken by the committee in identifying any recommendations to be considered by the Executive before consultation commenced.

A significant element of the discussion focused on infrastructure delivery and whether supporting infrastructure could realistically be delivered alongside planned growth. Members highlighted concerns regarding the availability of funding, particularly for major transport and utility infrastructure, and questioned the extent to which reliance could be placed on developer contributions. Officers advised that the Plan had adopted an infrastructure-first approach, supported by a forthcoming Infrastructure Delivery Plan, site-specific infrastructure requirements and the use of Grampian conditions where necessary to prevent occupation of development until required infrastructure was available. Members welcomed the stronger emphasis on infrastructure delivery but noted that future investment from utility providers and Government would remain critical.

Members discussed wastewater infrastructure at length, expressing concern about the ability of Thames Water to provide the upgrades necessary to support planned housing growth. Questions were raised regarding capacity constraints at sewage treatment works, the timing of upgrades and the risk of development proceeding ahead of infrastructure improvements. Officers advised that extensive engagement had taken place with Thames Water, supported by a Water Cycle Study, and that policies had been included within the Plan to ensure development aligned with available wastewater infrastructure. Members remained concerned about the uncertainty surrounding future upgrades and emphasised the importance of robust safeguards and monitoring arrangements.

The Committee considered housing growth requirements and noted that the proposed housing requirement reflected both West Oxfordshire's assessed needs and a continuing contribution towards Oxford City's unmet housing need. Officers explained the rationale for the stepped housing trajectory, the inclusion of contingency within the overall housing supply and the monitoring arrangements that would be used to track delivery. Discussion took place regarding strategic allocations already progressing through the planning process, the relationship between emerging planning applications and the Local Plan, and the need to retain sufficient flexibility should allocated sites fail to be delivered.

Transport and mass rapid transit formed a further area of discussion. Members sought clarification on the purpose and likely form of the safeguarded mass rapid transit corridor and questioned how such infrastructure might be funded and delivered. Officers confirmed that Oxfordshire County Council was undertaking further work on transport options and that the Plan intentionally retained flexibility whilst safeguarding the principle of a future mass rapid transit system. Members also discussed wider transport issues, including the relationship between the A40 corridor and the A4095, active travel infrastructure and the need for transport modelling to reflect local constraints and network bottlenecks.

The Committee also examined the Plan's environmental and climate policies. Members noted strengthened policies relating to climate change, biodiversity net gain, green infrastructure, flood risk and protection of the Cotswolds National Landscape. Discussion focused on the effectiveness of biodiversity net gain requirements, the delivery of nature recovery objectives, renewable energy proposals and the balance between climate ambitions and the protection of heritage assets. Members also raised concerns regarding the protection of agricultural land and the need for the Local Plan to better reflect the role of farming, food production and food security within West Oxfordshire's predominantly rural economy. Officers advised that policies protecting best and most versatile agricultural land had been included but agreed to review whether additional emphasis was required.

Members discussed several site-specific and policy-specific matters, including sports and recreation provision in Chipping Norton and Carterton, future employment land requirements, the role of community master planning, tourism accommodation, settlement hierarchy classifications and the need to provide clearer explanations of how settlements had been categorised. Clarification was also sought on a number of drafting issues, omissions and technical corrections identified within the draft document.

Throughout the meeting, officers advised that comments identifying factual inaccuracies, drafting changes, inconsistencies or omissions would be considered through an addendum report to be presented to the Executive, whilst broader policy matters could also be raised through the formal consultation process.

The report, subject to the recommendations discussed, was proposed, seconded and unanimously endorsed for submission to Council.

