

Council



Listening Learning Leading

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Date: 7 May 2024

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Summons to attend the annual meeting of Council

to be held on

THURSDAY 16 MAY 2024 AT 6.00 PM

at

DIDCOT CIVIC HALL, BRITWELL ROAD, DIDCOT, OX11 7JN

Alternative formats of this publication are available on request. These include large print, Braille, audio cassette or CD, and email. For this or any other special requirements (such as access facilities) please contact the officer named on this agenda. Please give as much notice as possible before the meeting.

Note: Please remember to sign the attendance register.

Vivien Williams
Head of Legal and Democratic (Interim)

Agenda

1 Election of chair

To elect a chair of Council for the municipal year 2024/25

2 Appointment of vice-chair

To appoint a vice-chair of Council for the municipal year 2024/25.

3 Apologies for absence

To record apologies for absence.

4 Minutes (Pages 4 - 17)

To adopt and sign as a correct record the Council minutes of the meeting held on 22 February 2024.

5 Declarations of interest

To receive declarations of disclosable pecuniary interests, other registrable interests and non-registrable interests or any conflicts of interest in respect of items on the agenda for this meeting.

6 Urgent business and chairs announcements

To receive notification of any matters which the chair determines should be considered as urgent business and the special circumstances which have made the matters urgent, and to receive any announcements from the chair.

7 Code of Corporate Governance (Pages 18 - 50)

At the Joint Audit and Governance Committee meeting on the 15 April 2024, the committee recommended that Council adopt the revised local code of corporate governance and include it in the council's constitution. The report considered by the committee is **attached**.

The draft minutes of the committee meeting are set out below:

"The committee received the code of corporate governance report, presented by the head of finance. He highlighted that the annual governance statements were based on the local code of good governance and that the version adopted by the councils was outdated and needed revising. The head of finance highlighted that the draft code had incorporated the latest Chartered Institute of Public Finance and Accountancy guidance, had been through the Constitution Task Review Group, and was suggested to be recommend to full council meetings for adoption and inclusion in the constitution.

In response to a question about what members could do if they believed that the

councils were not compliant with the code, the head of finance indicated that they should direct these concerns in the first instance to the councils' monitoring officer.

Overall, members welcomed the update and agreed that the revised code should be adopted by the councils".

RECOMMENDATION: That Council adopts the revised local code of corporate governance for inclusion in the council's constitution.

8 Appointments to committees, panels and joint committees for 2024/25 (Pages 51 - 57)

To consider the report of the head of legal and democratic on the appointment to those committees required to be politically balanced together with the Climate and Ecological Emergencies Advisory Committee, Licensing Acts Committee, Community Grants Panel and joint committees and panels **attached**.

9 Report of the leader of the council

9.1. To receive the report of the leader of the council.

9.2. Special Urgency Decision

The council's constitution stipulates that a Cabinet or Cabinet member decision taken as a matter of special urgency must be reported to the next available meeting of the Council, together with the reasons for urgency.

Council is requested to note the details of the following urgent decision.

Storm Henk Flood Grants

On 26 February 2024, Councillor Pieter-Paul Barker, Cabinet member for Finance and Property, took a decision to participate in the government funded schemes to provide financial compensation to households and businesses adversely affected by flooding impacts from Storm Henk, between 2 and 12 January 2024.

Agreement of the chair of the Scrutiny Committee was obtained that the required decision was urgent and could not be unreasonably deferred.

Details of the decision and the reasons for urgency are available [here](#).

Minutes

of the budget meeting of the Council



held on Thursday 22 February 2024
at 6.00 pm in Didcot Civic Hall,
Britwell Road, Didcot, OX11 7JN

Open to the public, including the press

Present in the meeting room:

Councillors: David Turner (Chair), Kellie Hinton (Vice-Chair), Pieter-Paul Barker, James Barlow, Tim Bearder, Robin Bennett, David Bretherton, Sam Casey-Rerhaye, Sue Cooper, Peter Dragonetti, Maggie Filipova-Rivers, Stefan Gawrysiak, Mike Giles, Ali Gordon-Creed, Kate Gregory, Georgina Heritage, Sam James-Lawrie, Alexandrine Kantor, Katharine Keats-Rohan, Mocky Khan, Ben Manning, Zia Mohammed, Andrea Powell, Leigh Rawlins, Jo Robb, David Rouane, Anne-Marie Simpson, Ed Sadler, Ian Snowdon, Andrew Tinsley, and Tony Worgan

Officers: Steven Corrigan (Democratic Services Manager), Simon Hewings (Head of Finance and Section 151 Officer), Mark Stone (Chief Executive Officer), Vivien Williams (Head of Legal and Democratic (Interim) and Monitoring Officer), and Darius Zarazel (Democratic Services Officer)

63 Apologies for absence

Apologies for absence was received from Councillors Ken Arlett, Axel Macdonald, James Norman, Freddie van Mierlo, and Denise Macdonald.

64 Minutes

RESOLVED: to approve the minutes of the meeting held on 14 December 2023 as a correct record and agree that the Chair sign them as such.

65 Declarations of interest

None.

66 Urgent business and chair's announcements

The Chair welcomed everyone to the meeting, outlined the procedure to be followed, and advised on emergency evacuation arrangements. He also noted that there was no urgent business.

The Chair then provided details of the events he had attended since the last meeting of Council.

67 Public participation

One member of the public had registered to ask a question as set out below.

(1) Mr McLaren had submitted the following question to Councillor Rouane, Leader of the council, but was unable to attend the meeting:

“I am writing formally to seek the Council’s view on a strategic matter which is currently adversely affecting the environment within this council’s area. It is an issue which has also affected over 100 other sites in 12 councils over the last 20 years.

This concerns the purchase of environmentally sensitive agricultural land and ancient woodlands, often in AONB’s and often by an Special Purpose Vehicle company, which is then divided into many small lots by the purchaser to be auctioned to individual buyers at an inflated price (known as woodlotting). These new owners exercise their permitted development rights and erect fences, huts and other temporary buildings. Because of the large number of individual plots each with infrastructure, fragmentation and environmental damage occurs, destroying the quiet and unspoilt amenity of the sites, seriously affecting biodiversity, and representing in aggregate a fundamental change of use in a context where no planning change of use was ever contemplated. It also means that no-one has the responsibility for the management of the overall site, which deteriorates as a direct result.

Only one remedy has so far been found by Councils elsewhere which successfully and instantly prevents these particular adverse consequences, and that is the imposition of an A4 Direction on a site thus threatened, which removes permitted development rights.

In a particular current instance, Swyncombe Parish Council has been in correspondence with SODC requesting that an A4D be issued on an area of ancient woodland which is currently in the process of being lotted, auctioned, and where new infrastructure is already being put in place.

I would be grateful if you could state the Council’s reasons for refusing to impose an A4 Direction on this site, which is already being adversely affected in the manner described. I would also request that the Council’s general view on A4Ds as a precautionary proactive response to woodlotting be reconsidered. This would at a stroke greatly benefit sites of great environmental importance and help to deter further instances of the cynical practice of lotting. By not issuing an A4 Direction a signal is being sent to developers that the AONB is not protected.”

Councillor Rouane, Leader of the council, responded as follows:

“Thank you for your question. I am familiar with the situation where land is being auctioned off into smaller plots, such as the example currently occurring within Swyncombe parish.

Government advises in the National Planning Policy Framework that the use of Article 4 directions to remove national planning permitted development rights should be limited to situation where it is necessary to avoid wholly unacceptable adverse impacts to protect local amenity and the well-being of an area. They should be based on robust evidence and applied to the smallest geographical area possible. Local Planning Authorities are required to notify the Secretary of State about new Article 4 directions, who will consider whether to exercise his power to intervene, either to modify or cancel an Article 4 direction.

The removal of permitted development, through an Article 4 direction does not stop development, but it means planning permission should be first sought. An Article 4 does not prevent a breach of planning and does not change the position that an area of land may have different owners and thus there will be no overall management of the land. An Article 4 does not prevent the suggested adverse consequences.

Each consideration of an Article 4 direction is on a case by case basis and assessed carefully on the evidence, following national planning guidance. Whether it is in a National Landscape (AONB) or any part of our district, we will use, appropriately, the planning tools available to us to ensure our attractive environment is maintained for our communities.

At this time there is no justification for the council to pursue an Article 4 Direction at the site in Swyncombe parish. The land is agricultural/woodland within a National Landscape (AONB) and due to the size of the plots being auctioned, most acts of development associated with the lawful use will be subject to the prior notification procedure. As advised locally, there is no credible evidence of permitted development activity being undertaken and no breaches of planning have been reported. The land continues to be in one ownership, based on current Land Registry data. We have proactively served a Tree Preservation Order on part of the site.

We have written to all the auction houses reminder them of the planning rules and status of the land, which we note is set out in the sales particulars.

I encourage you to report any alleged breaches of planning via the council's online form and we will consider the planning concern raised in line with our Planning Enforcement Strategy."

68 Petitions

There were no petitions for Council to consider.

69 Treasury management 2023/24 mid-year monitoring report

Council considered Cabinet's recommendations, made at its meeting on 15 February 2024, on the treasury management performance in the first six months of 2023/24.

Both the Joint Audit and Governance Committee, at its meeting on 30 January 2024, and Cabinet, at its meeting on 15 February 2024, were content that the treasury management activities had been carried out in accordance with the treasury management strategy and policy.

Councillor Barker, Cabinet member for finance and property assets, reported that income was strong in the first two quarters of the financial year, exceeding the expected budget due to higher than forecasted interest rates, and that the forecast was also very positive for the remaining two quarters. He also highlighted to Council that there was no need to borrow for the first six months and that there was no expectation of any need to borrow for the remainder of 2023/24.

Council was satisfied with the report and that treasury management activities were being carried out in accordance with the strategy and policy. Therefore, they agreed that the treasury management 2023/24 mid-year monitoring report should be approved.

RESOLVED: to

1. note that Cabinet is satisfied that the treasury activities are carried out in accordance with the treasury management strategy and policy; and
2. approve the treasury management 2023/24 mid-year monitoring report.

70 Treasury Management and Investment Strategy 2024/25

Council considered the head of finance's report on treasury management and investment strategy for 2024/25 which set out Cabinet's recommendations, made at its meeting on 15 February 2024.

The Joint Audit and Governance Committee, at its meeting on 30 January 2024, had supported the draft strategy and had recommended it to Cabinet, along with approving the prudential indicators and limits, approving the annual investment strategy and lending criteria, and approving the Environmental, Social and Governance (ESG) policy.

Councillor Barker, the Cabinet member for finance and property assets, introduced the report and Cabinet's recommendations. He highlighted that there were no changes to the counterparty selection in the strategy, although there had been a suggested inclusion of an environmental, social, and governance (ESG) policy that would be a factor in determining the council's investments. Councillor Barker emphasised that the council understood the importance of ESG factors, and that they would be taken into account in the council's investment decision, noting that the prioritisation of security, liquidity, then yield remained central to the council's investment strategy.

Councillor Barker notified Council about an additional recommendation Cabinet made, to note that the section 151 officer had confirmed that he would conduct a review of investment options with the council's treasury advisors, Link, accounting for ESG factors, and that that the report would be brought to the Joint Audit and Governance Committee.

