

POLICY, GOVERNANCE & FINANCE COMMITTEE



Agenda Item: Terms of Reference

Meeting Date: Monday, 23 June 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

The current terms of Reference for the Policy, Governance & Finance Committee are:

The overall purpose of this committee is to ensure that the council's finances, staffing, and its statutory obligations are conducted in accordance with good practice.

- a) To advise on, and consider, matters of Council administration and policy;
- b) To conduct effectively the Council's budgetary, financial and precepting responsibilities in accordance with statutory requirements, and to keep the smooth functioning of the Council's work under review;
- c) To consider and keep under review:
 - 1. the main objectives of the Council.
 - 2. all major issues of policy affecting the town council's area.
 - 3. the development of existing, and introduction of new, services.
 - 4. the order of priorities between services or projects, and to advise other committees accordingly.
 - 5. relationships with West Oxfordshire District and Oxfordshire County Councils, other public bodies and outside organisations;
- d) To consider the resources available to meet the Council's objectives in terms of land, property, finance, and manpower and to advise other committees and the Council as required.
- e) To consider the financial implications of the Council's plans and to recommend to the Council levels of expenditure in connection therewith;
- f) To regulate and control the finances of the Council.
- g) To consider estimates of this committee and of other committees of income and expenditure on continuing services and payments on capital account for the next and future financial years.

- h) To review all charges and fees made or proposed by all committees.
- i) To submit to the Council estimates of income and expenditure of the Council on continuing services and of payments on capital account for the next financial year and make a recommendation as to the Council's Precept.
- j) To consider and approve as appropriate matters referred from other committees to incur expenditure greater than already approved by the Council, within the requirements of Standing Orders; and also to consider any such requirement in respect of its own expenditure.
- k) To have charge of the financial and accounting arrangements of the Council.
- l) To receive reports from the internal and external auditors.
- m) To approve the Financial Statements and Annual Governance & Accountability Return (AGAR).
- n) To consider and decide upon recommendations from service committees for variations in staffing – via the Personnel Sub-Committee.
- o) To hold overall responsibility for employment matters - via the Personnel Sub-Committee.
- p) To review Standing Orders, terms of reference of committees, terms of delegation to officers and Financial Regulations and recommend amendments to the Council.
- q) To review from time-to-time existing Council Policies as well as agree and implement new Policies accordingly when the need arises – or to enact new government legislation and recommend to the Council.
- r) To be responsible to the Council for and review the effectiveness and efficiency of all services.
- s) To consider all matters arising in relation to the boundaries of the town, the number of Town Councillors and elections of any kind within the town and make recommendations to the Council.
- t) To consider any matters affecting members, including members' allowances (if appropriate) and the Council's Calendar of Meetings.
- u) To be responsible for the Council's assets, records, and archives.
- v) To be responsible for council's investment properties and other premises owned or leased to the council (save for council properties reserved to other committees according to their responsibilities)
- w) To consider applications for grants and to approve any such grants.
- x) The Membership of the Committee shall consist of 6 Members plus the Leader and Town Mayor ex officio;
- y) The quorum of the Committee shall be 4 Members.

(It should be noted that the Personnel Sub-Committees responsible to this Committee will have its own terms of reference.)

The Committee is invited to consider the following terms to replace the above which consolidate the items under relevant headings and in line with other committees and their objectives.

Overall Purpose

To ensure that the Council's finances, staffing, statutory obligations, and governance are managed effectively and in accordance with legal and regulatory requirements, while supporting the strategic direction and service delivery of the Council.

1. Policy

- a) To consider, keep under review and make recommendations to the Council as appropriate:
 - The Council's strategic objectives and priorities.
 - All major issues of national and local policy affecting the town, including new government legislation.
 - Council policies.
 - The development of existing and introduction of new services, including grounds maintenance.
 - Relationships with West Oxfordshire District Council, Oxfordshire County Council, other public bodies, and outside organisations.
- b) To consider the resources available to meet the Council's objectives in terms of land, property, finance, and manpower and to advise other committees and the Council as required.
- c) Within all decision-making, ensure that the green environment and biodiversity of public open spaces is protected and enhanced in line with the Council's Climate Emergency aspirations.
- d) To oversee and ensure social value outcomes are considered in policy development.

2. Governance

- e) Oversee Council administration, legal compliance, and be responsible to the Council for reviewing the effectiveness and efficiency of all services.
- f) Review and monitor:
 - Council corporate and financial risk register, insurance, and legal matters.
 - Data protection, FOI, and related statutory duties.
 - Committee structures and delegated responsibilities.
 - Banking arrangements
- g) To consider community governance matters including elections and electoral arrangements, town boundaries, and the impact of future changes to Local Government structure and devolution.
- h) Overall management of Council assets (including land), records, and operational premises (including those under other committees).

- i) To oversee and approve tendering and purchasing arrangements ensuring compliance with the Council's Financial Regulations and Procurement Act 2023.
- j) Provide oversight of contracts, major capital projects and investment properties including those leased to the Council.
- k) Hold overall responsibility for employment matters via the personnel sub-committee.
- l) Consider matters affecting Members, including Member allowances (if appropriate) and the annual calendar of meetings.
- m) To receive reports from the internal and external auditors, review actions required and ensure effective internal controls.
- n) To appoint the Council's independent Internal Auditor.

3. Finance

- o) Oversee the Council's finances (including investments), ensuring legal and regulatory compliance
- p) Prepare and recommend the annual budget and precept for approval by Council.
- q) Review and approve:
 - Estimates of income and expenditure from all committees.
 - Fees, charges, and funding levels.
 - Annual Governance & Accountability Return, and financial statements.
- r) To consider and approve grant applications in accordance with adopted policy, and to recommend larger or exceptional grants to Full Council
- s) To act as the Council's Audit Committee and to
 - Review and authorise Council payments in accordance with Financial Regulations.
 - Monitor budgeted vs actual income/expenditure.
 - Act as a financial scrutiny panel.
- t) Approve or recommend additional expenditure beyond approved limits.
- u) Maintain oversight of financial systems, controls, and reporting.
- v) To develop and monitor the Council's Medium-Term Financial Plan and Capital Programme

Committee Membership & Quorum

- 6 Councillors (made up of the Chairs of the standing Committees) plus the Leader and Town Mayor (ex officio).
- Quorum: 4 Members.
- The Committee may make recommendations to Full Council on any matter within its remit.

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 above.
- c) Crime & Disorder – no direct implications.
- d) Environment & Climate Emergency – see text above.

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.

Social Value

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

Financial Implications

The financial implications under each term will be considered within Committee reports at the time of presentation.

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.