



To: Members of the Audit & Governance Committee

***Notice of a Meeting of the Audit & Governance
Committee***

Wednesday, 16 July 2025 at 1.00 pm

Room 2&3 - County Hall, New Road, Oxford OX1 1ND

If you wish to view proceedings, please click on this [Live Stream Link](#)
Please note, that will not allow you to participate in the meeting.

Martin Reeves
Chief Executive

Deadline(pubagenda)

Committee Officers: Committee Services
Email: committees.democraticservices@oxfordshire.gov.uk

Membership

Chair – Councillor Roz Smith
Deputy Chair - Councillor John Shiri

Councillors

Ron Batstone
Andrew Crichton
Ted Fenton

James Fry
David Hingley
Gavin McLauchlan

Leigh Rawlins

Co-optee

Kate Cartwright
Paul McGinn
Dr Geoff Jones

Notes:

- ***Date of next meeting: 17 September 2025***



AGENDA

- 1. Apologies for Absence and Temporary Appointments**
- 2. Declaration of Interests - see guidance note**
- 3. Minutes of the Previous Meeting (Pages 1 - 12)**

To approve the minutes of the meeting held on 4 June 2025 and to receive information arising from them.

4. Petitions and Public Address

Members of the public who wish to speak on an item on the agenda at this meeting, or present a petition, can attend the meeting in person or 'virtually' through an online connection.

Requests to present a petition must be submitted no later than 9am ten working days before the meeting.

Requests to speak must be submitted no later than 9am three working days before the meeting.

Requests should be submitted to committeesdemocraticservices@oxfordshire.gov.uk

If you are speaking 'virtually', you may submit a written statement of your presentation to ensure that if the technology fails, then your views can still be taken into account. A written copy of your statement can be provided no later than 9am on the day of the meeting. Written submissions should be no longer than 1 A4 sheet.

5. Local Government Reorganisation Progress Update

Report by Executive Director of Resources & Section 151 Officer

Oxfordshire County Council is facing significant, externally driven change to its present form and future functions. This report outlines the need to increase the capacity and capability of the organisation to meet those challenges now, and in the future, through a number of fixed term programme director posts.

The Audit & Governance Committee is RECOMMENDED to:

- a) To note the Local Government Reorganisation process to date.**
- b) To note the County Council's preferred option of a single unitary council for Oxfordshire.**

- c) To note the benefits, areas of development and current assessment against the statutory invitation of the County Council's preferred option.
- d) To note the risks and issues created by the disaggregation to key services including those identified by government as 'high risk'.

6. Treasury Management Annual Performance Report 2024-25 (Pages 13 - 26)

Report by Executive Director of Resources & Section 151 Officer

Treasury management is defined as: "The management of the organisation's borrowing, investments and cash flows, including its banking, money market and capital market transactions, the effective control of the risks associated with those activities, and the pursuit of optimum performance consistent with those risks."

The Chartered Institute of Public Finance and Accountancy's (CIPFA's) 'Code of Practice on Treasury Management 2021' requires that committee to which some treasury management responsibilities are delegated, will receive regular monitoring reports on treasury management activities and risks. This is the fourth and final update for the 2024/25 financial year and sets out the position at 31 March 2025.

Throughout this report, the performance for the 2024/25 financial year is measured against the budget agreed by Council in February 2024.

As at 31 March 2025, the council's outstanding debt totalled £272m and the average rate of interest paid on long-term debt during the year was 4.41%. The council launched its "green bond" in December 2024 with an aim to raise an initial £0.5m. No other external borrowing was raised during the year, whilst £3m of maturing Public Works Loan Board (PWLB), and £10m of Lender's Option/Borrower's Option Loans were repaid. The council's debt financing position for 2024/25 is shown in Annex 1. Annex 2 shows the long term debt that matured in 2024/25.

The [Treasury Management Strategy for 2024/25](#) agreed in February 2024 assumed an average base rate of 4.75%.