Council was satisfied with the treasury management and investment strategy for 2024/25 and agreed that it should be approved.

RESOLVED: to

1. approve the treasury management strategy 2024/25, as set out in Appendix A to the head of finance's report to Cabinet on 15 February 2024;

2. approve the prudential indicators and limits for 2024/25 to 2026/27, as set out in Appendix A of the report;
3. approve the annual investment strategy 2024/25, as set out in Appendix A of the report, and the lending criteria detailed in table 6; and
4. approve the Environmental, Social and Governance Policy, as set out in Appendix E to the report.

71 Capital Strategy 2024/25-2033/34

Council considered Cabinet's recommendation, made at its meeting on 15 February 2024, on the council's capital strategy for 2024/25 to 2032/34.

Councillor Barker, the Cabinet member for finance and property assets, introduced the report and the Cabinet's recommendations. Cabinet had supported the strategy, and he noted that it was a requirement for the council to review its capital strategy annually. In this review, he noted that a key change to the strategy was in section five of the report, as the ending of commercial investments would bring the council in line with the Chartered Institute of Public Finance and Accountancy (CIPFA) requirements. He also drew members attention to Annex A which was the proposed strategy for the flexible use of capital receipts.

In addition, Councillor Barker noted that, since the report was published, there had been amendments made to the figures presented on page 74 of the agenda, but that they did not have any material effect on the strategy. Some members indicated that an improvement to future strategies would be for the charts to also present the raw data alongside them in order for members and residents to more easily examine the data.

Council was satisfied with the strategy and agreed that it should be approved.

RESOLVED:

1. approve the capital strategy 2024/25 to 2033/34, as set out in Appendix 1 of the head of finance's report to Cabinet on 15 February 2024; and
2. agree the strategy for flexible use of capital receipts, as set out in Annex 1 of the capital strategy.

72 Revenue budget 2024/25 and capital programme 2024/25 - 2028/29

The chair referred to regulations that require councils to record the names of those councillors voting in favour, against or abstaining from any vote on the budget, including amendments, and the council tax. In accordance with the regulations, he would call for a named vote on each of these matters at this meeting.

Council noted the report of the chief finance officer on the robustness of the budget estimates and the adequacy of the reserves.

Council considered Cabinet's recommendations, made at its meeting held on 15 February 2024, on the revenue budget for 2024/25 and the capital programme to 2028/29.

Councillor Barker, Cabinet member for finance and property assets, presented Cabinet's proposals for the revenue budget and capital programme. He moved and Councillor Powell, Cabinet member for corporate services, policy and programmes, seconded a motion to approve Cabinet's recommendations as follows:

To

1. set the revenue budget for 2024/25 as set out in appendix A.1 to the report,
2. approve the capital programme for 2024/25 to 2028/29 as set out in appendix D.1 and D.2 to the report, together with the capital programme changes as set out in appendix D.3 and Appendix D.4 to the report,
3. set the council's prudential limits as listed in appendix E to the report,
4. set the medium-term financial plan to 2028/29 as set out in appendix F to the report,
5. allocate £500,000 to fund the Communities Capital and Revenue grant scheme,
6. ask officers to review the Medium-Term Financial Strategy (MTFS) at the end of the current spending review period.

In introducing the budget, Councillor Barker noted that he was presenting a budget without any cuts to services in what was a very challenging time for local authorities across the country. It was noted that part of the reason for this was due to an increase in business rate collections.

Councillor Barker highlighted to Council that the budget was £1.5m better than the forecast and that the draw on reserves was down from £3m to £1.5m, whilst the settlement from central government had remained relatively stable. He also noted certain key areas of the budget including £500,000 for the community hub, support for the Cornerstone Arts Centre and performing arts across the district, the maintenance of the previous year's level of grant funding, decarbonisation funding, a range of grants and investments in affordable housing, and for the continued support for the Future Oxfordshire Partnership. Overall, Councillor Barker was satisfied that the council was on a firm financial footing for the upcoming year and the years beyond.

A minority of members spoke against the budget proposals. They opposed it on the grounds that it was not ambitious or transformational enough, that it did not put the environment at the heart of funding decisions as shown through the continued use of diesel vehicles, and that there were no real term increases for grants. Some members commented that future budgets would benefit from having the views of members from other political groups included in the budget discussions.

However, the majority of members supported the budget proposals. As it was a budget with no cuts to services in a time where other local authorities were struggling with their finances, members commended the budget and thanked the officers for their support. Specifically, members welcomed the micro and small enterprise grants which would provide support for small business, and they noted that one of the reasons for the increased business receipts was due to the success of small businesses across

the district. Members also praised the inclusion of funding for local arts and culture, continued support for the community hub, funding for decarbonisation efforts, and the investments planned for leisure centres. The inclusion of funding for homelessness prevention and affordable housing was also mentioned as members were proud of the support that the council provided in this area and indicated that these services would likely be increasingly needed moving forward. It was also highlighted that the council remained the seventh lowest taxing district in country and that the budget showed how they were providing value for money.

Overall, as members were satisfied with the relatively strong position of the council's finances, and with the proposed areas of allocated funding, they agreed that the budget and capital programme should be approved.

In accordance with regulations requiring councils to record the names of those councillors voting in favour, against or abstaining from any vote on the budget, the Chair called for a recorded vote which was carried with the voting being as follows:

For	Against	Abstain
Councillors	Councillors	Councillors
Pieter-Paul Barker	Ian Snowdon	Mocky Khan
James Barlow		
Tim Bearder		
Robin Bennett		
David Bretherton		
Sam Casey-Rerhaye		
Sue Cooper		
Peter Dragonetti		
Maggie Filipova-Rivers		
Stefan Gawrysiak		
Mike Giles		
Ali Gordon-Creed		
Kate Gregory		
Georgina Heritage		
Kellie Hinton		
Sam James-Lawrie		
Alexandrine Kantor		

Katharine Keats-Rohan		
Ben Manning		
Zia Mohammed		
Andrea Powell		
Leigh Rawlins		
Jo Robb		
David Rouane		
Ed Sadler		
Anne-Marie Simpson		
Andrew Tinsley		
David Turner		
Tony Worgan		
29	1	1

RESOLVED: to

1. set the revenue budget for 2024/25, as set out in Appendix A.1 to the head of finance’s report to Cabinet on 15 February 2024;
2. approve the capital programme for 2024/25 to 2028/29, as set out in Appendices D.1 and D.2 to the report, together with the capital programme changes, as set out in Appendices D.3 and D.4 to the report;
3. set the council’s prudential limits, as listed in Appendix E to the report;
4. set the medium-term financial plan to 2028/29, as set out in Appendix F to the report;
5. allocate £500,000 to fund the Communities Capital and Revenue grant scheme; and
6. ask officers to review the Medium-Term Financial Strategy at the end of the current spending review period.

73 Council tax 2024/25

Council considered the report of the head of finance on the setting of the Council Tax for the 2024/25 financial year.

Councillor Barker, the Cabinet member for finance and property assets, introduced the item. He moved and Councillor Rouane, Leader of the council, seconded a motion to approve the recommendations outlined in the report.

In accordance with regulations requiring councils to record the names of those councillors voting in favour, against or abstaining from any vote on the council tax the Chair called for a recorded vote which was carried with the voting being as follows:

For	Against	Abstain
Councillors	Councillors	Councillors
Pieter-Paul Barker		
James Barlow		
Tim Bearder		
Robin Bennett		
David Bretherton		
Sam Casey-Rerhaye		
Sue Cooper		
Peter Dragonetti		
Maggie Filipova-Rivers		
Stefan Gawrysiak		
Mike Giles		
Ali Gordon-Creed		
Kate Gregory		
Georgina Heritage		
Kellie Hinton		
Sam James-Lawrie		
Alexandrine Kantor		
Katharine Keats-Rohan		
Mocky Khan		
Ben Manning		

Zia Mohammed		
Andrea Powell		
Leigh Rawlins		
Jo Robb		
David Rouane		
Ed Sadler		
Anne-Marie Simpson		
Ian Snowdon		
Andrew Tinsley		
David Turner		
Tony Worgan		
31	0	0

RESOLVED:

1. To note that at its meeting on 14 December 2023 the council calculated the council tax base 2024/25:
 - (a) for the whole council area as 62,683.2 [Item T in the formula in Section 31B of the Local Government Finance Act 1992, as amended (the “Act”)]; and
 - (b) for dwellings in those parts of its area to which a parish precept relates as in column 1 of appendix 1.
2. That the council tax requirement for the council’s own purposes for 2024/25 (excluding parish precepts) is £9,166,791
3. That the following amounts be calculated for the year 2024/25 in accordance with Sections 31 to 36 of the Act:
 - (a) £96,205,984 being the aggregate of the amounts which the council estimates for the items set out in Section 31A(2) of the Act taking into account all precepts issued to it by parish councils.
 - (b) £79,487,903 being the aggregate of the amounts which the council estimates for the items set out in Section 31A(3) of the Act.
 - (c) £16,718,081 being the amount by which the aggregate at (3)(a) above exceeds the aggregate at (3)(b) above, calculated by the council, in

accordance with Section 31A(4) of the Act as its council tax requirement for the year. (Item R in the formula in Section 31B of the Act).

- (d) £266.71 being the amount at (3)(c) above (Item R), all divided by Item T (1(a) above), calculated by the council, in accordance with Section 31B of the Act, as the basic amount of its council tax for the year (including parish precepts).
 - (d) £7,551,290 being the aggregate amount of all special items referred to in Section 34(1) of the Act, as set out in column 2 of appendix 1.
 - (e) £146.24 being the amount at (3)(d) above less the result given by dividing the amount at (3)(e) above by Item T (1(a) above), calculated by the council, in accordance with Section 34(2) of the Act, as the basic amount of its council tax for the year for dwellings in those parts of its area to which no parish precept relates.
4. To note that for the year 2024/25 Oxfordshire County Council has stated the following amounts in precepts issued to the council, in accordance with Section 40 of the Local Government Finance Act 1992, for each of the categories of dwellings shown below:

Band A	£1,213.71
Band B	£1,415.99
Band C	£1,618.28
Band D	£1,820.56
Band E	£2,225.13
Band F	£2,629.70
Band G	£3,034.27
Band H	£3,641.12

5. To note that for the year 2024/25 the Police and Crime Commissioner for Thames Valley has stated the following amounts in precepts issued to the council, in accordance with Section 40 of the Local Government Finance Act 1992, for each of the categories of dwellings shown below:

Band A	£179.52
Band B	£209.44
Band C	£239.36
Band D	£269.28
Band E	£329.12
Band F	£388.96
Band G	£448.80
Band H	£538.56

6. That the council, in accordance with Sections 30 and 36 of the Local Government Finance Act 1992, hereby sets the aggregate amounts shown in appendix 3 as the amounts of council tax for 2024/25 for each part of its area and for each of the categories of dwellings shown in appendix 3.
7. To determine that the council's basic amount of council tax for 2024/25 is not excessive in accordance with principles approved under Section 52ZB Local Government Finance Act 1992.

74 Pay policy statement 2024/25

Council considered the report of the head of corporate services on the adoption of a pay policy statement to meet the requirements of the Localism Act.

