
Agenda Item: Committee Terms of Reference

Meeting Date: Monday, 13 July 2026

Contact Officer: Deputy Town Clerk

The purpose of this report is for the Council to approve standing Committee terms of reference for the new municipal year.

Background

At the Annual Council Meeting held on 6 May 2026, it was resolved that terms of reference for each Committee would be reviewed at each meeting in the current meeting cycle. As best practice these are referred to the Council to approve.

Current Situation

The recommended terms for each Committee are listed below (amendments are in bold text):

Parks & Recreation Committee

- a) To maintain all Recreation Grounds, Parks (including play equipment), and public open spaces and to initiate and oversee all matters of control properly associated with this recreation function;
- b) To maintain and oversee all sports activities upon any Recreation Ground or other recreational open space and buildings erected for such purposes thereon;
- c) To keep under review/updated the sports strategy within the Council's adopted Open Spaces Strategy to meet the changing needs of the community, sporting governing bodies recommendations and West Oxfordshire District Council's Playing Pitch Strategy in the Local Plan;
- d) To deal with the development and investment in the Council owned play areas, ensuring they remain safe and are inclusive wherever possible;
- e) To facilitate entertainment, community, and third-party events by ensuring that parks, recreation grounds, and related facilities are suitable, safe, and properly maintained for such use;
- f) Within all its 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.
- g) To oversee any development and investment of Council owned recreation ground sites and its supporting infrastructure, ensuring they remain safe and compliant;
- h) The Membership of the Committee shall consist of six Members plus the Town Mayor and the Leader of the Council ex officio with voting rights;
- i) The quorum of the Committee shall be four Members.

Halls, Cemeteries & Allotments Committee

- a) To operate, maintain and control the Corn Exchange, Burwell Hall, Langdale Hall and Madley Park Hall in all matters relative to their use as public halls be it through direct management or via trusteeships;
- b) The operation of such other buildings as the Council may from time to time acquire if so instructed;

- c) To operate and maintain the Cemeteries, burial responsibilities, and associated duties, consequential to Statutory or Council requirements, together with the War Memorials;
- d) To carry out the Council's obligations with regard to the Closed Churchyards of St Mary's and Holy Trinity;
- e) To oversee the management of Hailey Road, Lakeside, Newland and Windrush Place Allotments whilst leased to the Witney Allotment Association;
- f) To oversee the development and management of the Corn Exchange (including the 1863 café bar) as a community hub and arts centre in line with the Council's vision and long-term business plan for the venue;
- g) Within all its 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;
- h) To oversee any development and investment in Council-owned public halls, and the supporting infrastructure, ensuring they meet the needs of the community, remain safe and compliant;
- i) 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;
- j) The quorum of the Committee shall be 4 Members.

Stronger Communities Committee

- a) To acknowledge and promote the value and contributions of voluntary groups, local organisations, and community interest companies that deliver social value to our community—supporting and facilitating services, whether through partnerships or ad hoc arrangements, in accordance with relevant policies and legislation;
- b) To oversee community engagement with all residents of Witney, relevant stake holders and businesses, including, but not limited to conducting an annual resident satisfaction survey to gauge feedback;
- c) To recognise the importance of inclusivity by ensuring all voices in the community are heard and represented, advocating for underrepresented groups in line with equality legislation;
- d) To engage proactively with young people, supporting and promoting youth services where possible, and to oversee the operations of the Witney Youth Council;
- e) To oversee and maintain the infrastructure owned by the Town Council, including street furniture in the town centre (e.g. seating, litter bins, and salt bins), bus shelters, CCTV, noticeboards, and Christmas light displays;
- f) To organise and deliver civic events, such as Remembrance, in line with the approved programme and within the budget set by the Council;
- g) To work in collaboration with other partnerships on town wide events such as the Christmas Lights switch-on and others that may arise from time to time;
- h) To co-ordinate national commemorations, special community events, and initiatives in accordance with the Council's agreed programme and budget;
- i) To oversee the Council's communications and publications, including the website, newsletter, and social media platforms;
- j) To administer the Children & Young People Grant funds, considering applications and/or funding on an annual basis and making recommendations to the Policy, Governance & Finance Committee;
- k) To oversee the local Schools in Bloom competition and the Council's entry into the regional In Bloom Competition;
- l) Within all its decision making ensure that the green environment and biodiversity is protected and enhanced in line with the Council's Climate Emergency aspirations;
- m) 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;
- n) The quorum of the Committee shall be 4 Members.

Climate & Biodiversity Committee

- 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);
- 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, local Oxfordshire organisations, 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 and promote the expansion of community energy to keep the benefits of our local energy generation in our local economy;
- g) 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;
- h) To oversee the maintenance of the Council's infrastructure concerning planting displays (including hanging baskets);
- i) **To oversee the work of the Council's Climate Action Working Party;**
- j) 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;
- k) The quorum of the committee shall be 4 members.

Planning & Development Committee

- a) To receive planning applications and to comment on them in the name of the Council within the time limit set by statute. The Committee may decide, where time for consultation allows, to make a recommendation to the Council on any application considered to have a major impact on the town;
- b) To consider any planning decisions, appeals, planning briefs, and tree preservation orders, and recommend, if appropriate, any views that should be expressed by the Council, or any action that should be taken, in respect of these;
- c) To consider, and submit appropriate representations on behalf of the Council, in respect of applications for justices, gaming, public entertainment and pavement licences;
- d) To consider, and submit appropriate representations on behalf of the Council, in respect of street naming, highways and traffic regulation consultations unless deemed by the Proper Officer of significance to be referred to Full Council;
- e) To consider, and submit appropriate representations on behalf of the Council, in respect of consultations relevant to the sphere of planning and development including forward planning;
- f) To consider and submit appropriate representations on behalf of the Council concerning the potential impact of flooding in Witney, including requests for mitigation measures and comments on sustainable drainage solutions. Due to the serious nature of flooding events, any incidents will be referred to Full Council for further consideration, response, and escalation with other agencies;
- g) To consider the impact on the green environment and biodiversity of all planning applications and comment in the name of the Council accordingly;
- h) To promote sustainable and active travel in the future planning of the town;
- i) To receive and review the minutes of the Witney Traffic Advisory Committee and address any resulting actions relevant to the Town Council;

- j) The Membership of the Committee shall consist of 5 Members plus the Leader of the Council ex officio with voting rights;
- k) The quorum of the committee shall be 4 members

Policy Governance & Finance Committee

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.

****** The Terms of Reference for the Policy, Governance & Finance Committee were recommended for approval, subject to the exclusion of Item K, which remains under review by officers. Approval of Item K will be sought at a future meeting.

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 – The Stronger Communities Committee has proposed terms on inclusivity for all residents. The Policy, Governance and Finance Committee ensures the Council acts in compliance with legislation, this includes equality laws.
- b) Biodiversity – All Committee terms of reference have reference to biodiversity.
- c) Crime & Disorder – This item is considered by all Committees via this standing item in Reports.
- d) Environment & Climate Emergency - All Committee terms of reference have reference to the environment.

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.

The majority of Council services provide social value for different parts of the community. This item on Committee reports ensures consideration during discussion on projects.

Financial implications

- There are no financial implications pertaining to this report. In meeting terms of reference each Committee has budgets for services under its remit.

Recommendations

Members are invited to note the report and,

1. Approve the Committee terms of reference for the 2026-27 municipal year as recommended by each Committee above.