

To: Members of the Audit & Governance Committee

Notice of a Meeting of the Audit & Governance Committee

Wednesday, 15 July 2026 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.



Dr Martin Reeves OBE
Chief Executive

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
James Fry

David Hingley
Saj Malik
Gavin McLauchlan

Leigh Rawlins

Co-optee

Kate Cartwright
Paul McGinn

Notes:

- ***Date of next meeting: 16 September 2026***

AGENDA

- 1. Apologies for Absence and Temporary Appointments**
- 2. Declaration of Interests - see guidance note**
- 3. Minutes (Pages 9 - 16)**

To approve the minutes of the meeting held on 20 May 2026 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. Treasury Management- Outturn report 2025/26 (Pages 17 - 30)

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 (CIPFA) 'Code of Practice on Treasury Management 2021' requires that committees to which some treasury management responsibilities are delegated, will receive regular monitoring reports on treasury management activities and risks. This report is the fourth and final for the 2025/26 financial year and sets out the position at 31 March 2026.

The Audit and Governance Committee is RECOMMENDED to note the council's treasury management activity and outcomes in 2025/26.

6. Statement of Accounts 2025/26 (Pages 31 - 236)

In line with the revised statutory deadline set by the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government of the United Kingdom (MHCLG), Oxfordshire County Council published its draft [Statement of Accounts 2025/26](#) by 30 June 2026. 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 2026, 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 2026, allowing residents to review the accounts and exercise their rights under the Local Audit and Accountability Act 2014.

The Audit and Governance Committee is RECOMMENDED to consider and approve the draft Statement of Accounts for 2025/26.

7. Counter Fraud Plan and Update (Pages 237 - 258)

This report presents an overview of counter fraud activity for 2025/26.

The report also presents the Counter Fraud Plan for the coming year 2026/27.

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 Audit and Governance Committee is RECOMMENDED to:

- a) note the annual summary of counter fraud activity for 2025/26; and**
- b) approve the Counter Fraud Plan for 2026/27.**

8. Risk Management Update (Pages 259 - 264)

This report sets out updates to risk and opportunity management, and an overview of the latest strategic risk register which contains the Council's most significant risks. The strategic risk register is proactively managed by the senior leadership team (SLT) and reported into the Resources Directorate Meeting (DLT) as part of the council's business management and monitoring reports (BMMR). These combined reports contain performance, risk, and finance progress updates against the delivery of the current strategic plan priorities.

The Audit and Governance Committee is RECOMMENDED to note the risk management update

9. Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman's Annual Review Report (Pages 265 - 286)

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 2025/26, reflecting on those complaints that were considered by the LGSCO up to 31 March 2026.

The Audit and Governance Committee is RECOMMENDED to receive and comment on the Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman's Annual Review of Oxfordshire County Council for 2025/26, and the work undertaken by the council regarding its handling of complaints.

10. Assessment of Council's financial management, controls and governance (Pages 287 - 294)

Since 2020/21 the Government has provided [Exceptional Financial Support](#) (EFS) for councils who made a request for financial assistance to handle pressures that they considered unmanageable and to enable them to set balanced budgets. The support is provided on an exceptional basis, and where relevant, on the condition that a local authority may be subject to an external assurance review. Some of the councils in receipt of EFS have also issued a Section 114 notice.

Councils have sought EFS for a variety of reasons but in almost all cases, multiple issues have combined impacting on financial resilience. An assessment of the causes of financial strain indicates that in most cases where councils have upper tier responsibilities persistent pressures in adult and children's social care has been coupled with a low level of reserves. Other causes of financial strain include costs relating to homelessness, Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND) deficits impacting on cash balances, debt costs, transformation delays, legacy issues and accounting corrections.

While Oxfordshire County Council needs to continue to take action to manage demand and costs, the year-end position and the assessment against the Financial Management Code for 2025/26, demonstrates strong financial control and resilience. However, there are risks including uncertainty about the management of the deficit on the High Needs Dedicated Schools Grant funding as well as the impact of funding reform on the council's funding over the medium term.

The level of reserves is fundamental to financial sustainability so while the council is not currently in the same position as the councils that have sought EFS this report sets out an assessment of the current position and the controls in place to help mitigate risks.

The Audit and Governance Committee is RECOMMENDED to note the report.

11. Ernst and Young - Verbal Update

12. Health and Safety Annual Report (Pages 295 - 320)

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 and 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.

13. Fire and Community Safety Annual Report (Pages 321 - 338)

The Fire and Community Safety Annual Report provides information to members of the public on Oxfordshire Fire and Rescue, Trading Standards, Road Safety and the Joint Oxfordshire Resilience activities and performance. It demonstrates what we have done between 2025 and 2026 across our strategic priorities of protection, prevention, response, and people. The Annual Report supports principles of good governance, transparency, regular reporting, and public accountability.

The Audit and Governance Committee is RECOMMENDED to consider and approve the Fire and Community Safety Annual Report 2025/26 for publication. This document is procedural and does not recommend any policy decision, strategy, or project involving major change.

14. Scale of Election Fees 2026-27 (Pages 339 - 354)

The County Council's Returning Officer, Martin Reeves, is responsible for the conduct of the County Council elections and by-elections. The expenditure properly incurred by the Returning Officer is paid by the Council and, as such, a scale of expenses is set as a guide for such expenditure. The scale of expenses set at Annex 1 will be applicable for any polls associated with the County Council during the 2026/27 financial year.

The County Council's scale of election expenses is adopted by the City and District Councils.

HMRC released updated guidance on 21 May 2026 on the rates and allowances for travel, mileage and fuel. Following requests from the City and District Councils who held elections in May 2026 to update the County's scale of election expenses from £0.45 to £0.55 at paragraph 26, the Returning Officer agreed to this change on 27 May 2026.

This change in the scale of election expenses is brought to the Audit and Governance Committee in the interests of transparency in this area of election governance.

The Audit and Governance Committee is RECOMMENDED to note the change to the Scale of Election Expenses for the financial year 2026/27, as shown in Annex 1, paragraph 26, in the event of the election of County Councillors or any other poll associated with the County Council during the 2026/27 financial year, in relation to the change of payment eligible for travelling expenses per mile from £0.45 to £0.55, as per the guidance released by His Majesty's Revenue and Customs (HMRC).

15. Audit and Governance Committee Work Programme (Pages 355 - 356)

To receive and comment on the Audit and Governance Committee Work Programme for 2026-27

Close of meeting

An explanation of abbreviations and acronyms is available on request from the Head of Internal Audit and Counter Fraud.

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.