RESOLVED: to approve the statement of pay policy 2024/25 attached to the report of the head of corporate services to the Council meeting on 22 February 2024.

75 East Hagbourne Neighbourhood Development Plan Review

Council considered the recommendation of Councillor Rouane, Leader of the council, made on 12 February 2024, to make the East Hagbourne Neighbourhood Development Plan Review.

Councillor Rouane, Leader of the council, introduced the item and outlined the review and the recommended that the plan review be made. Specifically, he noted that adjustments to the plan emphasised sustainable development, carbon reduction, and preserving greenspaces. The plan also introduced a People and Nature strategy and introduced a bespoke design code for the parish. Councillor Rouane also assured council that the plan met its legal obligations.

Council welcomed the East Hagbourne Neighbourhood Development Plan Review, praising its People and Nature strategy, and agreed that it should be made.

RESOLVED: to

1. make the East Hagbourne Neighbourhood Development Plan Review with the modifications specified in the Examiner's report;
2. authorise the Head of Policy and Programmes, in consultation with the appropriate Cabinet Member and in agreement with the Qualifying Body, East Hagbourne Parish Council, the making of minor (non-material) modifications, the correction of any spelling, grammatical, typographical or factual errors together with any improvements from a presentational perspective.

76 Report of the leader of the council

Councillor Rouane, Leader of the council, provided an update on a number of matters.

77 Questions on notice

No questions were submitted on notice from members.

78 Motions on notice

- (1) Councillor Giles moved, and Councillor Kantor seconded, a revised the motion with an additional bullet point to reflect the content of a written ministerial statement issued since the submission of the original motion below.

Following debate and being put to the vote, the motion was declared carried.

RESOLVED:

Council notes:

- South Oxfordshire is a welcoming place for all, including people seeking sanctuary.
- The council is committed to playing its part in supporting people displaced by war and persecution of any background, evidenced by the key role officers and councillors play in coordinating and delivering support in Oxfordshire for people from across the various government schemes.
- South Oxfordshire is home to around 400 Ukrainian refugees who have arrived under the Home for Ukraine, Family and the Ukraine Extension schemes.
- These schemes are temporary for 3 years, sit outside immigration rules, and do not provide a route to settlement.
- Russia's war on Ukraine sadly continues and people's ability to return remains uncertain.
- Thousands of temporary visas are set to expire in 2025 which is already causing problems in terms of securing employment and tenancies. Ukrainian refugees are also unable to plan for the future of their children in terms of education and other commitments, significantly impeding their quality of life and future prospects.
- On Monday 19 of February 2024, via a written ministerial statement various changes to Ukrainian schemes were announced including:
 - o an 18th month extension for current visa holders which they will be able apply for within 3 months of the end of their 3 year leave
 - o The closure of the vital Ukraine family scheme
 - o And that with immediate effect new arrivals under HfU would only be able to stay in the UK for 18 months, instead of 3 years

Council Believes that:

- Government needs to urgently remove uncertainty around Ukrainian's ability to make the UK their home
- Ukrainians that come to the UK under the Ukraine Family Scheme, Homes for Ukraine, and Ukraine Extension scheme should be able extend their stay and apply for Indefinite Leave to Remain (in line with other refugee schemes) with minimum cost and bureaucratic burden on families, hosts and support agencies.

Council resolves to:

Agenda Item 4

- Ask the leader of South Oxfordshire District Council to write to the Minister of State for Immigration to request that Ukrainian refugees are provided with a route to settlement.
- Make information accessible to Ukrainian refugees who are considering their options on the services and support available, and signpost to appropriate (legal) advice.
- Continue to collaborate with Oxfordshire councils, statutory and voluntary sector partners in the development of a strategic approach for supporting people seeking sanctuary from any background which is coherent, effective, and compassionate.

The meeting closed at 7.56 pm

Joint Audit and Governance Committee



Report of Head of Finance

Author: Steven Corrigan

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Date: 15 April 2024

Local Code of Corporate Governance

Recommendation

That the committee recommends the revised local code of corporate governance for adoption by each Council for inclusion in the councils' constitution.

Purpose of Report

1. To consider a proposed new local code of corporate governance and recommend its adoption by each council.

Strategic Objectives

2. The adoption of a revised Local Code of Corporate Governance supports the following strategic objectives:
 - Openness and accountability in South Oxfordshire
 - Working in an open and inclusive way in the Vale of White Horse

Background

3. The councils are responsible for ensuring that their business is conducted in accordance with the law and proper standards, and that public money is safeguarded and properly accounted for. To this end members and senior officers are responsible for ensuring that proper arrangements exist for the governance of the councils' affairs and stewardship of its resources.
4. The Annual Governance Statement is based on a Local Code of Good Governance which forms part of the councils' constitution. As the Annual Governance Statement is

a statutory requirement, the councils are required to take account of any revised guidance.

5. Currently, the councils have a Local Code of Corporate Governance which is based on guidance in the CIPFA/SOLACE Framework for Corporate Governance. In 2016 CIPFA/SOLACE carried out a review of the Framework for Corporate Governance 2007 (as amended by the 2012 addendum). As a result, in April 2016 CIPFA/SOLACE published a new framework document “Delivering Good Governance in Local Government Framework 2016 Edition” with the key focus of governance processes and structures centring on the attainment of sustainable economic, societal and environmental outcomes. This year’s Annual Governance Statement recognised that a redrafted code would be brought forward to reflect the updated CIPFA guidance.
6. The attached draft local code of corporate governance (Appendix 1) is intended to replace the out-of-date protocol in the councils’ constitution and reflects updated CIPFA guidance which outlines the following seven principles:
 - Behaving with integrity, demonstrating strong commitment to ethical values and respecting the rule of law
 - Ensuring openness and comprehensive stakeholder engagement
 - Defining outcomes in terms of sustainable, economic, social and environmental benefits
 - Determining the interventions necessary to optimize the achievement of the intended outcomes
 - Developing the Council’s capacity, including the capability of its leadership and the individuals within it
 - Managing risks and performance through robust internal control and strong public financial management
 - Implementing good practices in transparency, reporting and audit, to deliver accountability
7. The revised local code of corporate governance provides further levels of detail on which the council can monitor its progress against each of the seven principles and demonstrates how the councils’ internal processes and governance framework support the delivery of those principles. The committee is requested to review the document to ensure members are satisfied it accurately reflects the councils’ governance arrangements in meeting the core principles set out above.
8. The draft has been considered by the Constitution Review Working Group and where appropriate updated in response to members’ views.
9. It is proposed that progress on delivery against the code is reviewed by officers and that this informs the future development of the Annual Governance Statement for consideration by this committee.

Financial Implications

10. The Annual Governance Statement is approved alongside the Annual Statement of Accounts. The Local Code of Corporate Governance provides the basis for assurance on managing risks and performance through internal control and strong public financial management.

Legal Implications

11. The preparation and publication of a local Code of Corporate Governance is in accordance with guidance set out in Delivering Good Governance in Local Government (CIPFA/SOLACE, 2016) and Good Governance in the Public Sector (CIPFA/IFAC, 2014).

Climate and ecological impact implications

12. There are no direct implications arising from this report. However, the proposed Local Code of Corporate Governance provides the basis for assurance on defining outcomes in terms of sustainable, economic, social and environmental benefits.

Equalities implications

13. The proposed Local Code of Corporate Governance includes an acknowledgment of the importance of equality matters and how they are addressed.

Risks

14. An effective Corporate Governance framework demonstrates good governance to the public and stakeholders. The revised Local Code of Corporate Governance demonstrates how the councils will achieve this.

Conclusion

15. The committee is asked to endorse the revised Code and recommend it to each Council for adoption and inclusion in the councils' constitution.

Background Papers:

CIPFA/Solace Delivering Good Governance in Local Government: Framework 2016

Code of Corporate Governance

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Introduction

The councils' Code of Corporate Governance is based upon the CIPFA / SOLACE publication entitled "Delivering Good Governance in Local Government: Framework 2016 Edition."

This document replaces the previous code of governance – **Delivering Good Governance: The Local Code of Governance our Local Code of Governance.**

This updated Code, adds detail of expected behaviours and actions in order to comply with the 2016 CIPFA guidance and provides a best practice framework for governance across the council.

What do we mean by Governance?

'The International Framework: Good Governance in the Public Sector' defines 'governance' as comprising the arrangements (including political, economic, social, environmental, administrative, legal and other arrangements) put in place to ensure that the intended outcomes for stakeholders are defined and achieved. The Framework also states that to deliver good governance in the public sector both governing bodies and individuals working for them must aim to achieve the councils' objectives while acting in the public interest at all times.

Governance is about how the council ensures that it is doing the right things, in the right way, for the right people in a timely, inclusive, open, honest and accountable manner. Good governance leads to effective:

- leadership and management
- performance and risk management
- stewardship of public money
- public engagement and outcomes for our citizens and service users.

Good governance will enable the council to provide services and deliver its Corporate Plan whilst ensuring that there are mechanisms in place to identify and mitigate any risk.

Core Principles

The councils' Code of Corporate Governance is based on the following seven core principles as set out in 'The International Framework: Good Governance in the Public Sector' published by CIPFA / SOLACE:

- A. Behaving with integrity, demonstrating strong commitment to ethical values, and respecting the rule of law.
- B. Ensuring openness and comprehensive stakeholder engagement.
- C. Defining outcomes in terms of sustainable economic, social, and environmental benefits.
- D. Determining the interventions necessary to optimize the achievement of the intended outcomes.

- E. Developing the councils' capacity, including the capability of its leadership and the individuals within it.
- F. Managing risks and performance through robust internal control and strong public financial management.
- G. Implementing good practices in transparency, reporting, and audit to deliver effective accountability.



Source: 'The International Framework: Good Governance in the Public Sector' published by CIPFA / SOLACE

The Code specifically identifies the actions and behaviours taken by the councils in relation to each of these core principles and associated sub principles. The Code, along with its supporting infrastructure is set out below at Appendix A.

The Annual Governance Statement provides evidence of the council's compliance with the seven core principles.

Responsibilities

Councillors and officers are collectively responsible for the governance of the council. This is achieved by councillors setting the policy parameters and officers delivering services within these parameters.

The statutory officers, the Head of Paid Service (Chief Executive), Section 151 Officer (Chief Finance Officer) and the Monitoring Officer have responsibility for advising council and cabinet on legislative, financial operational matters and ensuring that the council is governed effectively in line with the requirements of this Code.

The Joint Audit and Governance Committee is responsible for monitoring, governance matters and recommending this Code to council for adoption and will ensure its effectiveness.

How we measure and report performance against the principles

On an annual basis, each of our Heads of Service will be asked to complete assurance statements explaining actions they have taken throughout the financial year to assess and evidence compliance with the expected behaviours, as set out in Appendix A, within their areas of responsibility.

These statements then inform and support our Annual Governance Statement, which forms a part of our end of year Statement of Accounts, and also identify actions needed for the forthcoming year to address any areas of non-compliance. We review the information from the Managers Assurance Statements to update this code with the evidence of our compliance.

The Joint Audit and Governance Committee is responsible for recommending this Code to council for adoption and ensuring it is reviewed annually to ensure its effectiveness and that it is updated accordingly.

