

Council Agenda



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Summons to attend a meeting of Council

to be held on Wednesday, 21 February 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 remainder of the municipal year 2023/24.

2. Appointment of Vice-Chair

To appoint a vice-chair of council for the remainder of the municipal year 2023/24.

3. Apologies for absence

To record apologies for absence.

4. Minutes

(Pages 9 - 25)

To adopt and sign as a correct record the Council minutes of the meeting held on 13 December 2023 - attached.

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. Public participation

To receive any questions or statements from members of the public that have registered to speak.

8. Petitions

To receive any petitions from the public.

9. Treasury management 2023/24 mid-year monitoring report

(Pages 26 - 39)

Cabinet, at its meeting on 16 February 2024, will consider the attached report of the head of finance on the treasury management activity for the first half of 2023/24.

Cabinet's recommendations will be circulated to all members prior to the Council meeting.

10. Treasury Management and Investment Strategy 2024/25

(Pages 40 - 77)

Cabinet, at its meeting on 16 February 2024, will consider the attached report of the head of finance on the council's treasury management and investment strategy for 2024/25.

Cabinet's recommendations will be circulated to all members prior to the Council meeting.

11. Capital Strategy 2024/25-2033/34

(Pages 78 - 101)

Cabinet, at its meeting on 16 February 2024, will consider the attached report of the head of finance on the council's capital strategy for 2024/25 to 2033/34.

Cabinet's recommendations will be circulated to all members prior to the Council meeting.

12. Revenue budget 2024/25 and capital programme 2024/25 - 2028/29

(Pages 102 - 149)

Cabinet, at its meeting on 16 February 2024, will consider the attached report of the head of finance on the the draft revenue budget 2024/25, and the capital programme to 2028/29.

Cabinet's recommendations will be circulated to all members prior to the Council meeting.

Also attached is the chief finance officer's report on the robustness of the budget estimates and the adequacy of the reserves.

13. Council tax 2024/25

To consider the report of the head of finance on the setting of the council tax for the 2024/25 financial year. Following receipt of all the required information the report is being checked by officers prior to despatch.

The report once published will be a draft version subject to Oxfordshire County Council's agreement of its budget on Tuesday 20 February 2024.

14. Pay Policy Statement 2024/25

(Pages 150 - 156)

To consider the report of the deputy chief executive on the adoption of a pay policy statement to meet the requirements of the Localism Act - attached.

15. Local Government Boundary Commission for England Review of Vale of White Horse District Council Warding Arrangements

(Pages 157 - 165)

At its meeting on 19 February 2024, the Community Governance and Electoral Issues Committee will consider a report on the Local Government Boundary Commission for England (the commission) electoral review of the council and specifically the warding arrangements. At this

stage of the review, Council is invited to agree a warding pattern for submission to the Commission. The recommendations of the committee will be circulated to all members. The report, which has been circulated to all members is attached.

16. Review of political balance and allocation of seats to committees (Pages 166 - 170)

To consider the attached report of the head of legal and democratic on a review of the council's political balance.

17. Report of the leader of the council

To receive the report of Leader of the council.

18. Questions on notice

To receive questions from councillors in accordance with Council procedure rule 33.

1. Question from Councillor Povolotsky to Councillor Lugova, Cabinet member for planning and development management

In the current winter 2023/24 season we have experienced record storm occurrences, record winter flooding in many places, and huge pressure on the flood plains, failures in the sewage systems and infrastructure. In Steventon & the Hanneys we had flooding in places never experienced before, with many residents seeing a correlation between new estate developments on flood plains, failures of Thames Waters Sewage Networks and floodwaters in our spring line village which have not been seen since 2007.

Will the council ask, with urgency, the Environment Agency to review the flood plains / flood zones in effected areas and push for section 19 reports in heavily flooded areas where I still have households unable to return home in Steventon and East Hanney?

2. Question from Councillor Povolotsky to Councillor Pighills, Cabinet member for Community health and wellbeing

This council endorsed the Good Food Strategy in 2022, and a large part of that is around growing your own food, community allotments and community food resilience.

Is the council member aware of Thames Water guidance that no food should be consumed or grown in areas which have been subjected to contaminated flood water for 12 months. Given the wide spread contamination of water we experienced in Steventon and the Hanneys, and continue to do so, what awareness has the council of this advice and how will this council hold Thames Water to account on sewage clean up and contamination identification and public advice, is this public health risk?

<https://www.thameswater.co.uk/help/water-and-waste-help/sewer-flooding/cleaning-up-after-sewer-flooding>

3. Question from Councillor Povolotsky to Councillor Thomas, Leader of the council and Cabinet member for climate action and the environment, strategic partnerships and place

Local groups and members, including myself, have written to the Secretary of State, the Rt Hon Stephen Barclay, to request he calls the proposed Thames Water Resource Plan for public scrutiny due to the significant public interest over performance, leak and leak management, sewage discharge, performance and locally the threat of the South East Strategic Reservoir Option (SESRO).

Can I ask the leader of the council when she will also call for such a public review on behalf of the many residents in the Vale effected by Thames Water's failures and who could be adversely affected by the current designs proposed for (SESRO)?

4. Question from Councillor Povolotsky to Councillor Thomas, Leader of the council and Cabinet member for climate action and the environment, strategic partnerships and place

At the Council meeting of Wednesday 13 December 2023, Councillors Clegg and Cooke proposed a motion which was unanimously passed in which there was request for the Chief Executive to establish a Water Resource Officer-Member Liaison Group.

Can we get a progress update on this item, a timeframe and membership proposals of the group?

