



WEST OXFORDSHIRE
DISTRICT COUNCIL

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Name and Date of Committee	COUNCIL – 29 JANUARY 2025
Subject	PROGRAMME OF MEETINGS 2025/26
Wards Affected	None
Accountable Member	Councillor Andy Graham, Leader of the Council. Email: andy.graham@westoxon.gov.uk
Accountable Officer	Giles Hughes, Chief Executive. Email: giles.hughes@westoxon.gov.uk
Report Author	Andrew Brown, Head of Democratic and Electoral Services. Email: democratic@westoxon.gov.uk
Purpose	To invite Council to set a programme of Council and Committee meetings for the civic year 2025–2026.
Annexes	Annex A – Programme of Meetings for 2025/26 (calendar format). Annex B – Programme of Meetings for 2025/26 (list format).
Recommendations	That Council Resolves to: <ol style="list-style-type: none">1. Approve the Programme of Meetings for 2025/26, as detailed at Annex A and Annex B;2. Delegate authority to the Director of Governance, in consultation with Group Leaders, to make changes to the programme of meetings, in the event that there is any future decision of the Council to change the committee structure, frequencies of committees or sub-committees, or committee remits that impacts the programme of meetings;3. Delegate authority to the Head of Democratic and Electoral Services to set meeting dates for committees and sub-committees that meet on an ad-hoc basis (Performance and Appointments Committee, Development Control Committee, Licensing Committee, Licensing Panel, Miscellaneous Licensing Sub-Committee, Standards Sub-Committee), member training, member briefing sessions, and any further working groups

	established by the Council.
Corporate Priorities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Working Together for West Oxfordshire
Key Decision	NO
Exempt	NO
Consultees/ Consultation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Management Team • Planning Services • Licensing • Financial Services • Counter Fraud • Internal Audit • Executive Members

1. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY AND BACKGROUND

- 1.1** Council is responsible for setting the dates and times of Council and Committee meetings.
- 1.2** This report recommends a schedule of Council and Committee meetings for 2025/26 (June 2025 until May 2026 inclusive). Meeting dates up to and including May 2025 have already been set. Dates for meetings of the Executive are a matter for the Leader of the Council and are included in the programme for completeness.
- 1.3** Setting meeting dates in advance, allows for good governance, open, efficient and effective decision making, helping members and officers to plan their workloads & availability.

2. PROGRAMME OF MEETINGS FOR 2025/26

- 2.1** The programme of meetings for 2025/26 has been formulated on a similar basis to recent years and is based on the current committee structure. Council is recommended to approve the programme of meetings as set out in Annexes A & B. Should Council decide to make changes to its committee structure in future, a revised programme may need to be prepared and circulated. It is recommended that authority is delegated to the Director of Governance, in consultation with Group Leaders, to make changes to the programme as required following any such decision.
- 2.2** Meetings of Overview and Scrutiny Committee are scheduled to be held on the Wednesday prior to each meeting of the Executive. This is to enable the Overview and Scrutiny Committee to subject selected Executive reports to pre-decision scrutiny, with time allowed for the Committee's recommendations to be produced and then responded to by the Executive. Executive reports are subject to a robust internal clearance process. The timing of the process is such that Executive reports will not normally be cleared for publication when the Overview and Scrutiny Committee agenda is published and will need to follow as late papers a couple of days later.
- 2.3** The principle used in timetabling meetings is that business needs to take place in a timely manner, but that the broader needs of members will be taken into account. Oxfordshire school holiday dates have been avoided wherever possible, so that it does not adversely affect the overall meetings programme or the cycle of meetings. School holiday dates are shown in grey in Annex A.
- 2.4** District Councillors may also serve as County Councillors and/or Town or Parish Councillors. Meetings of Oxfordshire County Council have been set up to May 2026, with most meetings of that authority starting at 10.30am, 1.00pm or 2.00pm. There are no clashes of Cabinet and Council meetings at Oxfordshire County Council, with Executive or Council meetings at West Oxfordshire District Council. Where committee meetings of the two authorities clash any Members who are on both committees would be able to arrange a substitute for one meeting or the other.
- 2.5** Given that many of the officers who deliver the work of the Council and attend meetings are currently employed by Publica Group, and work across at least two other local

authorities, care has been taken to avoid Council and Committee meetings at West Oxfordshire District Council clashing with major meetings of Forest of Dean District Council and Cotswold District Council where possible. In some cases, full Council meetings of West Oxfordshire District Council will be held on the same day as full Council meetings of Cotswold District Council but with different start times (2.00pm and 6.00pm respectively).