Appendix A - Actions and behaviours to be taken by the councils that demonstrate good governance.

Core Principle A. Behaving with integrity, demonstrating strong commitment to ethical values, and respecting the rule of law.		
Sub Principle: Behaving with integrity	Lead Officers	Evidence base
1. Ensure that members and officers behave with integrity and lead a culture where acting in the public interest is visible and consistently demonstrated thereby protecting the reputation of the councils.	Head of Legal and Democratic / People and Culture Manager	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The councils have a Councillor Code of Conduct which is in compliance with the Localism Act 2011 and sets out expected behaviours with the aim of maintaining public confidence in both the councils and council members. The code of conduct is embedded within our constitution which is published on each council's website: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Constitution – South Oxfordshire District Council Constitution – Vale of White Horse District Council Councillor's Code of Conduct South Oxfordshire District Council Councillor's Code of Conduct Vale of White Horse District Council
2. Ensure that members take the lead in establishing values for the councils and officers and that they are communicated and understood. These will build on the Seven Principles of Public Life (The Nolan Principles).	Head of Legal and Democratic	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> An Employee Conduct Policy forms part of each officer's contract of employment and covers expected behaviours. The Employee Conduct Policy is published within a set of contractual policies on each council's website: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Contractual Policies - South Oxfordshire District Council Contractual Policies - Vale of White Horse District Council
3. Lead by example and use the values as a framework for decision making and other actions.	All Heads of Service/Service Managers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> There is also a Code of Conduct for Officers which, together with the Code of Conduct for Members includes and builds on the Nolan Principles. For both officers and council members to maintain transparency and identify and mitigate any potential conflicts, the council maintains a Register of Interests and a Register of Gifts and Hospitalitys. Registers for officers are held internally but both registers for members are available within the details for each council member on our websites: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Councillors - South Oxfordshire District Council Councillors - Vale of White Horse District Council
4. Demonstrate, communicate and embed values through appropriate policies and processes which will be reviewed on a regular basis to	All Heads of Service/Service Managers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> In keeping with our Constitution, council meetings and committees are conducted in accordance with procedure rules which include expected behaviours for decision makers. Declarations of interest are made and minuted at the start of each meeting to avoid conflict arising during the meetings. The constitution also includes a protocol for interaction between officers and members and can be found on each councils' website:

ensure they are operating effectively.		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Constitution – South Oxfordshire District Council ○ Constitution – Vale of White Horse District Council
Sub Principle: Demonstrating strong commitment to ethical values	Lead Officers	Evidence base
<p>5. Seek to establish, monitor and maintain the councils’ ethical standards and performance.</p> <p>6. Underpin personal behaviour with ethical values and ensure they permeate all aspects of the councils’ culture and operation.</p> <p>7. Develop and maintain robust policies and procedures which place emphasis on agreed ethical values.</p> <p>8. Ensure that external providers of services on behalf of the organisation are required to act with integrity and in compliance with ethical standards expected by the councils.</p>	<p>Head of Legal and Democratic</p> <p>All Heads of Service/Service Managers</p> <p>All Heads of Service/Service Managers</p> <p>All Heads of Service/Service Managers</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● This Code of Corporate Governance is set out within our Constitution which includes a requirement to operate in an ethical manner. This is reinforced within both the Protocol on Member and Officer Relations and the Officer Code of Conduct. The standards of conduct for councillors and any complaints arising are overseen by the Joint Audit and Governance Committee. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Constitution – South Oxfordshire District Council ○ Constitution – Vale of White Horse District Council ● Each council states a set of values on our internal intranet. These include an expectation for officers to demonstrate a commitment to upholding integrity and ethical values. We plan and provide services and policies in a fair, inclusive and equal way to promote good relations as set out in our Diversity and Inclusion Strategy available on our website. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Equalities – South Oxfordshire District Council ○ Equalities – Vale of White Horse District Council ● We recognise in our Procurement Strategy that the purchase of goods, services and works should promote ethical procurement. Each council publishes a statement on its website for organisations and individuals selling to the council which covers expected standards of conduct as well as ethical and legal requirements. These requirements also take into account the National Procurement Policy Statement PPN 5/21, the National Procurement Strategy for Local Government in England 2018, The Public Contracts Regulations 2015, the Local Government Transparency Code 2015 and the Modern Slavery Act 2015. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Selling to the council – South Oxfordshire District Council ○ Selling to the council – Vale of White Horse District Council
Sub Principle: Respecting the rule of law	Lead Officers	Evidence base
9. Ensure members and officers demonstrate a strong	Head of Legal and	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Our templates for reports, policies and decision making are available to officers on our internal intranet and include sections to record legal implications.

<p>commitment to the rule of the law as well as adhering to relevant laws and regulations.</p>	<p>Democratic / People and Culture Manger</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Members on decision making committees, such as licensing panels and planning committees, receive bespoke training to cover the legal aspects of their roles. The Monitoring Officer provides training to officer and members on good decision making.
<p>10. Create the conditions to ensure that the statutory officers, other key post holders, and members are able to fulfil their responsibilities in accordance with legislative and regulatory provisions.</p>	<p>Chief Executive</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Our Chief Executive has the role of Head of Paid Service with overall accountability for the governance arrangements and officers operating within the councils. The Head of Legal and Democratic has the statutory role of Monitoring Officer, who ensures the council, council officers and members operate legally and maintain the highest standards of conduct in all they do. The Chief Finance Officer (Section 151) has overall responsibility for the councils financial position.
<p>11. Strive to optimise the use of the full powers available for the benefit of citizens, communities and other stakeholders.</p>	<p>All Heads of Service/Service Managers</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> All statutory officers meet regularly to discuss governance issues We have an Anti-Fraud, Corruption and Bribery Policy which aims to help officers understand when and who to contact if they have concerns about fraud, bribery or corruption. This also emphasises the need for officers to adhere to legal requirements and ensure all procedures and practices remain above reproach. We publish the policy on our websites within the contractual policies section. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Contractual Policies – South Oxfordshire District Council Contractual Policies – Vale of White Horse District Council
<p>12. Deal with breaches of legal and regulatory provisions effectively.</p>	<p>Head of Legal and Democratic / People and Culture Manger</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Our Whistleblowing Policy is available to officers on our internal intranet, and this explains how officers can raise concerns about suspected wrongdoing and how the councils manage any allegations.
<p>13. Ensure corruption and misuse of power is dealt with effectively.</p>	<p>Head of Legal and Democratic / People and Culture Manger</p>	

Core Principle B. Ensuring openness and comprehensive stakeholder engagement.

Sub Principle: Openness	Lead Officers	Evidence base
<p>14. Ensure an open culture through demonstrating, documenting and</p>	<p>All Heads of Service/Service Managers</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> South Oxfordshire District Council has a specific theme of openness and accountability within its four-year Corporate Plan. The plan is available on the council website: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Corporate Plan 2020- 2024 - South Oxfordshire District Council

<p>communicating the councils' commitment to openness.</p>		
<p>15. Make decisions that are open about actions, plans, resource use, forecasts, outputs and outcomes. The presumption will be for openness. If that is not the case, a justification for the reasoning for keeping a decision confidential will be provided.</p>	<p>All Heads of Service/Service Managers</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Vale of White Horse District Council has a specific theme of working in an open and inclusive way within its four-year Corporate Plan. The plan is available on the council website: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Corporate Plan 2020 – 2024 - Vale of White Horse District Council • We publish agendas and minutes for council meetings and committees on each councils' website. Agenda items are supported by a reports pack with documents supporting topics being discussed and these can be accessed individually as well. The reports set out the background and information supporting the agenda item and explains if an item is considered confidential. This detail is available on the individual committee/meeting pages from the listing on the main meetings webpage. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Meetings list – South Oxfordshire District Council ○ Meetings list – Vale of White Horse District Council
<p>16. Provide clear reasoning and evidence for decisions in both public records and explanations to stakeholders and will be explicit about the criteria, rationale and considerations used. In due course, the councils will ensure that the impact and consequences of those decisions are clear.</p>	<p>All Heads of Service/Service Managers</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Exemptions from publication are the exception with the public interest test being applied. The Monitoring Officer adjudicates on requests for exemption at the point of publication • Each council has a Decision Register on their website recording decisions made by any of the councils' decision makers. The register can be searched by key words, by date ranges and by specific decision makers. As well as a summary outline, a link is provided to the individual decision notice which includes reasons for the decision. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Decision Register – South Oxfordshire District Council ○ Decision Register – Vale of White Horse District Council
<p>17. Use formal and informal consultation and engagement to determine the most appropriate and effective interventions / courses of action.</p>	<p>All Heads of Service/Service Managers</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • We make information available in many ways and to support openness and accountability in how we operate we publish sets of easy to access information within a Data Hub on each council's website. The information includes our decisions, performance and data reports and items we publish under the Transparency Regulations and Code 2015 and Model Publication Scheme. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Data Hub – South Oxfordshire District Council ○ Data Hub – Vale of White Horse District Council • Each council publishes live and closed consultations on their website and a specific Statement of Community Involvement covering the planning policy and planning development consultation process. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Data Hub – South Oxfordshire District Council ○ Data Hub – Vale of White Horse District Council

		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> We have an in-house Consultation and Engagement Team to help officers gather views of organisations and residents to obtain feedback, plan a project, validate the decision-making process or fulfil a statutory duty. Various methods are used including online and postal surveys, focus groups exhibitions and use of social media channels. Specific details are set out in the next two sections. The councils produce an Annual Consultations Report.
Sub Principle: Engaging comprehensively with institutional stakeholders	Lead Officers	Evidence base
<p>18. Effectively engage with institutional stakeholders to ensure that the purpose, objectives and intended outcomes for each stakeholder relationship are clear so that outcomes are achieved successfully and sustainably.</p> <p>19. Develop formal and informal partnerships to allow for resources to be used more efficiently and outcomes achieved more effectively.</p> <p>20. Ensure that partnerships are based on trust, a shared commitment to change, a culture that promotes and accepts challenge among partners and that the added value of partnership working is explicit.</p>	<p>All Heads of Service/Service Managers</p> <p>All Heads of Service/Service Managers</p> <p>All Heads of Service/Service Managers</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Each council has a Communications and Engagement Strategy setting out how we encourage our stakeholders to voice their views on our work and services. These are available on each councils' website: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Communications and Engagement Strategy – South Oxfordshire District Council Communications and Engagement Strategy – Vale of White Horse District Council The councils have a Deputy Chief Executive with responsibility, set out in our constitution, for Partnerships who acts as the councils' representative in communication with our strategic partners. This role is also the lead for the Five Councils' Partnership.

