



WEST OXFORDSHIRE
DISTRICT COUNCIL

WEST OXFORDSHIRE DISTRICT COUNCIL

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

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

1. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY AND BACKGROUND

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

2. COMMITTEE CHAIRS AND VICE-CHAIRS

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

3. APPOINTMENT OF SUB-COMMITTEES

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

4. APPOINTMENT OF WORKING GROUPS

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

5. SUBSTITUTIONS

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

6. EXTERNAL COMMITTEES

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

7. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

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

8. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

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

9. RISK ASSESSMENT

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

10. EQUALITIES IMPACT

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

11. ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS

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

I2. BACKGROUND PAPERS

None.

(END)