



WEST OXFORDSHIRE
DISTRICT COUNCIL

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Name and date of Committee	COUNCIL – 20 MAY 2026
Subject	ADOPTION OF THE COUNCIL'S CONSTITUTION AND UPDATED FINANCIAL PROCEDURE RULES
Wards affected	ALL
Accountable member	Councillor Alaric Smith, Executive Member for Finance & Chair of the Constitution Working Group Email: Alaric.Smith@westoxon.gov.uk
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Summary/Purpose	To agree the Scheme of Officer Delegations, other than those relating to Executive functions, and to adopt the Council's Constitution, as amended, as is required at the Annual Council meeting. To approve the revised Financial Procedure Rules March 2026 (Annex A).
Annexes	Annex A – Financial Procedure Rules March 2026 Annex B – Extract of Part 5A Council Procedure Rules: Rule 9 Duration of Meetings
Recommendation(s)	That the Council resolves to:

	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Adopt the Council’s Constitution and agree the Scheme of Officer Delegations, other than those relating to Executive functions, as set out in Part 4 of the Constitution. 2. Approve the updated Financial Procedure Rules attached as Annex A. 3. Agree to exclude the Strategic Planning Committee and Development Management Sub-Committee from the duration of meeting rule, as shown in Annex B.
Corporate priorities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Putting Residents First • Working Together for West Oxfordshire
Key Decision	NO
Exempt	NO
Consultees	Not Applicable

1. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY AND BACKGROUND

- 1.1** Part 5A rule 2.2 of the Council's Constitution requires the Council to adopt its Constitution and Officer Scheme of Delegation for non-executive functions at the Annual Council Meeting.
- 1.2** The Council's Constitution sets out how the Council operates, how decisions are taken and the procedures which are followed to ensure that decision-making is efficient, transparent and accountable to local people.
- 1.3** The Council has a legal duty to publish a constitution, which should be reviewed at least annually. The Council has an established, cross-party Constitution Working Group, which meets regularly and makes recommendations to Council regarding amendments to the Constitution, keeping it up to date with changes to legislation, governance practice and the wishes of the Council.
- 1.4** This report recommends that Council approves the updated Financial Procedure Rules 2026 (FPR's), as reviewed by the Constitution Working Group and agreed by the Audit and Governance Committee on 19 March 2026. The updated Financial Procedure Rules are attached at Annex A.
- 1.5** Council is also recommended to exclude planning meetings from the rule limiting the duration of meetings, following the replacement of two area planning sub-committees with a single district-wide Development Management Sub-Committee.

2. ADOPTION OF THE CONSTITUTION

- 2.1** The current version of the Council's Constitution for approval by Council can be found at the following link: [v2.18 of the Constitution](#).
- 2.2** Version 2.18 of the Constitution incorporates the changes to planning committees agreed by full Council on 25 March 2026, including merging the two area sub-committees into a single, district-wide planning sub-committee, which took effect at the start of the 2026/27 civic year.
- 2.3** The non-executive scheme of officer delegations for non-executive functions is set out in Part 4 of the Constitution. No changes are proposed. The only change to the Constitution that Council is asked to consider at the Annual Meeting is to the Financial Procedure Rules.

3. FINANCIAL PROCEDURE RULES (FPRS's)

- 3.1** The FPR's were last reviewed in July 2015. There have been numerous organisational changes since 2015, the most recent being Publica Transition Phase 1 and Phase 2. The revised FPRs have been significantly amended to reflect these changes.
- 3.2** The first draft of the revised FPR's was reviewed by the Constitution Working Group (CWG) on 19 November 2025.

- 3.3 The updated FPRs were then considered by the Audit and Governance Committee (A&GC) at its meeting on 19 March 2026 because the Committee has responsibility for advising changes in respect of financial and contract rules. The FPR's were approved at that meeting.
- 3.4 Following the approval of the FPR's at the A&GC, it was realised that two paragraphs in the original FPR's were not included in the revised version of the FPR's taken through CWG and A&GC.
- 3.5 These two paragraphs have been added to Section F: Assets and are shown in red text in Annex A.
- 3.6 Annex A contains the final version of the FPR's March 2026 for approval by Council.

4. DURATION OF MEETINGS RULE

- 4.1 Council on 25 March 2026 agreed to replace the Lowlands and Uplands area planning sub-committees with a single district-wide Development Management Sub-Committee. In debate, Members highlighted that Council Procedure Rule 9 (in Part 5A of the Constitution) would need to be reconsidered, given the expected workload of the single sub-committee (at least in the short term). In addition, it would be inappropriate for a planning meeting to immediately move to a vote on an item under discussion after 3 hours have elapsed, given the need for planning applications to be properly considered and debated before being determined.
- 4.2 If a Development Management Sub-Committee agenda included too much business for the Sub-Committee to deal with in a single sitting, the Sub-Committee would have the option to adjourn at the end of an application and reconvene on the "overspill" date (the following Monday at 2pm) for the remaining business. In governance terms this would be a continuation of the same meeting rather than a separate meeting with its own agenda.
- 4.3 Council is recommended to exclude both the Strategic Planning Committee and the Development Management Sub-Committee from the "3 hour rule", as is already the case with other regulatory meetings (e.g. licensing).
- 4.4 The proposed amendment to Rule 9 is attached at Annex B, with changes shown in red text and strikethrough text.

5. ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS

- 5.1 Council may choose to ask the Constitution Working Group to consider specific constitutional issues and report back with proposed changes.
- 5.2 Council may choose not to approve the FPR's but this is not recommended as the existing version no longer reflects current organisational arrangements.
- 5.3 Council could choose not to exclude planning meetings from the duration of meetings rule but this is not recommended due to the need for the new committee structure to operate effectively and the risks associated with regulatory decisions being challenged.

6. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

6.1 There are no direct financial implications arising from the recommendations in this report.

7. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

7.1 The Council has a duty to keep the Constitution up to date under S9P of the Local Government Act 2000. There are no other legal implications arising from this report.

8. RISK ASSESSMENT

8.1 By not regularly considering updates to the Council's Constitution, which sets out how the Council operates, how decisions are taken and the procedures which are followed, there is a risk to ensuring that decision-making is efficient, transparent and accountable to local people.

9. EQUALITIES IMPACT

9.1 None.

10. CLIMATE AND ECOLOGICAL EMERGENCIES IMPLICATIONS

None.

11. BACKGROUND PAPERS

11.1 None.

(END)