Sub Principle: Engaging stakeholders effectively, including individual citizens and service users	Lead Officers	Evidence base
21. Establish a clear policy on the type of issues that the councils will meaningfully consult with or involve communities, individual citizens, service users and other stakeholders to ensure that service (or other) provision is contributing towards the achievement of intended outcomes.	All Heads of Service/Service Managers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The public are able to observe most business at council meetings and can register to speak to or ask questions about items on council or committee agendas. The agendas are published 5 working days ahead of the meetings and a calendar of meetings and explanation of the responsibilities for each meeting are published on the councils' websites: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Meetings – South Oxfordshire District Council ○ Meetings – Vale of White Horse District Council • Each council has a Communications and Engagement Strategy setting out how we encourage our stakeholders to voice their views on our work and services. These are available on each councils website: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Communications and Engagement Strategy – South Oxfordshire District Council ○ Communications and Engagement Strategy – Vale of White Horse District Council • We publish ways that residents can get involved and have their say in the councils' work through Consultation and Engagement activities. This includes details on each council's website and an option to register an interest to be kept informed of our consultations: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Consultations - South Oxfordshire District Council ○ Consultations - Vale of White Horse District Council • The above web pages also include specific guidance for consultation about planning policy and planning development by way of a Statement of Community Involvement. • Larger scale or longer-term projects may include their own ways of engaging with residents, such as through sounding boards and newsletters. For example the Didcot Garden Town delivery which spans both councils: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Didcot Garden Town – South Oxfordshire District Council ○ Didcot Garden Town - Vale of White Horse District Council • Both councils are working together on a Joint Local Plan which will inform planning policy and decisions for the districts. The consultation used interactive maps, a video and images designed to work on various
22. Ensure that communication methods are effective, and that members and officers are clear about their roles with regard to community engagement.	All Heads of Service/Service Managers	
23. Encourage, collect and evaluate the views and experiences of communities, citizens, service users and organisations of different backgrounds including reference to future needs.	All Heads of Service/Service Managers	
24. Implement effective feedback mechanisms in order to demonstrate how their views have been taken into account.	All Heads of Service/Service Managers	

<p>25. Balance feedback from more active stakeholder groups with other stakeholder groups to ensure inclusivity.</p>	<p>All Heads of Service/Service Managers</p>	<p>platforms. An Equalities Impact Screening Assessment ensured proper consideration to equality and diversity. The next stage is a consultation statement and a statement of preferred options for further comment. Details are published on each councils' website:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Joint Local Plan 2041 – South Oxfordshire District Council ○ Joint Local Plan 2041 – Vale of White Horse District Council
<p>26. Take account of the interests of future generations of taxpayers and service users.</p>	<p>All Heads of Service/Service Managers</p>	

Core Principle C. Defining outcomes in terms of sustainable economic, social, and environmental benefits.

Sub Principle: Defining outcomes	Lead Officers	Evidence base
<p>27. Have a clear vision set out in a corporate plan, which is an agreed formal statement of the councils' purpose and intended outcomes containing appropriate performance indicators, which provide the basis for the councils' overall strategy, planning and other decisions.</p>	<p>Head of Policy and Programmes</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Both councils have a four-year Corporate Plan setting out strategic themes with projects and performance measures associated with each theme. The plans are available on the councils' websites: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Corporate Plan 2020- 2024 - South Oxfordshire District Council ○ Corporate Plan 2020 – 2024 - Vale of White Horse District Council • The Corporate Plan for each council explains why each theme has been adopted and the aims over a four-year period and has focus on sustainability. This is due to be reviewed and a new plan adopted in 2024
<p>28. Specify the intended impact on, or changes for, stakeholders including citizens and service users which may be immediately or over the course of a year or longer.</p>	<p>Head of Policy and Programmes</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The councils have a risk management framework which includes corporate and operational Risk Registers to help identify, mitigate and manage the risks that may affect us achieving our stated aims. Individual projects include monitoring of the risks associated throughout the lifetime of the project through a risk register as part of our approach to project management.

<p>29. Deliver defined outcomes on a sustainable basis within the resources that will be available.</p> <p>30. Identify, mitigate and manage risks to the achievement of outcomes.</p> <p>31. Manage residents' expectations effectively with regard to determining priorities and making the best use of the resources available.</p>	<p>All Heads of Service/Service Managers</p> <p>All Heads of Service/Service Managers</p> <p>All Heads of Service/Service Managers</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Each council publishes a Corporate Performance Report on a quarterly basis which has explanations for key activities set out by each theme in the Corporate Plan as well as updates on performance and is monitored and updated by responsible officers. The Corporate Performance Report is available on each councils' website: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Corporate Performance - South Oxfordshire District Council Corporate performance - Vale of White Horse District Council All officers are aware of their responsibility to achieve value for money with council resources. The Corporate Plan provides residents with a detailed scheme of priorities.
<p>Sub Principle: Sustainable economic, social, and environmental benefits</p>	<p>Lead Officers</p>	<p>Evidence base</p>
<p>32. Consider and balance the combined economic, social, equality and environmental impact of policies, plans and decisions when taking decisions about service provision.</p> <p>33. Take a longer-term view with regard to decision making, taking account of risk and acting transparently where there are potential conflicts between the councils' intended outcomes and short-term factors such as the political cycle or financial constraints.</p>	<p>All Heads of Service/Service Managers</p> <p>All Heads of Service/Service Managers</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The councils' activities are guided by our four-year Corporate Plan and by fulfilling our statutory responsibilities. Key measures are reviewed and reported via quarterly and annual corporate plan performance reports. The reports are subject to an approval process by our senior management team, Scrutiny Committee, Climate and Ecological Emergency Advisory Committee and Cabinet which ensures the necessary checks and balances are in place around monitoring, evaluation, decision-making and policymaking. Our decision-making process includes statements explaining the implications of the decision affecting at least the following and these are embedded within our reporting and decision-making templates: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> climate and ecological legal financial. Other implications that may be considered are: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> equalities and diversity health and safety crime and disorder risks. Consultation is required with council leads for:

<p>34. Determine the wider public interest associated with balancing conflicting interests between achieving the various economic, social and environmental benefits, through consultation where possible, in order to ensure appropriate trade-offs.</p>	<p>All Heads of Service/Service Managers</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ legal advice ○ financial advice ○ procurement ○ infrastructure ○ equalities ○ communications. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● In keeping with the Public Services Social Value Act 2012, our Procurement Strategy requires us to consider how the economic, social and environmental wellbeing of our area may be improved when we buy public service contracts. Each council publishes a statement on its website for organisations and individuals selling to the council which covers adding social value. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Selling to the council – South Oxfordshire District Council ○ Selling to the council – Vale of White Horse District Council ● Each councils' Corporate Plan has taken account of the wider public interest as each has been developed following engagement with residents and took account of hundreds of responses that informed the priorities each council will deliver. ● Each council has declared a Climate Emergency and developed a Climate Action Plan. Regular reports and updates are published that tie in with each council's Corporate Plan: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Climate Action – South Oxfordshire District Council ○ Climate Action – Vale of White Horse District Council ● We plan and provide services and policies in a fair, inclusive and equal way to promote good relations as set out in our Corporate Equality Policy available on our website. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Equalities – South Oxfordshire District Council ○ Equalities – Vale of White Horse District Council
<p>35. Ensure fair access to services.</p>	<p>All Heads of Service/Service Managers</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Selling to the council – South Oxfordshire District Council ○ Selling to the council – Vale of White Horse District Council ● Each councils' Corporate Plan has taken account of the wider public interest as each has been developed following engagement with residents and took account of hundreds of responses that informed the priorities each council will deliver. ● Each council has declared a Climate Emergency and developed a Climate Action Plan. Regular reports and updates are published that tie in with each council's Corporate Plan: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Climate Action – South Oxfordshire District Council ○ Climate Action – Vale of White Horse District Council ● We plan and provide services and policies in a fair, inclusive and equal way to promote good relations as set out in our Corporate Equality Policy available on our website. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Equalities – South Oxfordshire District Council ○ Equalities – Vale of White Horse District Council

Core Principle D. Determining the interventions necessary to optimize the achievement of the intended outcomes.

Sub Principle: Determining interventions	Lead Officers	Evidence base
<p>36. Ensure decision makers receive objective and rigorous analysis of a variety of options</p>	<p>All Heads of Service/</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● As covered in evidence for points 32 to 35 above, our decision-making documents include the need to record associated risks and seek input

<p>indicating how intended outcomes would be achieved and including the risks associated with those options. Therefore, ensuring value for money is achieved however services are provided.</p> <p>37. Consider feedback from residents when making decisions about service improvements or where services are no longer required in order to prioritise competing demands within limited resources available including people, skills, land and assets and bearing in mind future impacts.</p>	<p>Service Managers</p> <p>All Heads of Service/ Service Managers</p>	<p>from key stakeholders. The documents also captures details of alternative options that we considered.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Our published decision records for decisions made by either council officers or members include: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ A clear explanation of the reasons for the decision and the assessment criteria used ○ a statement about alternative options that were considered where appropriate ○ a list of consultees with brief comments, including from the councils' risk and insurance officer. • We publish ways that residents can get involved and have their say in the councils' work through consultation and engagement activities. This includes details on each council's website and an option to register an interest to be kept informed of our consultations: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Consultations - South Oxfordshire District Council ○ Consultations - Vale of White Horse District Council • The above web pages also include specific guidance for consultation about planning policy and planning development by way of a Statement of Community Involvement. • Larger scale or longer-term projects may include their own ways of engaging with residents, such as through sounding boards and newsletters. For example the Didcot Garden Town delivery which spans both councils: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Didcot Garden Town – South Oxfordshire District Council ○ Didcot Garden Town - Vale of White Horse District Council
<p>Sub Principle: Planning interventions</p>	<p>Lead Officers</p>	<p>Evidence base</p>
<p>38. Establish and implement robust planning and control cycles that cover strategic and operational plans, priorities and targets.</p>	<p>All Heads of Service/ Service Managers</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Both councils have a four-year Corporate Plan with projects and performance measures associated with each strategic theme. The plans are available on the councils' websites: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Corporate Plan 2020- 2024 - South Oxfordshire District Council ○ Corporate Plan 2020 – 2024 - Vale of White Horse District Council • Both councils have a Performance Management Process 'Let's Talk'. This involves continuous constructive conversations between council officers and their

39. Engage with internal and external stakeholders in determining how services and other courses of action should be planned and delivered.	All Heads of Service/ Service Managers	<p>line manager or supervisor. Goals and objectives are identified for the coming 12 months along with support and development needs to achieve agreed targets..</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Our Annual Budget Setting Process is explained in our reports on the Revenue Budget and Capital Programme presented to each council’s Cabinet, Scrutiny Committee and Council for approval. Issues affecting the budget setting are listed along with reflection of the budget base estimated in the previous year Medium Term Financial Plan. The annual budget follows a programme of internal scrutiny and challenge across the council by the Head of Finance and Strategic Finance Team. The budget information is available on each councils’ website by year of budget and has supporting documents including the Medium-Term Financial Plan: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Annual budget information – South Oxfordshire District Council ○ Annual budget information – Vale of White Horse District Council
40. Consider and monitor risks facing each partner when working collaboratively including shared risks.	All Heads of Service/ Service Managers	
41. Ensure arrangements are flexible and agile so that the mechanisms for delivering outputs can be adapted to changing circumstances.	All Heads of Service/ Service Managers	
42. Establish appropriate key performance indicators (KPIs) as part of the planning process in order to identify how the performance of services and projects is to be measured.	All Heads of Service/ Service Managers	
43. Ensure capacity exists to generate the information required to review service quality regularly.	All Heads of Service/ Service Managers	
44. Prepare budgets in accordance with organisational objectives, strategies and the medium-term financial plan.	Head of Finance	
	Head of Finance	

