



WEST OXFORDSHIRE  
DISTRICT COUNCIL

**WEST OXFORDSHIRE DISTRICT COUNCIL**

Name and date of Committee	<b>COUNCIL – 18 JANUARY 2023</b>
Report Number	<b>AGENDA ITEM 10</b>
Subject	<b>WEST OXFORDSHIRE DISTRICT COUNCIL DRAFT PROGRAMME OF MEETINGS 2023-24</b>
Wards affected	N/A
Accountable member	Cllr Andy Graham – Leader of the Council Email: <a href="mailto:andy.graham@westoxon.gov.uk">andy.graham@westoxon.gov.uk</a>
Accountable officer	Giles Hughes – Chief Executive Email: <a href="mailto:giles.hughes@westoxon.gov.uk">giles.hughes@westoxon.gov.uk</a>
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Summary/Purpose	To set a programme of Council and committee meetings for 2023-24.
Annexes	Annex A – Programme of meetings for January 2023 to May 2023 with changes. Annex B – Draft programme of meetings for June 2023 to May 2024.
Recommendation(s)	The Council resolves to: <ol style="list-style-type: none"><li>1. <i>Approve the changes to the programme of meetings for January to May 2023 as explained in paragraph 2.3 and shown in Annex A;</i></li><li>2. <i>Approve the programme of meetings for June 2023 to May 2024 as shown in Annex B;</i></li><li>3. <i>Delegate authority to the Monitoring Officer, in consultation with Group Leaders, to make changes to the programme of meetings in the event that there is any future decision of Council to change the committee structure or committee remits that impacts the programme of meetings;</i></li><li>4. <i>Delegate authority to the Democratic Services Business Manager to set meeting dates for the Performance and Appointments Committee, member training and briefing sessions and any working groups established by the Council;</i></li></ol>

Corporate priorities	Delivering of services to the highest standards
Key Decision	NO
Exempt	NO
Consultees/ Consultation	Licensing Team Leader Planning Services Business Manager Finance Business Manager Local Management Team

## 1. BACKGROUND

- 1.1 Council is responsible for setting the dates and times of Council and committee meetings.
- 1.2 This report proposes some changes to previously agreed meeting dates in January to May 2023, and a recommended programme of Council and Committee meetings for June 2023 to May 2024. Meeting dates for Cabinet 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 and efficient decision making and helps members and officers to plan their workloads and availability.

## 2. PROGRAMME OF MEETINGS FOR JANUARY TO MAY 2023

- 2.1 Council on 26 January 2022 agreed a programme of meetings for the (current) 2022-23 municipal year up to the end of May 2023.
- 2.2 This report proposes the following changes to the programme of meetings for January to May 2023:
- a) That the Council meeting previously scheduled for 26 April is moved to 22 March to avoid the pre-election period of “heightened sensitivity”.
  - b) That the Uplands Area Planning Sub-Committee previously scheduled for Monday 2 May is moved to Tuesday 25 April to avoid very close proximity to the elections.
  - c) That the Annual Council meeting previously scheduled for 17 May 2023 is moved to 24 May 2024 to allow more time for the formation of political groups following the local elections and for those groups to nominate members to committee seats.
  - d) That the Lowlands Area Planning Sub-Committee previously scheduled for Monday 22 May is moved to Tuesday 30 May 2023 as a consequence of c).
  - e) That the Economic and Social Overview and Scrutiny Committee previously scheduled for 25 May 2023 is removed from the programme due to its proximity to the new meeting date for Annual Council.

- f) That the Uplands Area Planning Sub-Committee previously scheduled for Monday 29 May 2023 is moved back a week to Monday 5 June 2023 to avoid the Spring Bank Holiday.
- g) That member induction sessions are earmarked for Wednesday 10 May 2023. The intention is to hold two induction sessions; one afternoon and one evening session.

### **3. PROGRAMME OF MEETINGS FOR JUNE 2023 TO MAY 2024**

- 3.1 The draft programme of meetings for 2023-24 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 Annex 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 and Development (Monitoring Officer), in consultation with Group Leaders, to make changes to the programme as required following any such decision.
- 3.2 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. West Oxfordshire school holiday dates have been avoided where this does not adversely affect the overall meetings programme or the cycle of meetings.
- 3.3 District councillors may also serve as county councillors and/or parish councillors. Meetings of Oxfordshire County Council have been set up to May 2024, with most meetings of that authority starting in the morning (9.00am, 10.00am or 10.30am). Clashes with County Council meetings are few but where they do occur any members affected would be able to arrange a substitute for one meeting or the other.
- 3.4 Given that many of the officers who deliver the work of the Council and attend meetings are 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. The avoidance of clashes means that some committees (e.g. Audit and Governance Committee) do not always meet on the same day of the week. The programme of meetings across the three councils is very busy meaning there is limited scope to move or add meetings without creating potential clashes for officers. It is likely that the Budget Council meeting will be held on the same date as Cotswold District Council meeting; 21 February 2024. This has been difficult to avoid due to the school holidays the previous week. However, the two meetings are likely to start four hours apart and this shouldn't cause difficulties for many officers.

