

# Council Agenda



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## Summons to attend a meeting of Council

to be held on Wednesday, 18 December 2024 at 7.00 pm  
The Ridgeway, The Beacon, Portway, Wantage, OX12 9BY

Nick Bennett  
Head of Legal and Democratic

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# Agenda

## Open to the public including the press

### 1. Apologies for absence

To record apologies for absence.

### 2. Minutes

(Pages 9 - 19)

To adopt and sign as a correct record the Council minutes of the meeting held on 23 October 2024.

### 3. 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.

### 4. 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.

### 5. Public participation

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

### 6. Petitions

To receive any petitions from the public.

### 7. Joint Audit and Governance Committee Annual Report

(Pages 20 - 23)

At its meeting on 15 October 2024, the Joint Audit and Governance Committee considered the head of finance's [report](#) on the 2023/24 Joint Audit and Governance Annual Report.

In accordance with the Chartered Institute for Public Finance and Accountancy (CIPFA) Position Statement: Audit Committees in Local Authorities and Police, it is recommended practice for an annual public report to be produced demonstrating how the Joint Audit and Governance Committee has discharged its responsibilities.

**RECOMMENDATION TO COUNCIL:** to note the Annual Report of the work of the Joint Audit and Governance Committee during 2023/24, attached to the Council agenda,

which outlines the activity of the committee during 2023/24.

## **8. Review of Joint Gambling Policy**

(Pages 24 - 51)

The Licensing Acts Committee, at its meeting on 22 November 2024, considered the [report](#) of the head of communities on the review of the Joint Gambling Policy following statutory consultation.

The proposed Joint Gambling Policy is attached.

### **RECOMMENDATIONS TO COUNCIL:** to

1. adopt the proposed Joint Gambling Policy
2. authorise the head of communities to make minor editorial changes to the Joint Gambling Policy.
3. authorise the head of communities to publish the Joint Gambling Policy in accordance with the Gambling Act 2005 (Licensing Authority Policy Statement) (England and Wales) Regulations 2006.
4. continue to adopt a 'no casino' resolution under section 166 (1) of the Gambling Act 2005, meaning that any application for a casino would not be considered.

## **9. Council tax reduction scheme 2025/26**

(Pages 52 - 54)

At its meeting on 29 November 2024, Cabinet considered the attached report of the head of finance on the adoption and implementation of a modified council tax reduction scheme for the financial years 2025/2026 onwards.

**RECOMMENDATION TO COUNCIL:** that for the 2025/26 financial year onwards the council continues to adopt the previous 2024/25 Council Tax Reduction (CTR) Scheme but with the following amendment:

- to extend the period in which a new claim for council tax reduction can be backdated from six months to twelve months, where good cause has been demonstrated.

## **10. Council tax base 2025/26**

(Pages 55 - 59)

At its meeting on 29 November 2024, Cabinet considered the attached report of the head of finance on the setting of the council tax base for 2025/26.

### **RECOMMENDATION TO COUNCIL:** to

1. Approve the report of the head of finance for the calculation of the council's tax base and the calculation of the tax base for each parish area for 2025/2026.
2. Agree that, in accordance with The Local Authorities (Calculation of Council Tax Base) (England) Regulations 2012, the amount calculated by Vale of White Horse District Council as its council tax base for the year 2025/26 be 59,151.5.
3. Agree that, in accordance with The Local Authorities (Calculation of Council Tax Base) (England) Regulations 2012, the amount calculated by Vale of White Horse

District Council as the council tax base for the year 2025/26 for each parish be the amount shown against the name of that parish in Appendix A of the report of the head of finance to Cabinet on 29 November 2024.

## **11. Wantage Leisure Centre Salix Phase 3b Decarbonisation Projects**

At its meeting on 29 November 2024, Cabinet considered the [report](#) of the head of development and corporate landlord on the Wantage Leisure Centre Salix Phase 3b decarbonisation project.

### **RECOMMENDATION TO COUNCIL:** to

1. create a budget from S106 contributions and release the funds for the capital expenditure at Wantage Leisure Centre phase 3b decarbonisation project, in accordance with 75 (c) of the council's financial procedure rules.
2. approve the expenditure of over £100k.