45. Inform medium- and long-term resource planning by drawing up realistic estimates of revenue and capital expenditure aimed at developing a sustainable funding strategy.		
Sub Principle: Optimising achievement of intended outcomes	Lead Officers	Evidence base
46. Ensure the medium-term financial plan integrates and balances service priorities, affordability and other resource constraints.	Strategic Finance Manager/ S151 Officer	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Each council has a Treasury Management Strategy describing the management of cashflow, banking, money market and capital transactions which is approved annually for the year ahead. A report on activity and performance against the strategy for the previous year is presented to the Joint Audit and Governance Committee and includes a review of economic conditions and factors impacting investments. Both the annual reports and the strategies are available on each councils' website: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Treasury Management - South Oxfordshire District Council ○ Treasury Management - Vale of White Horse District Council • A Medium-Term Financial Plan providing a forward budget model for the next five years is agreed as part of each council's annual budget setting process. • Our Annual Budget Setting Process is explained in our reports on the Revenue Budget and Capital Programme presented to each council's Cabinet, Scrutiny Committee and Council for approval. Issues affecting the budget setting are listed along with reflection of the budget base estimated in the previous year Medium Term Financial Plan. The annual budget follows a programme of internal scrutiny and challenge across the council by the Head of Finance and Strategic Finance Team. The budget information is available on each councils' website by year of budget and has supporting documents including the Medium-Term Financial Plan: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Annual budget information – South Oxfordshire District Council ○ Annual budget information – Vale of White Horse District Council • In keeping with the Public Services Social Value Act 2012, our Procurement Strategy requires us to consider how the economic, social and environmental wellbeing of our area may be improved when we buy public service contracts.
47. Ensure the budgeting process is all-inclusive, taking into account the full cost of operations over the medium and longer term.	Strategic Finance Manager/ S151 Officer	
48. Ensure the medium-term financial plan sets the context for ongoing decisions on significant delivery issues or responses to changes in the external environment that may arise during the budgetary period in order for outcomes to be achieved while optimising resource usage.	Strategic Finance Manager/ S151 Officer	
49. Ensure the achievement of 'social value' through service planning and commissioning.	All Heads of Service/ Service Managers	

		<p>Each council publishes a statement on its website for organisations and individuals selling to the council which covers adding social value.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Selling to the council – South Oxfordshire District Council ○ Selling to the council – Vale of White Horse District Council
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Core Principle E. Developing the councils’ capacity, including the capability of its leadership and the individuals within it.

Sub Principle: Developing the councils’ capacity	Lead Officers	Evidence base
50. Review operations, performance and use of assets on a regular basis to ensure their continuing effectiveness.	All Heads of Service/ Service Managers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Both councils operate a shared service, although remaining separate legal and sovereign entities so benefit from partnership and collaborative working across all service areas, for example working together on a Joint Local Plan 2041. The councils jointly work with other organisations for service delivery, for example through the 5 Councils Partnership. • Each council has identified organisations that can impact upon council services and representatives contribute through forums and committees that are responsible for them to maintain an effective partnership. The lists and representatives are available on each council’s website: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Partnership organisations – South Oxfordshire District Council ○ Partnership organisations – Vale of White Horse District Council • South Oxfordshire District Council recognises the benefit from collaborating and working in partnership. An example is set out in the Corporate Plan objective to protect and restore our natural world which lists projects to work in partnership and to establish a Local Nature Partnership now established. The plan is available on the council website: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Corporate Plan 2020- 2024 - South Oxfordshire District Council • Vale of White Horse District Council has a specific theme of working in partnership within its four-year Corporate Plan. This sets out a commitment to partnership working with other councils, authorities and businesses, non-profit organisations, community and residents’ groups to achieve our aims and objectives effectively, efficiently and fairly. The plan is available on the council website: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Corporate Plan 2020 – 2024 - Vale of White Horse District Council • Both councils have a Performance Management Process ‘Let’s Talk’. This involves continuous constructive conversations between council officers and their line manager or supervisor. Goals and objectives are identified for the coming 12
51. Improve resource use through appropriate application of techniques such as benchmarking and other options in order to determine how the councils’ resources are allocated so that outcomes are achieved effectively and efficiently.	All Heads of Service/ Service Managers	
52. Recognise the benefits of partnerships and collaborative working where added value can be achieved.	All Heads of Service/ Service Managers	
53. Develop and maintain an effective workforce plan to enhance the strategic allocation of resources.	All Heads of Service/ Service Managers	

		<p>months along with support and development needs to achieve agreed targets. The process includes training for managers or supervisors who need to review performance.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Each service area within the councils has a business recovery team and Business Resilience Plan which feeds into the corporate plan, where critical processes and contingencies are mapped. • Our internal audit team have responsibility to review, appraise and report on the soundness and adequacy of our control systems and also our economical, efficient and effective use of resources.
Sub Principle: Developing the capability of the councils' leadership and other individuals.	Lead Officers	Evidence base
<p>54. Develop protocols to ensure that elected and appointed leaders negotiate with each other regarding their respective roles early on in the relationship and that a shared understanding of roles and objectives is maintained.</p> <p>55. Publish a statement that specifies the types of decisions that are delegated and those reserved for the collective decision making of the governing body.</p> <p>56. Ensure the leaders and the chief executive have clearly defined and distinctive leadership roles within a structure whereby the chief executive leads the councils in implementing strategy and</p>	<p>Head of Legal and Democratic</p> <p>Head of Legal and Democratic</p> <p>Chief Executive</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The councils deliver mandatory councillor training for those newly appointed to the role. This is supported by: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ a clear three-month training plan ○ members handbook ○ online resources ○ a 'buddy system' to provide support to those new to the role • Our Constitution includes a protocol for interaction between officers and members and a scheme of delegation. • Part 2 of the Constitution covers decision making processes and the Scheme of Delegation set out functions which are the responsibility of the Cabinet, Council and local choice functions, and delegation to officers. The constitution can be found on each councils' website: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Constitution – South Oxfordshire District Council ○ Constitution – Vale of White Horse District Council • We have job descriptions in place setting out roles and responsibilities for all officers including our Chief Executive and senior management roles • Our senior officers and managers have development plans set out as part of their regular review under our Performance Management process. • We have an Induction Programme for officers which includes mandatory training and procedures in addition to service area specific requirements and personalisation to the individual officer.

<p>managing the delivery of services and other outputs set by members and each provides a check and a balance for each other's authority.</p> <p>57. Develop the capabilities of members and senior management to achieve effective shared leadership and to enable the organisation to respond successfully to changing legal and policy demands as well as economic, political and environmental changes and risks by ensuring:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ members and officers have access to appropriate induction tailored to their role and that ongoing training and development matching individual and organisational requirements is available and encouraged; ○ members and officers have the appropriate skills, knowledge, resources and support to fulfil their roles and responsibilities and ensuring that they are able to update their knowledge on a continuing basis; and ○ personal, organisational and system-wide 	<p>Head of Legal and Democratic / People and Culture Manager</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Job Descriptions are in place for each role which set out the expected skills, knowledge and responsibilities. Our performance management programme, as covered in the section above, identifies ongoing training and development needs. • Each service area produces a Monthly Members Update which reports on service team performance and discusses key tasks and issues as well as budget and staffing pressures. The updates are discussed at monthly catch up meetings between the Head of Service and the relevant portfolio holder. • Our Annual Governance Statements, also see point 84 below, sets out actions for the coming year following review of the governance arrangements in order to address any issues identified. • All members undergo an induction process upon being elected with bespoke training provide, some of which is mandatory. • The councils operate a corporate training support programme.
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<p>development through shared learning, including lessons learnt from governance weaknesses both internal and external.</p>		
<p>58. Ensure that there are structures in place to encourage public participation.</p>	<p>All Heads of Service/ Service Managers</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Both councils encourage participation by service teams in Local Government Association peer-supported improvement programmes, including peer challenges.
<p>59. Take steps to consider the leadership's effectiveness and ensure leaders are open to constructive feedback from peer review and inspections.</p>	<p>Head of People and Culture</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Both councils have a Performance Management Process 'Let's Talk'. This involves continuous constructive conversations between council officers and their line manager or supervisor. Goals and objectives are identified for the coming 12 months along with support and development needs to achieve agreed targets. The process includes training for managers or supervisors who need to review performance. The Chief Executive Officer is held to account by the Leaders of the councils and their performance is monitored by the Joint Staff Committee.
<p>60. Hold staff to account through regular performance reviews which take account of training or development needs.</p>	<p>All Heads of Service/ Service Managers</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> We have a Corporate Training System 'LEAH' to deliver training modules and to ensure key policies and procedures are read by council officers. This includes statutory policies such as those covering data protection and health and safety.
<p>61. Ensure arrangements are in place to maintain the health and wellbeing of the workforce and support individuals in maintaining their own physical and mental wellbeing.</p>	<p>All Heads of Service/ Service Managers</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Both councils promote and support the need to take care of Personal Wellbeing both physically and mentally. Our internal intranet has a list of wellbeing resources officers can use, which includes a free and confidential telephone support programme and 'Healthy Advantage' app. A wellbeing group works with our Strategic HR team to identify wellbeing activities.

<p>Core Principle F. Managing risks and performance through robust internal control and strong public financial management.</p>		
<p>Sub Principle: Managing risk</p>	<p>Lead Officers</p>	<p>Evidence base</p>
<p>62. Recognise that risk management is an integral part of all activities which must</p>	<p>Head of Finance/ Internal Audit Manager</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The councils have a Risk Management Framework comprising a Risk Management Strategy and Risk Management Policy and Guidance. These documents set out the approach to assessing and managing risks across all

be considered in all aspects of decision making.

63. Implement robust and integrated risk management arrangements and ensure that they are working effectively.

64. Ensure that responsibilities for managing individual risks are clearly allocated.

Head of Finance/ Internal Audit Manager

All Heads of Service/ Service Managers

operations and are available to officers within our intranet. The overall process for managing risks is:



- The approach includes regular review and update of corporate and operational **Risk Registers** to help manage the risks that may affect us achieving our stated aims. The risks identified are aligned with our Corporate Plan objectives and specific officers are named as owners of each risk.
- A **Corporate Risk Review** is repeated each half year to the councils' Joint Audit and Governance Committee. This reports on progress of the corporate risk registers as outlined in the risk management strategy.
- Individual projects include monitoring of the risks associated throughout the lifetime of the project as part of our approach to project management.
- The councils internal audit function takes a risk-based approach.

