



WEST OXFORDSHIRE
DISTRICT COUNCIL

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Name and Date of Committee	COUNCIL – 31 JANUARY 2024
Subject	WEST OXFORDSHIRE DISTRICT COUNCIL PROGRAMME OF MEETINGS JUNE 2024 – MAY 2025
Wards Affected	None
Accountable Member	Councillor Andy Graham – Leader of the Council. Email: andy.graham@westoxon.gov.uk
Accountable Officer	Giles Hughes – Chief Executive. Email: giles.hughes@westoxon.gov.uk
Report Author	Max Thompson – Senior Democratic Services Officer. Email: max.thompson@westoxon.gov.uk
Purpose	To approve a programme of Council and Committee meetings for the municipal year 2024–2025.
Annexes	Annex A – Programme of Meetings for June 2024 to May 2025 (Calendar Format). Annex B – Programme of Meetings for June 2024 to May 2025 (Listed Format).
Recommendations	That Council Resolves to: <ol style="list-style-type: none">1. Approve the Programme of Meetings for June 2024 to May 2025, as detailed at Annex A and Annex B;2. Delegate authority to the Director of Governance, in consultation with Group Leaders, to make changes to the programme of meetings, in the event that there is any future decision of the Council to change the committee structure, frequencies of committees or sub-committees, or committee remits that impacts the programme of meetings;3. Delegate authority to the Democratic Services Business Manager to set meeting dates for committees and sub-committees that meet on an ad-hoc basis (Performance and Appointments Committee, Development Control Committee, Licensing Committee, Licensing

	Panel, Miscellaneous Licensing Sub-Committee, Standards Sub-Committee), member training, member briefing sessions, and any further working groups established by the Council.
Corporate Priorities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Working Together for West Oxfordshire
Key Decision	NO
Exempt	NO
Consultees/ Consultation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Democratic Services Business Manager; • Senior Democratic Services Officer, Cotswold District Council; • Future Oxfordshire Partnership; • Oxfordshire County Council.

1. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY AND BACKGROUND

- 1.1** Council is responsible for setting the dates and times of Council and Committee meetings.
- 1.2** This report recommends a schedule of Council and Committee meetings from June 2024 until May 2025 inclusive. Dates for meetings of the Executive are a matter for the Leader of the Council, and are included in the programme for completeness.
- 1.3** A previous report on the subject matter was considered by Council on 29 November 2023. Members and Officers found that after initial publication, the report contained minor anomalies. As a result, Council resolved only to note the draft programme of meetings for the upcoming municipal year, with a revised, corrected programme of meetings considered by Council at its next meeting.
- 1.4** Setting meeting dates in advance, allows for good governance, open, efficient and effective decision making, helping members and officers to plan their workloads & availability.

2. PROGRAMME OF MEETINGS FOR JUNE 2024 TO MAY 2025

- 2.1** The programme of meetings for 2024-2025 has been formulated on a similar basis to recent municipal years, and is based on the current committee structure. Council is recommended to approve the programme of meetings as set out in Annexes A & 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, in consultation with Group Leaders, to make changes to the programme as required following any such decision.
- 2.2** 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. Oxfordshire school holiday dates have been avoided wherever possible, so that it does not adversely affect the overall meetings programme or the cycle of meetings.
- 2.3** Meetings of Overview and Scrutiny Committee are scheduled to be held on the Wednesday prior to meetings of the Executive. This is to embed the role of Overview and Scrutiny in the Council's executive decision-making process, allowing time for recommendations to be produced and responded to by the Executive. Executive reports are subject to a robust internal clearance process. The timing of the process is such that Executive reports will not normally be cleared for publication when the Overview and Scrutiny Committee agenda is published and will need to follow as late papers a couple of days later.
- 2.4** District Councillors may also serve as County Councillors and/or Town/Parish Councillors. Meetings of Oxfordshire County Council have been set up to May 2025, with most meetings of that authority starting at 10.30am, 1.00pm or 2.00pm. There are no clashes of Cabinet and Council at Oxfordshire County Council, with Executive or Council at West Oxfordshire District Council respectively.
- 2.5** Given that many of the officers who deliver the work of the Council and attend meetings are currently 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. The Budget Council meeting is scheduled to be held on the same date as Cotswold District Council meeting; 26 February 2025. However, the two meetings are likely to start four hours apart and this should not cause logistical difficulties for many officers.