## **12. S106 Funding Request - Drayton Parish Council - Towards sports pitches and a cricket wicket at Walnut Meadow, Drayton**

At its meeting on 29 November 2024, Cabinet considered the [report](#) of the head of finance on an application for funds of £278,860 from Drayton Parish Council towards sports pitches and a cricket wicket at Walnut Meadow, Drayton.

**RECOMMENDATION TO COUNCIL:** to create a budget for £278,860.00 towards sports pitches and a cricket wicket at Walnut Meadow, Drayton, from the section 106 contribution set out in the report of the head of finance to Cabinet on 29 November 2024.

## **13. Councillors' Allowances Scheme**

(Pages 60 - 85)

To consider the report of the head of legal and democratic, and the recommendations of the Joint Independent Remuneration Panel, on a revised councillors' allowances scheme to run from 1 April 2025 - attached.

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

To receive the report of the Leader of the council.

## **15. Future Oxfordshire Partnership - recent activity by Vale representatives' update**

(Pages 86 - 93)

To receive the update report attached.

## 16. Questions on notice

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

### A. Question from Councillor Katherine Foxhall to Councillor Lugova, Cabinet Member for Planning

The Housebuilder Forum's *Unspent Developer Contributions Report* for 2024 has recently identified that Oxfordshire County Council holds £287.5m of unspent Section 106 money, the largest of any authority in the country. [1] While Vale of White Horse was not mentioned in this year's report, in 2023, the HBF identified Vale of White Horse as holding £18,223,919 in unspent contributions, at the time this was the 18<sup>th</sup> highest in England among the authorities who responded to the FOI request.

Allocating funding for infrastructure is extremely complicated and the fact of any particular pot of money being "unspent" is not necessarily an issue in itself. But I would like to ask the Cabinet member how much S106 money, where all instalments have been received by Vale, remains unallocated and within one and two years of the "spend by" deadline, and have we had to return any S106 money to developers in the last 5 years?

[1]

[https://www.hbf.co.uk/documents/14032/2024\\_Unspent\\_developer\\_contributions\\_report.pdf](https://www.hbf.co.uk/documents/14032/2024_Unspent_developer_contributions_report.pdf)

[2]

[https://www.hbf.co.uk/documents/12809/HBF\\_Unspent\\_Developer\\_Contributions\\_Report\\_2023.pdf](https://www.hbf.co.uk/documents/12809/HBF_Unspent_Developer_Contributions_Report_2023.pdf)

### B. Question from Councillor James to Councillor Edwards, Cabinet Member for Communications, Customer Services, Legal and Democratic

We make publicly available a livestream and a recording of most of our meetings. We also enable members of the public to attend and speak to the meeting online. This is very welcome and reflects the Council's priority to work in an open and inclusive way.

However, this is not an option for meetings of the full Council, despite our constitution saying that participation at the meeting for members of the public may be remotely via Teams. Due to the size of the Council, we meet in The Beacon in its largest meeting room, and it is not equipped for sound or video recording. In time we expect that these meetings will be held in a new purpose built headquarters in Didcot where hopefully such technology can be provided.

However, plans to move to Didcot Gateway were announced in October 2020, but this is not likely to be ready until 2027 at the earliest, so we are in the middle of a long period where that cannot help us to make Council available to the public online.

I would like to ask the Cabinet member how we can provide some form of online access to full Council meetings in advance of moving to Didcot Gateway?

### **C. Question from Councillor Patel to Councillor Foulsham, Cabinet Policy and Programmes**

In relation to our leisure facilities strategy, our consultant STA had highlighted Shrivenham as having “the most unmet demand” for pool facilities. Looking through the consultation comments, I note that several responses have highlighted the general lack of leisure and sports facilities in the further Western region, with Shrivenham pointed to as a suitable location given its size and connectivity. I also note a number of comments around the focus of the strategy on driving times as the default mode of transport to access facilities.

In May’s council I had asked whether a more detailed viability assessment could be carried out on how the unmet demand in Shrivenham could be addressed. At the time the member in charge felt it inappropriate to comment while the consultation comments were being reviewed.