3. COMMITTEES AND SUB-COMMITTEES THAT MEET AS REQUIRED

3.1 The following committees and sub-committees will generally only meet when there is specific business to consider, and this report seeks a delegation to the Head of Democratic and Electoral Services to set meeting dates for these committees and sub-committees as required:

- Performance and Appointments Committee – Responsible for matters relating to the appointment, performance, and dismissal of the Council's statutory officers;
- Licensing Committee – Responsible for considering licensing policies and determining certain licensing applications where representations have been received;
- Development Control Committee – Responsible for determining applications which in the opinion of the Senior Officer with responsibility for Planning, are of significant local importance, e.g. major housing development, or where either the Uplands or Lowlands area sub-committee proposes to make a decision which would be unlawful, seriously undermine policy, set adverse precedent or result in substantial costs being awarded against the Council.
- The Standards Sub-Committee – Responsible for conducting hearings to, in consultation with an Independent Person, hear allegations that a Member or Co-opted Member has failed to comply with the Code of Conduct of Members.
- Miscellaneous Licensing Sub-Committee and Licensing Panel meet as required to determine certain licensing applications. Regular dates are included in the programme which can be used for sub-committee meetings or panel hearings. These will be cancelled where there is no business and at times additional dates may be needed outside of the regular cycle of scheduled meeting dates.

4. MEETING START TIMES

4.1 No changes are proposed in this report to the current start times of meetings. Under the Council Procedure Rules of the Constitution, committees and sub-committees may vary the timing of their meetings at their first meeting of the municipal year. The existing start times are as follows:

- Council meetings are held at 2.00pm;
- Overview and Scrutiny Committee meetings start at 5.30pm;
- Audit and Governance Committee meetings are held at 6.00pm;

- Development Control Committee meetings start at 10.00am;
- Area Planning Sub-Committee meetings are held at 2.00pm;
- Licensing Committee, Licensing Sub-Committee and Licensing Panel meetings start at 10.00am;
- Standards Sub-Committee meetings start at 10.00am;
- Executive meetings start at 2.00pm, however that is a matter for the Leader rather than Council.

5. TRAINING AND BRIEFING DATES

- 5.1 This report seeks a delegation to the Head of Democratic and Electoral Services to set dates for member induction, training and briefing sessions. Member briefing sessions will continue to take place monthly at 5.30pm on the first Thursday of each month and at other times as required.

6. MEMBER WORKING GROUPS

- 6.1 The Council may establish informal cross-party member working groups to perform particular tasks. Recent examples include the Constitution Working Group and the Local Plan Cross-Party Member Working Group. This report seeks a delegation to the Head of Democratic and Electoral Services to set meeting dates for current and future member working groups.

7. ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS

- 7.1 Should Council wish to consider alternative proposals, it could request that a further report is presented to a future meeting.

8. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

- 8.1 Members are entitled to claim mileage expenses for attending meetings and such costs can be met from existing budgets. The number of meetings within the recommended meeting programme is similar to previous years. It is anticipated that the majority of training will be delivered internally and will not therefore have a financial impact. Council has allocated a budget of £4,000 per annum which is available to fund externally delivered training sessions and members' attendance at external training courses. There are no further direct financial implications.

9. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

- 9.1 The responsibility for setting meeting dates for Council and Committee meetings rests with Council under the Local Government Act 1972 (Schedule 12). In a year of ordinary elections the Annual Council meeting must be held on the eighth day after the retirement of councillors, or such other day within twenty-one days of the date of retirement. In non-election years the Annual Council meeting may be held on any date in March, April or May.

10. RISK ASSESSMENT

10.1 If Council did not agree a programme of meetings for 2025/26, there is significant risk that decision making would not be able to take place in a timely, effective and open & transparent manner. There are no other significant risks in relation to this report.

11. EQUALITIES IMPACT

11.1 The recommendations are not expected to differentially impact any groups with protected characteristics. Meetings are held in accessible venues.

12. CLIMATE AND ECOLOGICAL EMERGENCIES IMPLICATIONS

Members are required to attend meetings in person, which will result in emissions associated with journeys to and from meetings. Members have the right to choose to have paper copies of agenda packs, however where possible, Members are strongly encouraged to access papers using the Modern.gov App or the Extranet website.

13. BACKGROUND PAPERS

None.

(END)