



WEST OXFORDSHIRE  
DISTRICT COUNCIL

## WEST OXFORDSHIRE DISTRICT COUNCIL

Name and Date of Committee	<b>ANNUAL COUNCIL – WEDNESDAY 20 MAY 2026</b>
Subject	<b>ESTABLISHMENT AND APPOINTMENT OF COMMITTEES, SUB-COMMITTEES AND WORKING GROUPS, INCLUDING SUBSTITUTE MEMBERS</b>
Wards Affected	All
Accountable Member	Councillor Andy Graham – Leader of the Council Email: <a href="mailto:andy.graham@westoxon.gov.uk">andy.graham@westoxon.gov.uk</a>
Accountable Officer	Andrea McCaskie, Director of Governance and Regulatory Services Email: <a href="mailto:andrea.mccaskie@westoxon.gov.uk">andrea.mccaskie@westoxon.gov.uk</a>
Report Author	Andrew Brown, Head of Democratic and Electoral Services Email: <a href="mailto:andrew.brown@westoxon.gov.uk">andrew.brown@westoxon.gov.uk</a>
Purpose	To establish the Council’s committees for the 2026/27 Civic Year and appoint members to committees, working groups and external committees.
Annexes	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)
Recommendations	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)