Can I ask the Cabinet member to outline what weight was given to and considerations made towards addressing the unmet needs of Shrivenham residents for pool facilities?

### **D. Question from Councillor de la Harpe to Councillor Edwards, Cabinet Member for Communications, Customer Services, Legal and Democratic**

This Council has an active and effective Communications Team who communicate regularly with residents via several social media channels such as Facebook, Instagram and X (formerly Twitter). For obvious reasons, this Council does not publish on party-political channels, such as a Liberal Democrat newsletter to residents, and neither do Council members ask the Communications Team to publish party-political statements to voters.

In recent months, however, Elon Musk has transformed X and, in my opinion, used it to influence an election.

Does the Cabinet member agree with me that X is now a party-political mouthpiece and that this Council should begin a process of withdrawing its presence on X and cease using it as a channel to communicate with our residents?

### **E. Question form Councillor Smith to Councillor Thomas, Leader of the council**

Network Rail have announced they will pause work on the Oxford Station project for 17 days over Christmas. This news only adds to the frustration of residents and business in my ward over the lack of information about how much longer the Botley Road will be closed for.

I note the Transport Secretary agreed to meet Layla Moran MP to discuss the 'unacceptable' delays to this project, but then resigned her post before the meeting could be arranged.

Has the Leader had any more luck in getting an update from Network Rail or national government about the timeline for the Oxford Station project that she can share?

## **F. Question from Councillor Gascoigne to Councillor Crawford, Cabinet member for finance and property**

Getting appointments to see a GP continues to be difficult across the district and indeed the country. In Didcot and the surrounding villages, this has been particularly difficult due to the growth in housing numbers and BOB ICB not yet providing the promised GP surgery on Great Western Park.

I understand that the Vale officers have been working with the local NHS body, BOB ICB, to facilitate its delivery.

Can the cabinet member provide an update with where we are, a projected timeline for delivery and what the next steps are?

## **17. Motions on notice**

Motion to be proposed by Councillor Maddison, seconded by Councillor Stevens:

Large parts of Oxfordshire have recently faced significant flooding for the third time this year, each following short periods of extremely heavy rainfall.

In some parts of the Vale, including South Abingdon and Wantage, some people have been flooded three times. Some of these incidents have been caused by flooding from surface water and some from streams and rivers overflowing. Flooding of homes and property in the Vale, including from the River Ock and the Thames downstream of Abingdon, hampers the lives and economies of local residential and working communities driving the Science Vale.

The County Council (as lead flood authority) is currently working on at least 28 Section 19 Reports as a result of the flooding in September and November.

Having previously proposed and then dropped two previous schemes to protect homes from the River Ock overflowing, the Environment Agency have now told residents that the Thames Valley Flood Scheme will not be going forward as it is not considered cost effective.

### **Council agrees:**

1. To write to the Secretary of State asking for the government to review whether the level of resources spent on flood prevention and mitigation is high enough, and whether the formula used for allocating funds to the Vale of the White Horse District is adequate.
2. To write to the Environment Agency (EA) asking for urgent action to identify, publicise and implement viable schemes to reduce the growing issues of flooding of homes, businesses and infrastructure in the Vale, including from the River Ock and the Thames downstream of Abingdon.
3. That a copy of the above letters be sent to the three MPs whose constituencies include parts of the Vale.
4. To continue to work with the EA, the County Council and other organisations to prevent flooding and to mitigate its impact.
5. To promote the use of the Oxfordshire Flood Toolkit and support town and parish councils and community groups in creating more resilient communities.

## **18. Exclusion of the public**

To consider whether to exclude members of the press and public from the meeting for the following item of business under Section 12A of the Local Government Act 1972 as amended on the grounds that:

- (i) It is likely that there will be disclosure of exempt information as defined in paragraph 3 of Schedule 12A, and
- (ii) the public interest in maintaining the exemption outweighs the public interest in disclosing the information.

## **19. Land acquisition.**

(Pages 94 - 127)

At its meeting on 29 November 2024, Cabinet considered the confidential report of the head of development and corporate landlord on the acquisition of land. The Joint Scrutiny Committee considered the report at its meeting on 18 November 2024 and supported the proposal.

The report attached reflects Cabinet's recommendations.