That Overview and Scrutiny Committee resolved to:

1. Note the report.
2. Agree the following recommendations to the Executive:
    i. That consideration is given to ensuring that development does not box in the Witney Sewage Treatment Works (Land South of Witney Strategic Location for Growth).
    ii. That Mass Rapid Transport is defined within the Local Plan as being a fast, high quality, high frequency mode of transport.
    iii. That the protection of best and most versatile agricultural land is strengthened within the Local Plan.
    iv. That the Local Plan recognises that there is more than one football club in Carterton and is more balanced in giving other sports the same weight and indicators (Land North of Carterton Strategic Location for Growth).
    v. That the Local Plan recognises that there is more than one football club in Carterton and is more balanced in giving other sports the same weight and indicators (Land North of Carterton Strategic Location for Growth).
    vi. That the example of a specific business relocating is removed (Land West of Witney Strategic Location for Growth).

148 **Overview and Scrutiny Annual Report**

At the Chair’s discretion this was taken as the first substantive item on the agenda.

The Committee considered the Overview and Scrutiny Annual Report, which summarised the work undertaken during the 2025/26 year and invited comments prior to its submission to Council. The report was introduced by the Senior Democratic Services Officer who made the following points;

- Advised of a minor amendment to paragraph 4.3 to clarify that four recommendations had been made to Oxfordshire County Council regarding proposed changes to fire services, following referral of a Council motion to the Committee.
- 75 recommendations had been made to the Executive during the year, of which 45 had been fully or partially accepted. It was considered that this demonstrated an appropriate balance between constructive challenge and effective scrutiny.
- The report also highlighted improvements to the operation of Task and Finish Groups and proposed further enhancements, including improved scoping arrangements, the pre-submission of questions on reports, and formal reporting back from Task and Finish Groups to the parent Committee.

During discussion, the Chair suggested that the Chair of any Task and Finish Group reporting to Overview and Scrutiny should be a member of the Committee to ensure effective feedback and accountability. It was also suggested that members should have greater input into the initial scoping of Task and Finish Groupst. The Chair further commented that comfort breaks during meetings should be taken at the Chair's discretion rather than at fixed hourly intervals.

The report, subject to the amendments discussed, was proposed, seconded and unanimously approved for submission to Council.

That Overview and Scrutiny Committee resolved to:

1. Approve the report for submission to Council.

149 **Report back on recommendations**

The Committee received the Executive's responses to recommendations previously submitted by Overview and Scrutiny. Members noted that the responses relating to the Woodford Way item and the Community Safety Partnership, considered by the Committee on 26 March, had been delayed as the Executive had not considered them until its June meeting. Responses were also received in relation to recommendations made by the Committee on 3 June concerning the Crowdfunding Platform and the Quarterly Service Performance Report. The Executive's comments and whether recommendations had been agreed were set out in the report and were noted by the Committee.

150 Committee Work Programme

The Committee considered its future work programme. Members discussed the scheduling of upcoming items and noted a proposal to bring the Infrastructure Funding Statement, an annual report on developer contributions, to the Committee in October before its consideration by the Executive.

Concern was raised that the September agenda was particularly full, including quarterly performance reports, leisure, youth development and Woodford Way items. It was suggested that the Youth Development report could be reprogrammed to a later meeting, as it was considered less time sensitive, to ensure sufficient time was available for all items. Members also discussed the potential use of advance questions on quarterly reports to help manage meeting time more effectively, although it was noted that this would depend on reports being available with sufficient notice.

Members sought clarification on the planned September update regarding the Woodford Way project. It was explained that the update would provide responses to issues raised by the Committee at its earlier consideration of the matter, including traffic surveys and other information requested by members. Concern was expressed that a previously requested feasibility study had not been undertaken, and members sought assurance that the evidence available would be sufficient to address the Committee's concerns.

During discussion, members also suggested that significant items such as Youth Development and Mental Health should, where possible, be scheduled earlier on agendas to ensure they received appropriate consideration before member fatigue became a factor. The Chair noted this suggestion and confirmed that agenda ordering remained at the Chair's discretion.

The Committee noted the work programme and proposed scheduling amendments.

151 Executive Work Programme

This was noted without discussion.

152 Meeting Start Time

It was proposed that the meeting time remain 5:30pm. This was seconded, voted on and agreed unanimously.

Overview and Scrutiny Committee

08/July2026

The Meeting closed at Time Not Specified

CHAIR