5. Question from Councillor Povolotsky to Councillor Thomas, Leader of the council and Cabinet member for climate action and the environment, strategic partnerships and place

On 21 September 2023: Councillor Thomas wrote to Thames Water regarding the draft Water Resources Management Plan 2024 (WRMP24). This is listed on the Vale of White Horse District Council's website alongside a copy and the Thames Water response.

As the ward member for Steventon & The Hanneys could I ask why there has been a lack of openness and transparency with me and other ward members the last two years over responses to consultations and lack of our input, or even consultation, on the list of bullet points of suggestions. Including a country park and water sports provision has not been consulted on with the local elected members or representatives of the communities in any way?

6. Question from Councillor Thompson to Councillor Foulsham, Cabinet member for corporate services, policy and programmes

This month is LGBT+ History month. It coincides with the anniversary of the abolition of Section 28 in part to remind us of the vital role of education and teachers in ensuring LGBT+ persons are heard and respected. Since 2005, this initiative has aimed to raise awareness of, and combat prejudice against, LGBT+ people. Each year has a different theme and this year highlights the LGBT+ community contributions to medicine and healthcare. It celebrates these contributions whilst also shining a light on the health inequalities that are still experienced by LGBT+ persons. Section 28 of the Local Government Act not only prevented the discussion of LGBT+ in schools but also prevented Council's from "promoting homosexuality." It contributed to a climate of hatred and fear and its lasting impact on LGBT+ persons and the community must not be forgotten. At a time when the LGBT+ community is experiencing a rise in hate crime, how

is Council acknowledging LGBT+ history month, and what is Council doing now and over the next three years to ensure that LGBT+ persons' needs are considered and that they are welcome and included in the Vale of White Horse.

7. Question from Councillor James to Councillor Thomas, Leader of the council and Cabinet member for climate action and the environment, strategic partnerships and place

Even since we last met as a Council there have been several power cuts in my rural ward. Speaking to councillors and residents in other parts of the district, power cuts are an irregular, but not uncommon, occurrence outside the towns. They often happen due to high winds but also on other more unexpected occasions. The electricity infrastructure is currently not adequately resilient to provide a supply with a high degree of confidence. We expect in the future to need to increase the electricity supply as the strategy for decarbonising heating and transport includes significantly electrifying these sectors so the impacts of this are only set to grow.

Power cuts are difficult for all, usually resulting in no heating as many households have some form of central heating that relies on electric pumps, whatever the fuel. Increasing numbers of us work from home, but not without broadband in a power cut. But they disproportionately affect those who are already vulnerable: the old, the very young, and those with health issues.

How are we engaging as a Council with our local network operator Scottish and Southern Electricity Networks (SSEN) on behalf of our residents to try and improve the quality of the infrastructure in the rural areas of our district and make sure that it will be fit for the future? As a Council, is there anything more that we can do, working with SSEN and other partners, to ensure that vulnerable residents are kept safe when power cuts occur?

8. Question from Councillor Foxhall to Councillor Dewhurst, Cabinet Member for Leisure Centres and Community Buildings

In the Development and Corporate Landlord fee proposals for 2024/5, we are intending to introduce a new 20p fee to use public toilets in the Charter and Portway car parks in Abingdon and Wantage, and to retain the existing fee in Hales Meadow and Millbrook Square (Grove).

Freely accessible public toilets are essential for public health, accessibility and inclusion – they make being in public spaces possible for many people including people with health conditions or who are pregnant, families with young children and the elderly. I appreciate that the costs involved have forced many local authorities to reduce their provision of public conveniences, but to charge for access does seem to go contrary to our corporate plan priorities of Building Healthy Communities and Working in an Open and Inclusive Way.

Could the cabinet member please explain the justification for why we are introducing charging for some toilets and not others in the district, and what format the charging will take?

19. Motions on notice

To consider motions from councillors in accordance with Council procedure rule 38.

Motion to be proposed by Councillor Fawcett, seconded by Councillor Smith:

Council notes:

Thames Water Limited's proposal to increase household water bills to an average of £735 by 2030, an increase of 60% in cash terms.

That amongst the main arguments for privatising the water companies in 1989 were:

- The private sector would be more efficient and make better use of investment funds.
- The private sector would not be held back by government limits on investment levels.
- The water regulator, OFWAT would prevent the new private monopolies from abusing their market power.

In the 35 years since privatisation, investment in infrastructure has stagnated while the debt held by water companies has increased significantly.

Thames Water has failed to deal with leaks and the amount of sewage being pumped into local rivers has rocketed.

Across the network, Thames Water spilled sewage for 6,500 hours in the last nine months of 2023. This pollutes our waterways, damages the natural environment, and poses serious health risks to wildlife, pets and humans.

Thames Water has continued to pay out huge dividends to shareholders, last year paying a £37.5m dividend to a parent company as the company's debts rose to £14.7bn in the same period.

Thames Water has continued to pay out huge pay and benefits packages to senior executives, including a total of £1.6m paid to the Chief Executive in the 2022-23 financial year.

Council believes:

Thames Water has had 35 years to draw up and implement plans to provide the necessary infrastructure to run its business properly.

That it is for Thames Water Limited to fund and manage the infrastructure investment urgently needed to stop the leaks and reduce sewage outflows, in line with the basis upon which the water industry was privatised in 1989.

That the cost of this much needed infrastructure should not fall on consumers who have been paying Thames Water bills on the basis that it delivers on its responsibilities.

Council resolves:

To ask the Leader to write to the Chair and Chief Executive of Ofwat and to the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, setting out this council's opposition to the proposed Thames Water price hike.

To send a copy of this letter to the MPs for Oxford West & Abingdon and Wantage constituencies.