

# Council Agenda



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## **Summons to attend the annual meeting of Council**

**to be held on Wednesday, 22 May 2024 at 7.00 pm  
The Ridgeway, The Beacon, Portway, Wantage, OX12 9BY**

Vivien Williams,  
Head of Legal and Democratic (Interim)

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# Agenda

## Open to the public including the press

### 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 6 - 31)

To adopt and sign as a correct record the Council minutes of the meeting held on 21 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 chair's 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. Appointments to committees, panels and joint committees for 2024/25

(Pages 32 - 37)

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 together with the Climate Emergency Advisory Committee, the Licensing Acts Committee and joint committees.

### 8. Making the East Hanney Neighborhood Plan

(Pages 38 - 42)

To consider the recommendations of the Cabinet member for planning, Councillor Foulsham, made on 7 May 2024, regarding the neighbourhood plan for East Hanney following the referendum held on 11 April 2024.

The Individual Cabinet Member Decision is attached.

#### **RECOMMENDATIONS:**

1. To make the East Hanney Neighbourhood Development Plan, so that it becomes part of the council's development plan.
2. To delegate to the Head of Policy and Programmes, in consultation with the appropriate Cabinet Member and in agreement with the Qualifying Body, East Hanney 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

### **9. Making the Sutton Courtenay Neighbourhood Plan**

(Pages 43 - 47)

To consider the recommendations of the Cabinet member for planning, Councillor Foulsham, made on 7 May 2024, regarding the neighbourhood plan for Sutton Courtenay following the referendum held on 11 April 2024.

The Individual Cabinet Member Decision is attached.

#### **RECOMMENDATIONS:**

1. To make the Sutton Courtenay Neighbourhood Development Plan, so that it becomes part of the council's development plan.
2. To delegate to the Head of Policy and Programmes, in consultation with the appropriate Cabinet Member and in agreement with the Qualifying Body, Sutton Courtenay 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.

### **10. Code of Corporate Governance**

(Pages 48 - 80)

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.

## **11. Report of the leader of the council**

1. To receive the report of the leader of the council.
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 Andrew Crawford, 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](#).

## **12. Questions on notice**

To receive questions from councillors in accordance with Council procedure rule 35.

### **A. Question from Councillor Katherine Foxhall to Councillor Bethia Thomas, Cabinet member for Climate Action and the Environment.**

The Environment Agency (EA) is currently developing the Thames Valley Flood Scheme, identifying places that could be used to store floodwater to reduce flood risk across the non-tidal Thames Valley. From an initial list of over 700 potential locations, 17 potential locations remain (according to the EA) “that might be suitable to store flood water on some of the rivers that feed into the river Thames”. Two of these remaining sites are in the Vale – although the exact locations are vague, one is on the National Trust estate at Buscot and Coleshill, and the other appears to be southwest of Abingdon, just south of the River Ock, a site many of our members are of course familiar with as the proposed site of Thames Water’s massive reservoir.

Given the EA’s stated aims of working “in partnership to deliver a wide range of environmental and other benefits” can the Cabinet member please advise what contact have officers had with the Environment Agency during the planning process for this scheme, and are we confident that we are being fully informed of the implications of any finalised locations for example in allocating land within our new local plan?

**B. Question from Councillor Viral Patel to Councillor Bethia Thomas as Cabinet member for Leisure Centres and Community Buildings.**

Over the last decade we have seen a growth in population of 14% across the Vale, with a further growth of 25% expected in the next 15 years. A significant proportion of this growth has been in Wantage, Faringdon, Stanford and Shrivenham, with the arrival of so many more residents it is good to see the focus on expanding our capacity at leisure facilities. For my ward I am particularly pleased to see the addition of a learner pool at Faringdon, and at Wantage, with both facilities in proximity for residents of my ward. In the Vale Leisure Facilities Assessment and Strategy Report the lack of capacity at Wantage and its low quality were highlighted, along with the need to increase capacity at Faringdon. Further, in assessing the future needs for the Vale, Shrivenham was highlighted for pool facilities as where “the most unmet demand can be met”, however at present that was deemed not enough to validate the consideration for a new pool facility in the locality.

Does the Cabinet member agree with me that, while we expect to see continued growth in our population, we should be looking to support our residents, including those on the outskirts of the county, with facilities we have assessed to be vital for their wellbeing and without expecting them to travel to neighbouring districts to meet those needs? Further, can I ask the Cabinet member if we could undertake a more detailed viability assessment for providing for the highlighted deficit in swimming facilities in the western Vale, to support those residents and provide a better distribution of leisure facilities across the district?

**C. Question from Councillor Viral Patel to Councillor Andrew Crawford as Cabinet member for Finance and Property.**

Over the last few years local authorities of varying sizes have chosen to bring leisure facilities back in house. In North Yorkshire, a Conservative led upper tier authority, the cabinet member expressed one of the reasons as “All outsourcing does is encourage very good local government officers to move to the private sector to manage services they were managing in the first place”. North Yorkshire joins Stroud (a Green-LibDem-Independent led council), Haringey and Wiltshire (who started in-housing in 2020). Each of these authorities have chosen to in-source leisure facilities for reasons based on the needs of the local population, the position of the council and other local conditions.

In our own council, we have chosen to bring many services in house following poor service and excessive contract costs of outsourcing over recent decades. As we look to renegotiate contracts with our leisure facilities suppliers in the near future, I would expect the process to be far more challenging than it has been in past years, largely down to the financial burdens faced in all sectors of the economy, not least in council finances and especially given the high inflationary pressures felt over recent years. An example of this can be seen with the bidding process carried out by Rutland County Council, where no supplier was willing to take on the full running costs resulting in Rutland needing to restart the process in a weaker position.

Can the Cabinet member update us on what work is taking place to assess the viability of bringing our leisure services in-house, in order to put us in the strongest possible position in renegotiating contracts?