

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, 4 June 2025**

PRESENT

Councillors: Andrew Beaney (Chair), Genny Early (Vice-Chair), Adam Clements, Steve Cosier, Liz Leffman, Nick Leverton, Dan Levy, Paul Marsh, Stuart McCarroll, Michele Mead, Ruth Smith and Alistair Wray

Officers: Andrew Brown (Head of Democratic and Electoral Services), Alison Borrett (Senior Performance Analyst), Chris Hargraves (Head of Planning), Andrew Thomson (Planning Policy Manager), Andrew Turner (Business Manager - Assets and Council Priorities) and Gemma Moreing (Business Information and Performance Lead)

Other Councillors in attendance: Geoff Saul, Andy Graham, Hugo Ashton, Duncan Enright and Alaric Smith

8 Apologies for Absence and Temporary Appointments

Apologies were noted from Councillors Mark Walker and Alex Wilson.

9 Declarations of Interest

There were no declarations of interest.

10 Minutes of Previous Meeting

The Committee considered the draft minutes of the meeting held on 21 May 2025. Head of Democratic and Electoral Services explained that the start and finish times had been corrected and the names of proposers and seconders added.

With those amendments, approval of the minutes were proposed by Councillor Cosier, seconded by Councillor Wray and agreed by the Committee.

RESOLVED: The Committee APPROVED the minutes of the meeting held on 21 May 2025.

11 Chair's announcements

The Chair drew the Committee's attention to the exempt report at agenda item 12 and explained that the Committee would need to resolve to enter into private session for consideration of that item.

12 Participation of the Public

There was no participation of the public.

13 Report back on recommendations

There were no recommendations arising from the previous committee meeting.

14 2024/25 Quarterly Service Review Q4

The Leader of the Council introduced the report detailing the Council's operational performance at the end of 2024-25 Quarter Four (Q4) and highlighted the following key points:

- A Youth Development Officer had been in post since February and was engaging with external organisations.
- The Draft Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) Charging Schedule Examination would be taking place on 10 June 2025 and the Council aimed to implement CIL by August.
- A revised Net Zero policy for the Salt Cross Area Action Plan (AAP) had been submitted to the Planning Inspectorate.
- Round 4 of the Westhive funding allocations would be announced publicly on Monday. There had been a large number of applications and a diverse range of community projects would be funded.

The Senior Performance Analyst highlighted the indicators that were above target, including planning application timescales of all types, customer satisfaction, missed bins and leisure visits. Processing times for Council Tax claims and changes of circumstances were below target following a Christmas backlog and increased contacts. The number of affordable homes delivered was also below target at 198 for the year. The target was 274 and 218 were now expected as some schemes had slipped into the next reporting year.

In discussion the Committee noted that:

- Officers had been working with Ubico to improve processes and reduce the number of missed bin collections, with a focus on repeated missed collections.
- The Youth Development Officer post was very welcome and was already making a positive impact.
- There was some concern about the reduction in the recycling rate although it was recognised that this was a national trend and that the Council's target of 62% was very ambitious.
- Options such as curbside collection could potentially make a difference to the recycling rate but the Council may not wish to do that.
- The current leisure visits KPI was written into the KPI and was uplifted annually. Leisure usage would be expected to increase due to population growth but benchmarking was difficult, particularly with private sector providers.

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- The increased number of Westhive applications was welcome.
- The Committee would welcome an update on Carterton Leisure Centre decarbonisation in a future report.

In response to a question, the Leader of the Council offered to report back with more detail on the aims and objectives of the Youth Development Officer post.

The Leader also agreed to follow up with the Communications Team about whether the Council could do more through its communications activities to increase the recycling rate.

The Senior Performance Analyst agreed to:

- Take away a suggestion that there could be more information about funding contributions on the Westhive website and to come back with a written response.
- Provide a written response on the timescales for the markets tender.
- Provide a written update on the Windrush application for Lottery funding.

The Chair thanked the Leader and the Senior Performance Analyst for their report and attendance.

RESOLVED: The Committee NOTED the report.

15

West Oxfordshire Local Plan 2041

The Executive Member for Planning introduced the Local Plan 2041 Preferred Policy Options Consultation Paper report, stating that site allocations would be considered in the coming months. This was not a draft Local Plan, rather a set of policies on which the Council wanted to receive feedback from members, the public, town and parish councils, site promoters and others. The Local Plan Working Group had considered the proposals over a series of meetings and there had been two all-member briefing sessions held. The Executive Member extended his thanks to the planning team during what had been a particularly busy period.

The Committee considered the report page by page, asked questions and made a number of suggestions.

The Committee's list of suggestions is included as an annex to these minutes.

The Executive Member thanked the Committee for its input and said that the preferred sites would be coming forward to the Overview and Scrutiny Committee and the Executive in August or September 2025.

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The Committee thanked the Executive Member, officers and the Local Plan Working Group for all their work.

RESOLVED: The Committee

1. NOTED the report.
2. RECOMMENDED to the Executive to include the suggested amendments contained within the Annex be included in the final version West Oxfordshire Local Plan 2041.

16 Committee Work Programme

The Committee noted that the membership of the Leisure Task and Finish Group did not include a member of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee. Councillor Stuart McCarroll was appointed as Chair of the Leisure Task and Finish Group.

The Committee asked to invite the Youth Development Officer to the September meeting.

The Head of Democratic and Electoral Services agreed to look at the timeline for the Public Conveniences Task and Finish Group.

17 Executive Work Programme

Councillor Cosier suggested that the Executive Member for Environment should be notified of the Environment Agency's new flooding maps.

18 Exclusion of Press and Public

The Committee resolved to exclude the press and the public from the meeting in accordance with section 100A of the Local Government Act 1972 on the grounds that their presence could involve the likely disclosure of exempt information as described in paragraph 3 of Schedule 12A of the Local Government Act 1972, with the public interest in maintaining the exemption outweighing the public interest in disclosing the information.

19 Knights Court Business Case

The Committee considered a report on the next steps regarding a council owned asset that was under review. The report was considered in private session. The Executive Member for Finance and the Business Manager for Assets and Council Priorities presented the report and answered questions.

The Committee welcomed the report.

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RESOLVED: The Committee NOTED the report.

The Meeting closed at 8.34 pm

CHAIR