Sub Principle: Managing performance	Lead Officers	Evidence base
<p>65. Monitor service delivery effectively including planning, specification, execution and independent post implementation review.</p> <p>66. Make decisions based on relevant, clear objective analysis and advice pointing out the implications and risks inherent in the councils' financial, social and environmental position and outlook.</p> <p>67. Ensure effective audit, scrutiny or oversight function is in place which encourages constructive challenge and debate on policies and objectives before, during and after decisions are made thereby enhancing the councils' performance and that of any organisation for which it is responsible.</p> <p>68. Provide members and senior management with regular reports on service delivery plans and on progress towards outcome achievement.</p>	<p>All Heads of Service/ Service Managers</p> <p>All Heads of Service/ Service Managers</p> <p>Head of Legal and Democratic / Head of Finance/ Internal Audit Manager</p> <p>All Heads of Service/ Service Managers</p> <p>All Heads of Service/ Service Managers</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Our decision-making process includes statements explaining the implications of the decision affecting at least the following and these are embedded within our reporting and decision making templates: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ climate and ecological ○ legal ○ financial. Other implications that may be considered are: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ equalities and diversity ○ health and safety ○ crime and disorder ○ risks. Consultation is required with council leads for: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ legal advice ○ financial advice ○ climate and ecological advice ○ procurement ○ infrastructure ○ equalities ○ communications. • Each council's committee structure, as set out in our Constitution, which includes a Scrutiny Committee with functions including <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ review and scrutiny of decisions made by the Cabinet, Council, committees and officers ○ review the councils' progress in achieving policy aims and performance targets ○ review the performance of individual services or Cabinet member portfolios ○ consider and make recommendations on mechanisms to encourage and enhance community participation in the development of policy options. • Heads of service have monthly catch-up meetings with the relevant portfolio holder to provide a Monthly Members Update covering progress within the service area.

69. Ensure there is consistency between specification stages (such as budgets) and post implementation reporting (e.g. financial statements).		
Sub Principle: Robust internal control	Lead Officers	Evidence base
<p>70. Align the risk management strategy and policies on internal control with achieving objectives.</p> <p>71. Evaluate and monitor the councils risk management and internal control arrangements on a regular basis.</p> <p>72. Ensure effective counter fraud, anti-corruption and whistleblowing arrangements are in place.</p> <p>73. Ensure additional assurance on the overall adequacy and effectiveness of the framework of governance, risk management and control is provided by the internal auditor.</p> <p>74. Ensure an effective audit and scrutiny function is in place which is independent of the</p>	<p>Head of Finance/ Internal Audit Manager</p> <p>Head of Finance/ Internal Audit Manager</p> <p>Head of Finance/ Internal Audit Manager/Head of Legal and Democratic</p> <p>Head of Finance/ Internal Audit Manager</p> <p>Head of Finance/ Internal</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • (70) As set out in Core Principle F above, our Risk Management Strategy aligns identified risks with our Corporate Plan objectives. • (71) There is a half yearly review of risks which is reported to our Joint Audit and Governance Committees. • (71) In line with the Public Sector Internal Audit Standards (PSIAS), the internal audit and risk manager (chief audit executive) provides an annual internal opinion and report to the Joint Audit and Governance Committee (JAGC) on the overall effectiveness of the councils' governance framework, risk management and control. The annual opinion is used by the councils to inform the annual governance statement. • (72) The councils have an in-house Counter Fraud Team and Corporate Fraud is managed through our internal audit team. Our approach to procurement is to ensure high standards of conduct are in place for employees engaged in procurement activity including honesty, integrity, impartiality and objectivity. Our Whistleblowing Policy is available to all staff through our intranet. Contractual policies for staff are included on each council's website and include our Anti-Fraud, Corruption and Bribery Policy and Anti Money Laundering Policy: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Contractual Policies - South Oxfordshire District Council ○ Contractual Policies - Vale of White Horse District Council • 73 & 74 ties in with 87 & 88 • (73) The internal audit plan is a risk-based plan, which is developed through consideration of the corporate risk registers and corporate objectives. The plan focuses on areas where internal audit can provide assurance on the effectiveness of governance, risk management, and internal control processes.

<p>executive and accountable to each council and which</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ provides a further source of effective assurance regarding arrangements for managing risk and maintaining an effective control environment; and ○ that recommendations are listened to and acted upon. 	<p>Audit Manager/Head of Legal and Democratic Services</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • (73) Quarterly updates are provided to the JAGC on the internal audit plan, other audit work (e.g. government returns), and status of internal audit recommendations. • (73) Work is underway to establish an organisational wide assurance map. The purpose of assurance mapping is to draw all sources of assurance together in one chart or table to show the areas where assurance is received. It can be used as a tool for governance arrangements by management and the audit committee to take an objective view of the councils' risks, identify any gaps and confirm 'Do we really know what we think we know?'. It also informs the internal audit plan
<p>Sub Principle: Managing data</p>	<p>Lead Officers</p>	<p>Evidence base</p>
<p>75. Ensure effective arrangements are in place for the safe collection, storage, use and sharing of data, including processes to safeguard personal data.</p> <p>76. Ensure effective arrangements are in place and operating effectively when sharing data with other bodies.</p> <p>77. Review and audit regularly the quality and accuracy of data used in decision making and performance monitoring.</p>	<p>Data Protection Officer/ All Heads of Service/ Service Managers</p> <p>Data Protection Officer/ All Heads of Service/ Service Managers</p> <p>Head of Finance/Internal Audit Manager</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • We have an Information Governance Framework of policies, procedures and guidance which covers topics across four main themes of: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Data Protection and Privacy ○ Information Access and Rights ○ Information Security ○ Records Management. • Arrangements for data sharing with other bodies is detailed within contractual clauses or within Data Sharing/Processing Agreements for partnerships which are not contract based. • The need for accuracy of information is a key data protection principle set out in our Data Protection Policy. • We have an Information Governance Team which liaises with service areas to provide advice and review compliance with the requirements of our Information Governance Framework. We also use the Information Commissioner's Office self-assessment tool to monitor the councils' compliance with expected Information Governance Accountability requirements. • We have a Security Policy to ensure that the requirement for and use of critical employee facing information technologies, within the councils' managed network service infrastructure, are properly managed to minimise any security risks to the business.
<p>Sub Principle: Strong public financial management</p>	<p>Lead Officers</p>	<p>Evidence base</p>

<p>78. Ensure financial management supports both long term achievement of outcomes and short-term financial and operational performance.</p> <p>79. Ensure well developed financial management is integrated at all levels of planning and control, including management of financial risks and controls.</p>	<p>S151 Officer</p> <p>S151 Officer</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A Medium-Term Financial Plan providing a forward budget model for the next five years is agreed as part of each council’s annual budget setting process. • Each council has a Treasury Management Strategy describing the management of cashflow, banking, money market and capital transactions which is approved annually for the year ahead. A report on activity and performance against the strategy for the previous year is presented to the Joint Audit and Governance Committee and includes a review of economic conditions and factors impacting investments. Both the annual reports and the strategies are available on each councils’ website: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Treasury Management - South Oxfordshire District Council ○ Treasury Management - Vale of White Horse District Council • Part 3 of the Constitution covers codes, protocols and procedures and includes Financial Procedure Rules setting out how the councils’ financial affairs are to be managed. This includes the following: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Heads of Service, in consultation with the Head of Finance, prepare, monitor and report on financial plans for the services for which they are responsible. ○ The Head of Finance ensures there are adequate levels of internal control and check taking into account the risks involved. <p>The constitution can be found on each councils’ website:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Constitution – South Oxfordshire District Council ○ Constitution – Vale of White Horse District Council
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Core Principle G. Implementing good practices in transparency, reporting, and audit to deliver effective accountability.

Sub Principle: Implementing good practice in transparency	Lead Officers	Evidence base
<p>80. Write and communicate reports for the public and other stakeholders in a fair, balanced and understandable style appropriate to the intended audience ensuring</p>	<p>All Heads of Service/ Service Managers</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Both councils have a style guide published internally, which emphasises the need for plain English, encourages use of active language and discourages the use of jargon and acronyms. • Each council has a Communications and Engagement Strategy setting out our commitment to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Have a clear and defined purpose and audience ○ Be accessible and inclusive

<p>that they are easy to access and interrogate.</p> <p>81. Strike a balance between providing the right amount of information to satisfy transparency demands and enhance public scrutiny while not being too onerous to provide and for users to understand.</p>	<p>All Heads of Service/ Service Managers</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ To be timely with our communications and feedback ○ The be concise and honest <p>The strategies are available on each council’s website:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Communications and Engagement Strategy – South Oxfordshire District Council ● Communications and Engagement Strategy – Vale of White Horse District Council ● Both councils’ websites offer easy access to up to date information.
<p>Sub Principle: Implementing good practice in reporting</p>	<p>Lead Officers</p>	<p>Evidence base</p>
<p>82. Report at least annually on performance, value for money and the stewardship of its resources to stakeholders in a timely and understandable way.</p> <p>83. Ensure members and senior management own the results.</p> <p>84. Ensure robust arrangements for assessing the extent to which the principles contained in this framework have been applied and publish the results on this assessment including an action plan for improvement and evidence to demonstrate good governance in an annual governance statement.</p>	<p>S151 Officer/ Internal Audit Manager</p> <p>Chief Executive Head of Finance</p> <p>All Heads of Service/</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Each year both councils’ statement of accounts is subject to an external audit review which includes an assessment of whether the councils have made proper arrangements to secure value for money in its use of resources. The External Auditor’s report is embedded within the approved statement of accounts which are published annually on each council’s website: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● External Audit of Accounts - South Oxfordshire District Council ● External Audit of Accounts - Vale of White Horse District Council ● An Annual Governance Statement forms a part of each councils’ statement of accounts. This reports on the extent of the councils’ compliance with their principles and practices of good governance, including how we have monitored the effectiveness of the governance arrangements and sets out action for planned changes in the coming year. This statement provides an assurance to the council and its stakeholders that good governance arrangements are in place. The Annual Governance Statement is published on each councils’ website: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Annual Governance Statement – South Oxfordshire District Council ● Annual Governance Statement – Vale of White Horse District Council

<p>85. Ensure that the framework is applied to jointly managed or shared service organisations as appropriate.</p> <p>86. Ensure the performance information that accompanies the financial statements is prepared on a consistent and timely basis and the statements allow for comparison with other similar organisations.</p>	<p>Service Managers</p> <p>All Heads of Service/ Service Managers</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Information that accompanies the financial statements is compiled in accordance with the CIPFA Code of Practice for Local Authority Accounting.
<p>Sub Principle: Assurance and effective accountability</p>	<p>Lead Officers</p>	<p>Evidence base</p>
<p>87. Ensure that recommendations for corrective action made by external audit are acted upon.</p> <p>88. Ensure an effective internal audit service with direct access to members is in place which provides assurance with regard to governance arrangements and that recommendations are acted upon.</p> <p>89. Welcome peer challenge, reviews and inspections from regulatory bodies and implement recommendations.</p> <p>90. Gain assurance on risks associated with delivering</p>	<p>Head of Finance/S151 officer</p> <p>All Heads of Service/ Service Managers</p> <p>All Heads of Service/ Service Managers</p> <p>Head of Finance/ All</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The External Auditor’s report is embedded within the approved statement of accounts which are published annually on each council’s website: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> External Audit of Accounts - South Oxfordshire District Council External Audit of Accounts - Vale of White Horse District Council Recommendations raised by External Auditors are discussed at the Joint Audit and Governance Committees and actioned accordingly. The structure of the councils in house internal audit function is such that the internal audit and risk manager (chief audit executive) reports functionally to the Joint Audit and Governance Committee (JAGC), with unfettered access to the co-chairs of the committee. The internal audit and risk manager provides assurance to the JAGC with regard to governance arrangements through individual audit reports and a quarterly update report. Reports from the councils’ Joint Audit and Governance Committee are published though each council’s website: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Joint Audit and Governance Committee - South Oxfordshire District Council Joint Audit and Governance Committee - Vale of White Horse District Council