- 2.6** A meeting of the Development Control Committee will take place on Monday 5 February 2024. As part of the business for that meeting, the Democratic Services Business Manager will present a report, enabling the Committee to consider the frequency of Area Planning Sub-Committees. It is recommended that authority is delegated to the Director of Governance, to make changes to the programme of meetings as required following any decision taken by the Development Control Committee.

3. ANNUAL COUNCIL MEETINGS

- 3.1** Local Elections for one third of seats on West Oxfordshire District Council, along with the election of the Thames Valley Police and Crime Commissioner, will take place on 2 May 2024, and the Annual Meeting of Council following those elections has previously been set for 22 May 2024. This date allows sufficient time between the elections and the Annual Council meeting for the formation of groups and the nomination of members to committee seats.
- 3.2** In May 2025 there are County Council elections but no seats on West Oxfordshire District Council are due for election. The Annual Meeting of Council in 2025 is recommended to be held on 21 May 2025.
- 3.3** 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 22 May 2024 and 21 May 2025, 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); and
 - Licensing Committee (for the Miscellaneous Licensing Sub-Committee).

4. COMMITTEES AND SUB-COMMITTEES THAT MEET AS REQUIRED

- 4.1** The following committees and sub-committees will generally only meet when 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 – Responsible for matters relating to the appointment, performance, and dismissal of the Council’s statutory officers;

- Licensing Committee – Responsible for considering licensing policies and determining certain licensing applications where representations have been received;
- Development Control Committee – 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 – Responsible for dealing with matters relating to standards and ethics and to sit in the capacity of a hearing panel to, in consultation with an 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.

5. FUTURE OXFORDSHIRE PARTNERSHIP

- 5.1** The Future Oxfordshire Partnership (FOP) is a joint executive 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, however the expected meeting dates are included in the draft programme at Annexes A & B for completeness. Meetings of the FOP start at 1.00pm and virtual meetings of the FOP Scrutiny Panel start at 6.30pm.

6. MEETING START TIMES

- 6.1** No changes are proposed in this report to the current start times of meetings. Under the Council Procedure Rules 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;
 - Overview and Scrutiny Committee meetings start at 5.30pm;
 - Audit and Governance Committee meetings are held at 6.00pm;
 - Development Control Committee meetings start at 10.00am;
 - Area 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;
- Executive meetings start at 2.00pm, however that is a matter for the Leader rather than Council.

7. TRAINING AND BRIEFING DATES

- 7.1 This report seeks a delegation to the Democratic Services Business Manager to set dates for member induction, training and briefing sessions.

8. MEMBER WORKING GROUPS

- 8.1 The Council may establish informal cross-party member working groups to perform particular tasks. Recent examples include the Constitution Working Group and the Local Plan Cross-Party Member Working Group. This report seeks a delegation to the Democratic Services Business Manager to set meeting dates for current and future member working groups.

9. ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS

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

10. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

- 10.1 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, and this incorporates the changes made to the Overview and Scrutiny Model in November 2023. 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.

11. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

- 11.1 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.

12. RISK ASSESSMENT

- 12.1 If Council did not agree a programme of meetings for 2024/25, there is significant risk that decision making would not be able to take place in a timely, effective and open & transparent manner. There are no other significant risks in relation to this report.

13. EQUALITIES IMPACT

13.1 The recommendations are not expected to differentially impact any groups with protected characteristics. Meetings are held in accessible venues.

14. CLIMATE AND ECOLOGICAL EMERGENCIES IMPLICATIONS

Members are required to attend meetings in person, which will result in emissions associated with journeys to and from meetings. Members have the right to choose to have paper copies of agenda packs, however where possible, Members are strongly encouraged to access papers using the Modern.gov App or the Extranet.

15. BACKGROUND PAPERS

None.

(END)