
Agenda Item: Terms of Reference

Meeting Date: Tuesday, 20th May 2025

Contact Officer: Deputy Town Clerk

The purpose of this report is for Members to review and recommend terms of reference for the Committee for the forthcoming municipal year.

Background

At the Annual Council Meeting held on 7th May 2025, it was resolved that terms of reference for each Committee would be reviewed at each meeting in the current meeting cycle.

Current Situation

As this is a new Committee, the items from the former Climate, Biodiversity & Planning Committee are listed below as initial suggestions.

- a) To work to achieve net zero emissions in WTC vehicles, heating and electricity (scopes 1 and 2) by 2028, in line with the Council's Climate Emergency resolution made in June 2019. To identify ways for event's organisers to reduce the carbon footprint of events held on council ground. Any financial or policy change implications should be recommended to the Council.
- b) To manage the Council's Environmental Spaces, including Amenity Areas, Witney Lake and Country Park and Tiny Forest (except recreation grounds). Any financial or policy change implications should be recommended to the Council.
- c) To oversee the management of the Council's tree stock across the town.
- d) To engage with Central Government, West Oxfordshire District Council, Oxfordshire County Council, relevant stake holders and other organisations to initiate local action on climate change (towards achieving net zero carbon emissions) air & water pollution, and other environmental issues within the town.
- e) To encourage biodiversity and healthy recreation in the environmental spaces.
- f) To explore the expansion of community energy to keep the benefits of our local energy generation in our local economy.
- g) The Membership of the Committee shall consist of 6 Members plus the Town Mayor and the Leader of the Council ex officio with voting rights.
- h) The quorum of the committee shall be 4 members.

The Committee is asked if it would like to make any amendments to the terms for the forthcoming municipal year. The Committee may like to consider the following:

- (a) To work to achieve energy efficiencies and net zero carbon emissions in the Council's operations and facilities by 2028, in line with the Council's Climate Emergency resolution made in June 2019.
- (b) To manage the Council's Environmental Spaces, including Amenity Areas, Witney Lake and Country Park, Tiny Forest and Community Orchards (except recreation grounds).
And,
- To identify ways for event's organisers to reduce the carbon footprint of events held on council ground. Any financial or policy change implications should be recommended to the Council.
- To oversee the maintenance of the Council's infrastructure concerning planting displays (including hanging baskets).

Impact Assessments

The Town Council has a duty to consider the effects of its decisions, functions and activities on equality, biodiversity, and crime & disorder. Consideration should also be given to effects on the environment, given the Council's Climate Emergency declaration in 2019.

- a) Equality – no direct implications.
- b) Biodiversity – see text in the report.
- c) Crime & Disorder – no direct implications.
- d) Environment & Climate Emergency – see text in the report.

Risk

In decision making Councillors should give consideration to any risks to the Council and any action it can take to limit or negate its liability.

Without clear terms of reference, Council committees face significant risks including role confusion, lack of accountability, and potential legal challenges. This can lead to inefficient decision-making, strategic misalignment, resource misallocation, and reduced transparency. The absence of defined responsibilities and authority undermines governance, impairs stakeholder trust, and can result in poor outcomes that do not align with the council's objectives. Clear, regularly reviewed terms of reference are essential to ensure effective, transparent, and accountable committee operations.

Social Value

Social value is the positive change the Council creates in the local community within which it operates.

Recommendations

Members are invited to note the report and,

1. Review the terms of reference; and
2. Consider any changes to the terms of reference; and
3. Recommend such changes be made to Full Council on 23rd June 2025.