<p>services through third parties and evidence this in the annual governance statement</p> <p>91. Ensure that when working in partnership, arrangements for accountability are clear and that the need for wider public accountability has been recognised and met.</p>	<p>Heads of Service/ Service Managers</p> <p>All Heads of Service/ Service Managers</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Quarterly, internal audit recommendations are reviewed in detail with action owners and progress is reported to the JAGC. <p>89. (also see 59)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Member Peer Review management Peer reviews
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Listening Learning Leading

Council report



Report of Head of Legal and Democratic

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To: COUNCIL

DATE: 16 May 2024

Appointments to committees, panels and joint committees 2024/25

Recommendations

That Council:

1. appoints the committees and panels for the 2024/25 year, allocates seats to each political group and appoints councillors and substitutes to sit on them in accordance with paragraphs 9-13 of this report and as set out in the schedule circulated at the meeting;
2. appoints chairs and vice-chairs as set out in the schedule circulated at the meeting;
3. appoints members to the Community Grants Panel in accordance with paragraphs 15 and 16 of this report and as set out in the schedule circulated prior to the meeting;
4. appoints members to the Climate and Ecological Emergencies Advisory Committee in accordance with paragraphs 17 and 18 of this report and as set out in the schedule circulated at the meeting;
5. appoints members to the Licensing Acts Committee in accordance with paragraphs 19-21 of this report and as set out in the schedule circulated at the meeting;
6. appoints a representative and a substitute on the Oxfordshire Joint Health Overview and Scrutiny Committee;
7. appoints a representative and a substitute on the Thames Valley Police and Crime Panel;
8. appoints three representatives to the Future Oxfordshire Partnership Scrutiny Panel;
9. authorises the head of legal and democratic to make appointments to any vacant committee or panel seat and substitute positions in accordance with the wishes of the relevant group leader.

Purpose of report

1. This report invites Council to agree appointments to those committees required to be politically balanced together with the Climate and Ecological Emergencies Advisory Committee, Community Grants Panel and the Licensing Acts Committee. It also invites Council to make appointments to joint bodies.

Background

2. Section 15 of the Local Government and Housing Act 1989 imposes a duty on a local authority at its annual meeting, or as soon as possible after it, to review the allocation of seats on the committees of the Council between the political groups. The Council may carry out such a review at any other time and may do so if requested by a political group.
3. In summary the Council has a duty to ensure the following principles are adhered to:
 - (i) where there is more than one political group, not all seats are allocated to the same political group
 - (ii) a majority group should get the majority of seats on each committee
 - (iii) the seats allocated to groups on a committee reflect the membership of the Council as a whole
 - (iv) the allocation of the total number of seats on all committees reflects the membership as a whole.
4. Ordinary committees are those that have decision-making powers but excluding the Licensing Acts Committee and area committees.
5. Ungrouped members are not entitled to committee seats and any seats given are at the discretion of Council.

Strategic Objectives

6. This report supports the council's corporate plan theme of openness and accountability. It is also in line with the council's requirement to review the political complexion of committees and other bodies, having regard to the Local Government and Housing Act 1989.

Political balance

7. The current composition of the Council's 36 seats by political group is as follows:
 - Conservative – 1 (0%) as not a group
 - Green Group – 8 (22.86%)
 - Henley Residents Group -3 (8.57%)
 - Labour and Co-operative Group - 3 (8.57%)
 - Liberal Democrat Group – 21 (60%)

8. The Local Government (Committees and Political Groups) Regulations 1990 require a constituted political group to be two or more members. As such the Conservative member is designated as a non-group member.

Composition of committees

9. The ordinary committees and panels that are required to be politically balanced both individually, and overall, are set out below.

Committee	Members	Comments
South Scrutiny Committee	9	
Joint Scrutiny Committee	5	10 in total with Vale of White Horse District Council
Joint Audit and Governance Committee	4	8 in total with Vale of White Horse District Council
Planning Committee	11	
General Licensing Committee	12	
Community Governance and Electoral Issues Committee	6	
Appeals Panel	3	
Joint Staff Committee	5	10 in total with Vale of White Horse District Council
Totals	55	

- The membership of the General Licensing Committee and the Licensing Acts Committee are the same, although they are two separate entities. This allows for a sufficiently large, well trained pool of councillors from which to draw the Taxi Licensing and Licensing Panels and avoids confusion as to which members are on which committee. These committees may appoint the same, or different chairs and vice chairs.

10. The terms of reference of the council's committees and panels are set out in the constitution.

11. The political balance calculation and the entitlements to seats on committees are set out in the tables below. Fractional entitlements of less than one half are rounded down and entitlements of one half or more are rounded up. Some adjustments must be made to ensure that the overall percentage of seats is correctly apportioned.

Groups	Group members	Number of committee seats
Liberal Democrat	21	33
Green	8	13
Henley Residents	3	5
Labour and Co-operative	3	5

TOTAL	35	56(-1)
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	Green	HRG	Labour	Liberal Democrat	Total
Appeals Panel 3 seats	1	0	0	2	3
Community Governance and Electoral Issues Committee 6 seats	1	1	1	4	7(-1)
General Licensing Committee 12 seats	3	1	1	7	12
Joint Audit and Governance 4 seats	1	0	0	2	3(+1)
Joint Scrutiny 5 seats	1	0	0	3	4(+1)
JSC 5 seats	1	0	0	3	4(+1)
Planning 11 seats	3	1	1	7	12(-1)
Scrutiny 9 seats	2	1	1	5	9
Total	13	4(+1)	4(+1)	33	56(-1)

- To obtain balance across the committees and overall, the Henley Residents Group and Labour and Co-operative Group must each gain an additional seat.
- Council also needs to agree the adjustments shown in brackets including a reduction of a member on the Planning Committee.

12. In agreement with the groups the vacant seat on the Joint Audit and Governance committee will be held by the Labour and Co-operative Group and the vacant seat on the Joint Scrutiny Committee will be held by the Henley Residents Group. The Liberal Democrat Group will lose a seat on the Community Governance and Electoral Issues Committee and take the vacant seat on the Joint Staff Committee. In addition, the Liberal Democrat Group has agreed to lose a seat on the planning Committee to achieve balance across the committees as required by legislation.

13. The Council does not have to adhere to the political groups regulations if:

- A political group does not use up its allocation.
- Notice of alternative proposed allocations is given to all members and no member objects.

Substitutes

14. Each political group is entitled to the same number of preferred substitutes as the number of ordinary seats it holds on a committee or panel, and up to a maximum of three preferred substitutes where it has fewer than three members on a committee or panel. All substitutes for regulatory committees must have met the relevant training requirement, regardless of whether they are preferred or other substitutes.

Community Grants Panel

15. There is a maximum of nine seats (balanced politically) on the Community Grants Panel. This panel is not subject to the regulations detailed in paragraph 3 of this report and, therefore, has no effect on the overall allocation of seats. For this panel to be politically balanced alone, five seats are allocated to the Liberal Democrat Group, two to the Green Group and one seat each to the Henley Residents Group and Labour Group.

16. In accordance with the Council's constitution, each political group is entitled to substitutes as detailed in paragraph 14 above.

Climate and Ecological Emergencies Advisory Committee

17. This advisory committee, comprising 12 members, is not subject to the regulations detailed in paragraph 3 of this report and, therefore, has no effect on the overall allocation of seats. A committee of 12 provides for representation from all the groups – three Greens, one Henley Resident, one Labour and Co-operative and 7 Liberal Democrats.

18. In accordance with the Council's constitution, each political group is entitled to substitutes as detailed in paragraph 14 above.

Licensing Acts Committee

19. The Licensing Acts Committee is a statutory committee and is not required to be included in the calculation of political balance. The whole committee meets rarely to deal with licensing and gambling policy matters but a membership of 12 provides a pool of councillors from which panels of three can be drawn to deal with hearings relating to premises licence applications and reviews, and gambling matters.

20. Council has previously agreed to appoint a committee in accordance with the political balance of the Council. The membership will mirror the membership of the General Licensing Committee and will, therefore, be politically balanced but will not in itself contribute to the total political balance of the council's committees.

21. As a statutory committee with a specified membership substitutes may not be appointed.

Eligibility to sit on committees and panels.

- Any member of the council may be appointed to any committee with the following exceptions and caveats:
- No member of Cabinet may sit on any Scrutiny Committee;
- No member of Cabinet may sit on the Joint Audit and Governance Committee;
- No member of Cabinet may sit on the Planning Committee;
- The Chair or Vice Chair of Council may not be the Chair or Vice Chair of any committee or panel;
- No Cabinet member may be the Chair or Vice Chair of any committee or panel with the exception of the Joint Staff Committee;
- Most panels meet during the daytime, and only members who have some daytime availability should be selected for these panels. This includes General Licensing Committee and Licensing Acts Committee, which do most of their work through daytime panels.
- The requirement for members to declare disclosable pecuniary interests, other registrable interests and non-registrable interests or any conflicts of interest applies to all committees and panels.

Appointments

22. Officers have discussed and agreed the adjustments with group leaders and the non-group member, set out in this report, and have invited group leaders to submit the names of members they wish to sit on each of the above committees. A table of nominations will be circulated prior to the meeting.

Joint Health Overview and Scrutiny Committee

23. Council is invited to appoint a representative and a named substitute to the Oxfordshire Joint Health Overview and Scrutiny Committee.

Thames Valley Police and Crime Panel

24. Council is invited to appoint a representative and a substitute to the Thames Valley Police and Crime Panel.

Future Oxfordshire Partnership Scrutiny Panel

25. The Scrutiny Panel is non-statutory and is only advisory, unlike the council's scrutiny functions. The ability of the constituent council scrutiny committees is primary regarding the statutory ability to scrutinise the Future Oxfordshire Partnership. The chair will be elected by the members of the Scrutiny Panel.

26. As a non-statutory panel, the Scrutiny Panel does not need to be politically balanced, but councils are asked to have regard to their own political balance in making appointments.

27. Council is invited to appoint three representatives to the Scrutiny Panel.

Financial implications

28. There are no direct financial implications.

Legal implications

29. These are set out in the body of the report.

Climate and ecological impact implications

30. There are no climate or ecological implications arising from this report.

Equalities implications

31. There are no equality implications arising from this report.

Conclusion

32. In deciding the committees and panels it wishes to establish for the 2024/25-year, Council is required to allocate seats to political groups in the same proportion as they hold on the council as a whole. Against that background, Council is invited to establish the committees and panels set out in the table in paragraph nine of this report and to appoint councillors to them. Council is also invited to appoint councillors to the Community Grants Panel, the Climate and Ecological Emergencies Advisory Committee and the Licensing Acts Committee and to appoint representatives to the Oxfordshire Joint Health Overview and Scrutiny Committee, the Thames Valley Police and Crime Panel and the Future Oxfordshire Partnership Scrutiny Panel. If all committee and panel seats and substitute places are not filled at the meeting, Council is invited to delegate authority to the head of legal and democratic to make appointments in accordance with the wishes of the relevant group leader.

Background Papers: None.