The average daily balance of temporary surplus cash invested in-house was expected to be £463m in 2024/25, with an average in-house return on new and existing deposits of 4.25%.

The council achieved an average in-house return of 4.86% on average cash balances of £460.916m, producing gross interest receivable of £22.398m. In relation to external funds, the return for the year was £4.763m, bringing total investment income to £27.161m. This compares to budgeted investment income of £19.242m, giving a net overachievement of £7.919m.

At 31 March 2025, the council's investment portfolio totalled £484.920m. This comprised £335.000m of fixed term deposits, £52.000m at short term notice in money market funds and £97.919m in pooled funds with a variable net asset value. Annex 4 provides an analysis of the investment portfolio at 31 March 2025.

The Audit & Governance Committee is RECOMMENDED to:

- a) note the report and
- b) **RECOMMEND Council to note the council's treasury management activity and outcomes in 2024/25.**

7. Review of Appointments to Outside Bodies (Pages 27 - 36)

Report by Director of Law & Governance & Monitoring Officer

The procedures and guidance around Council appointments to Outside Bodies has not been reviewed since 2013. This report proposes to change the procedures for appointments to Category B (Non-strategic) and Category C (Local) Outside Bodies.

The Audit & Governance Committee is RECOMMENDED to:

- a) **agree the amended method of appointment to non-strategic Outside Bodies useful to the Council's work, known as Category B Outside Bodies, and Other Outside Bodies that request Council representation or are of primary value to local councillors/the local community, known as Category C Outside Bodies;**
- b) **agree that Category B appointments be made by the Audit and Governance Committee;**
- c) **agree that Category C appointments be delegated to the Monitoring Officer;**
- d) **RECOMMEND to Council to approve the Constitutional Amendments in Annex 1 to reflect these changes;**
- e) **adopt the Guidance for Members who are appointed to Outside Bodies (attached at Annex 2); and**
- f) **approve a list of appointments to Category B Outside Bodies for this Council subject to Council approving the Constitutional Amendments (Annex 3, to follow).**

8. 2024-25 Statement of Accounts (to follow)

Report by the Executive Director of Resources & Section 151 Officer

In line with the revised statutory deadline set by the Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities, Oxfordshire County Council published its draft Statement of Accounts 2024/25 by 30 June 2025.

This extension supports efforts to address the national local audit backlog. The accounts provide a full picture of the Council's financial position as of 31 March 2025, including key statements and detailed disclosures. They are available on the Council's website.

The public inspection period runs from 1 July to 12 August 2025, allowing residents to review the accounts and exercise their rights under the Local Audit and Accountability Act 2014.

The Committee is RECOMMENDED to consider and approve the draft Statement of Accounts for 2024-25.

9. Counter Fraud Plan & Update (Pages 37 - 56)

Report by Executive Director of Resources & Section 151 Officer

This report presents an overview of activity against the Counter Fraud Plan for 2024/25, which was previously presented to the July 2024 Audit & Governance committee meeting.

The report also presents the Counter Fraud Plan for the coming year 2025/26.

The Counter Fraud plan supports the Council's Anti-Fraud and Corruption Strategy by ensuring that the Council has proportionate and effective resources and controls in place to prevent and detect fraud as well as investigate those matters that do arise.

The Committee is RECOMMENDED to:

- a) note the summary of activity against the Counter Fraud Plan for 2024/25; and**
- b) approve the Counter Fraud Plan for 2025/26.**

10. Ombudsman Annual Report (Pages 57 - 90)

Report by the Director of Law & Governance and Monitoring Officer

Each year, the Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman (LGSCO) issues an Annual Review Report about each council. This relates to the complaints made to the LGSCO about the Council in the previous financial year. This report updates the Committee on this area of governance for the year 2024/25, reflecting on those complaints that were considered by the LGSCO up to 31 March 2025.

The Committee is RECOMMENDED to receive and comment on the Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman's Annual Review of Oxfordshire County Council for 2024/25, and the work undertaken by the Council regarding its handling of complaints.