### **4. ANNUAL COUNCIL MEETINGS**

- 4.1 The Council is due to hold elections by third on 4 May 2023 and the pre-election period for those elections is expected to start on 27 March 2023. Saturday 6 May 2023 will be the Coronation of King Charles and Monday 8 May will be a public holiday. Members elected on 4 May 2023 will therefore commence their term of office on Tuesday 9 May 2023. The Annual Council meeting was previously set for Wednesday 17 May 2023, now the eighth day following the date of retirement of councillors. As explained at paragraph 2.2c) it is proposed that the Annual Council meeting is moved back a week to Wednesday 24 May 2023 to allow more time for the formation of political groups following the local elections and for groups to nominate members to seats on committees before the Annual Council meeting.
- 4.2 Elections by third will also take place on 2 May 2024 and it is proposed that the Annual meeting of Council following those elections is set for 22 May 2024. Again, this date will allow sufficient time between the elections and the Annual Council meeting for the formation of groups and the nomination of members to committee seats.
- 4.3 Council is responsible for appointing committees in accordance with the requirements of political balance. The responsibility for appointing sub-committees rests with the “parent” committee. The intention is to hold meetings of the parent committees immediately after the Annual Council meetings on 17 May 2023 and 22 May 2024 so that those committees may elect chairs and vice-chairs and appoint sub-committees at the beginning of the municipal year:
- Audit and Governance Committee for the Standards Sub-Committee;
  - Development Control Committee for the Uplands Area Planning Sub-Committee and Lowlands Area Planning Sub-Committee;
  - Licensing Committee for the Miscellaneous Licensing Sub-Committee.

## **5. COMMITTEES AND SUB-COMMITTEES THAT MEET AS REQUIRED**

- 5.1 The following committees and sub-committees will generally only meet during the municipal year where there is specific business to consider and this report seeks a delegation to the Democratic Services Business Manager to set meeting dates for these committees and sub-committees as required:
- Performance and Appointments Committee is responsible for matters relating to the Council’s statutory officers.
  - Licensing Committee will consider licensing policies and determine certain licensing applications where representations have been received.
  - Development Control Committee is 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 is responsible for dealing with matters relating to standards and ethics and to sit in the capacity of a hearing panel to, in conjunction with the Independent Person, hear allegations that Members have failed to comply with the Member Code of Conduct. Two meeting dates are included in the programme but further meetings will be required if the sub-committee needs to meet as a hearing panel.
- 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.

## **6. CABINET AND SCRUTINY CYCLE**

- 6.1** One change to the cycle of meetings from previous years is that an overview and scrutiny committee is scheduled to meet on the Wednesday prior to a Cabinet meeting. This is intended to allow for pre-decision scrutiny of Cabinet reports and will provide the opportunity for Scrutiny to submit recommendations to Cabinet on those decisions. There are three scrutiny committees which each meet four times per year. No Cabinet and Scrutiny meetings have been scheduled for August 2023, due to the summer holidays, or May 2024, due to the local elections, so there are two months in which scrutiny meetings are scheduled outside of the normal Cabinet and Scrutiny cycle; July 2023 and January 2024.

## **7. PLANNING SUB-COMMITTEES**

- 7.1** The Development Control Committee agreed on 7 November 2022 that the Lowlands and Uplands area planning sub-committees would continue to meet on a 4-weekly cycle through the year as opposed to a monthly cycle. The draft programme for 2023-24 continues the regular 4-weekly cycle with the exception of a 5-week cycle from December 2023 to January 2024 taking account of the holiday period. There is also a three-week gap between Lowlands meetings in April 2024 to avoid close proximity to the May 2024 local elections.

## **8. FUTURE OXFORDSHIRE PARTNERSHIP**

- 8.1** The Future Oxfordshire Partnership (FOP) is a joint committee comprising the leaders of the six councils of Oxfordshire together with key strategic partners working together to deliver a better future for the county. The Future Oxfordshire Partnership Scrutiny Panel is an informal panel comprising three non-executive members from each of the six councils and exists to provide oversight of the work of the FOP. The Council does not set meeting dates for the FOP or the FOP Scrutiny Panel but the expected meeting dates are included in the draft programme at Annex A for completeness. Meetings of the FOP start at 2.00pm and meetings of the FOP Scrutiny Panel start at 6.30pm.

## **9. MEETING START TIMES**

**9.1** No changes are proposed in this report to the recent start times of meetings. Under the Council Procedure Rules at Part 5A 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
- Economic and Social Overview Scrutiny meetings start at 6.30pm.
- Finance and Management Overview and Climate and Environment Scrutiny meetings start at 2.00pm
- Audit and Governance meetings are held at 6.00pm
- Development Control meetings start at 11.00am
- 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
- Cabinet starts at 2.00pm but that is a matter for the Leader rather than Council.

## **6. TRAINING AND BRIEFING DATES**

**6.1** It is intended that a member training scheme will be produced and approved prior to the May 2023 local elections which will articulate a member induction and training programme. It is also intended that a programme of regular member briefings will be produced. This report seeks a delegation to the Democratic Services Business Manager to set training and briefing dates.

## **7. MEMBER WORKING GROUPS**

**7.1** The Council may establish informal cross-party member working groups to perform particular tasks. Recent examples include the Constitution Working Group, Agile Working Group and the Cost of Living Working Group. This report seeks a delegation to the Democratic Services Business Manager to set meeting dates for member working groups.

## **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 2023/24 there is a risk that decision making would not be able to take place in a timely, effective and open and 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 an accessible venue.

## **12. CLIMATE AND ECOLOGICAL EMERGENCIES IMPLICATIONS**

- 12.1** Members are required to attend meetings in person so there will be emissions associated with journeys to and from meetings. Many members choose to have paper copies of agenda packs but alternatively members may prefer to access papers using the Modern.gov app or the extranet.

## **13. ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS**

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

## **14. BACKGROUND PAPERS**

- 14.1** None

(END)