

Part I: Summary

IA Summary and Explanation

IA.1 The Council

West Oxfordshire District Council ('the Council') is the local authority for the administrative area of the West Oxfordshire, which comprises an area of around 714 km² within Oxfordshire. The district has a population of approximately 109,800.

This constitution sets out the processes and procedures of how West Oxfordshire District Council will govern itself and make decisions.

The Council seeks to be cost effective and efficient in its operation and in delivering services, ensuring that it is open and transparent and accountable for its actions.

Each year, the Council appoints a ceremonial Chair of the District, who is responsible for Chairing meetings of the full Council (see Part 2: Article 2).

IA.2 Executive Model

The Council operates a Leader and Executive structure (see Part 2: Article 4).

The Council appoints the Leader of Council, who may then appoint up to nine Executive members to form an Executive, also known as the Cabinet. The functions for which the Executive will be responsible are identified in [Part 3D](#). It is responsible for most decisions that affect the day-to-day operations of the Council.

IA.3 Regulatory Matters

The Development Control and Licensing Committees, together with their Sub-Committees, will undertake the regulatory functions of the Council relating to determining planning applications and applications for public licences, e.g. caravan sites, gambling, liquor and public entertainment licenses, hackney carriages, etc. (See Part 2: Article 5). Meetings of all Committees will be in public except where exempt or confidential information is to be discussed and the meeting considered that the public interest does not outweigh the need to maintain the confidentiality of the information.

IA.4 Overview and Scrutiny

The Council has also appointed one Overview and Scrutiny Committee that supports the work of the Executive and the Council as a whole. The Overview and Scrutiny Committee may be consulted by the Executive on forthcoming decisions

and on the development of policies. The Overview and Scrutiny Committee will allow members of the public to have a greater say in Council matters by holding inquiries into matters of local concern, which can lead to reports and recommendations which advise the Executive and the Council. The Overview and Scrutiny Committee is able to ‘call-in’ certain categories of decisions made by the Executive but not yet implemented and may recommend that the Executive reconsiders the relevant decision. (See Part 2: Article 3).

IA.5 Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman

Members of the Public, without prejudice to other legal rights and remedies, may complain to the Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman if they believe that the Council has not followed the procedures or processes properly, or to the Monitoring Officer if they believe that there is evidence which shows that a Councillor has breached the provisions of the Members’ Code of Conduct. The Council has adopted a customer feedback process that enables members of the public to seek remedies locally before referring the matter to the Ombudsman.

IA.6 The Constitution

This document comprising the Constitution contains mandatory provisions required by central government and other relevant provisions, which have been modified to suit the circumstances relating to the Council. (See Part2: Article 10).

This Constitution was adopted by West Oxfordshire District Council on 27th April 2022 to be effective from 18th May 2022 and replaced all previous versions. It has since been amended as follows:

- 20th July 2022: Part 3D - Executive Functions
- 19th October 2022: Part 5A - Council Procedure Rules, Part 5K - Officer Employment Procedure Rules, Part 6K - Protocol for the Conferment of Honorary Titles
- 19th January 2023: Glossary, Part 1 – Summary, Part 2 – Articles, Part 3 – Functions of Responsibility, Part 5E – Standards Sub-Committee Procedure Rules, Part 6G – Monitoring Officer Protocol

IA.7 How Decisions are made

The full Council agrees the policy framework and budget within which any other decisions within the Council are to be made. The Executive are responsible for most other major decisions.

The fact that the Executive is to make a Key and/or Exempt decision is published on the Executive work plan which is published on the Council’s website not less than 28 calendar days before the decision is to be made. When such decisions are to be discussed at a meeting of the Executive this will be open to the public to attend, except where there are excluded due to exempt or confidential information being discussed. The Executive has to make decisions which are in line with the Council’s overall policies and budget.

Executive members also take individual decisions, within the remit of their portfolios.

The Council has put in place procedures to ensure that before such decisions are taken, there is appropriate opportunity for consultation with all interested parties and that the decisions must be recorded, in writing, kept and are available to the public.

The majority of the day-to-day decisions of the Council are delegated to Officers.

IA.8 Audit and Governance Committee

The Council has an Audit and Governance Committee responsible for overseeing the audit function, annual accounts and the work of the internal auditors, promoting and maintaining high standards of conduct of members and through its Standards Sub-Committee, determining standards matters.

IA.9 The Council's staff

The Council is an employer of staff but has appointed the majority of its staff from the Publica Group UK; all such staff are known as Officers. Officers give professional and practical advice, implement decisions of Members, make, and implement delegated decisions and manage day to day delivery of the Council's services. The statutory officers have specific duties to ensure that the Council acts within the law and uses its resources wisely. (See Part 2: Article 12).

IA.10 The Public

Members of the public have a number of rights in their dealings with the Council and these are set out in more detail in Part 2: Article 13. Some of these are legal rights, whilst others depend on the Council's own processes and procedures. The Citizen's Advice Bureau can advise on individuals' legal rights.

The Council welcomes and actively encourages participation by members of the public in its work.