11. Health & Safety Annual Report (to follow)

Report by Director of Property & Assets

The Annual H&S Report (attached at Annex 1) is a summary of performance and is part of the corporate governance framework. It seeks to provide the Audit and Governance Committee with assurance that arrangements for managing health safety are suitable and sufficient whilst identifying areas for improvement.

This annual report contains information about the work of the Health and Safety (H&S) functions, the council's health and safety performance over the year and its plans for the coming year.

The Audit & Governance Committee is **RECOMMENDED** to note and accept the contents of the Health and Safety (H&S) Annual Report and the work of the H&S Team to support services and improve performance keeping employees and customers safe.

12. Audit & Governance Committee Work Programme (Pages 91 - 92)

To review the Committee's Work Programme for 2025-26

Close of meeting

An explanation of abbreviations and acronyms is available on request from the Chief Internal Auditor.

Councillors declaring interests

General duty

You must declare any disclosable pecuniary interests when the meeting reaches the item on the agenda headed 'Declarations of Interest' or as soon as it becomes apparent to you.

What is a disclosable pecuniary interest?

Disclosable pecuniary interests relate to your employment; sponsorship (i.e. payment for expenses incurred by you in carrying out your duties as a councillor or towards your election expenses); contracts; land in the Council's area; licenses for land in the Council's area; corporate tenancies; and securities. These declarations must be recorded in each councillor's Register of Interests which is publicly available on the Council's website.

Disclosable pecuniary interests that must be declared are not only those of the member her or himself but also those member's spouse, civil partner or person they are living with as husband or wife or as if they were civil partners.

Declaring an interest

Where any matter disclosed in your Register of Interests is being considered at a meeting, you must declare that you have an interest. You should also disclose the nature as well as the existence of the interest. If you have a disclosable pecuniary interest, after having declared it at the meeting you must not participate in discussion or voting on the item and must withdraw from the meeting whilst the matter is discussed.

Members' Code of Conduct and public perception

Even if you do not have a disclosable pecuniary interest in a matter, the Members' Code of Conduct says that a member 'must serve only the public interest and must never improperly confer an advantage or disadvantage on any person including yourself' and that 'you must not place yourself in situations where your honesty and integrity may be questioned'.

Members Code – Other registrable interests

Where a matter arises at a meeting which directly relates to the financial interest or wellbeing of one of your other registerable interests then you must declare an interest. You must not participate in discussion or voting on the item and you must withdraw from the meeting whilst the matter is discussed.

Wellbeing can be described as a condition of contentedness, healthiness and happiness; anything that could be said to affect a person's quality of life, either positively or negatively, is likely to affect their wellbeing.

Other registrable interests include:

- a) Any unpaid directorships

- b) Any body of which you are a member or are in a position of general control or management and to which you are nominated or appointed by your authority.
- c) Any body (i) exercising functions of a public nature (ii) directed to charitable purposes or (iii) one of whose principal purposes includes the influence of public opinion or policy (including any political party or trade union) of which you are a member or in a position of general control or management.

Members Code – Non-registrable interests

Where a matter arises at a meeting which directly relates to your financial interest or wellbeing (and does not fall under disclosable pecuniary interests), or the financial interest or wellbeing of a relative or close associate, you must declare the interest.

Where a matter arises at a meeting which affects your own financial interest or wellbeing, a financial interest or wellbeing of a relative or close associate or a financial interest or wellbeing of a body included under other registrable interests, then you must declare the interest.

In order to determine whether you can remain in the meeting after disclosing your interest the following test should be applied:

Where a matter affects the financial interest or well-being:

- a) to a greater extent than it affects the financial interests of the majority of inhabitants of the ward affected by the decision and;
- b) a reasonable member of the public knowing all the facts would believe that it would affect your view of the wider public interest.

You may speak on the matter only if members of the public are also allowed to speak at the meeting. Otherwise you must not take part in any discussion or vote on the matter and must not remain in the room unless you have been granted a dispensation.