Weak Council Oversight: The Consequences of Irregular District Council Meetings in Adado

Shukri Mahad Abdullahi

Governance Brief 53 | November 2026

Summary

- Adado District Council, mandated under the Galmudug State Local Government Law (Law No. 004/2020) to convene every three months, has not held a formal session since November 2024, following a period of relatively regular meetings between August 2022 and that date.
- The primary driver of this irregularity is budgetary: the local government's limited resources have made it difficult to consistently finance the costs of convening formal Council sessions.
- In the absence of regular Council sessions, the Executive Committee, comprising the Mayor, Deputy Mayor, and Secretary, has continued to oversee the day-to-day operations of the local government, while the Council's committees have continued their respective oversight and follow-up functions. However, the lack of full-Council sessions has limited collective oversight, budget scrutiny, and decisions requiring plenary approval.
- Strengthening dedicated financing mechanisms and establishing a predictable budget line for Council sessions, supported by federal, state, and partner engagement, would help restore .

About Somali Public Agenda

Somali Public Agenda is a nonprofit public policy and administration research organization based in Mogadishu. Its aim is to advance understanding and improvement of public administration and public services in Somalia through evidence-based research and analysis.

About the Author

Shukri Mahad Abdullahi is a human rights lawyer, researcher, and humanitarian practitioner.

www.somalipublicagenda.org

© 2026 Somali Public Agenda

Introduction

Since November 2024, formal oversight by the Adado District Council has sharply declined, a pattern that respondents describe consistently despite their differing roles and levels of involvement in Council affairs. Under Article 31 of the Galmudug State Local Government Law (Law No. 004/2020), the District Council is required to hold a formal session once every three months, with each session mandated to last twenty days. Sessions are typically called by the Council Chairperson, although the law also allows one-third of Council members to request that a session be convened.

After its formation in August 2022, the Council held approximately eight formal sessions through November 2024, a period that respondents describe as relatively consistent, with sessions generally proceeding with the required quorum and minutes recorded as the official record of Council discussions and decisions. Since November 2024, however, no formal Council session has been held, even as the Council's committees and the local administration have continued to manage day-to-day governance functions.

This brief examines the gap between Adado's legally mandated meeting schedule and actual Council practice. It assesses the drivers and consequences of irregular oversight for accountability, budget scrutiny, decision-making, and public participation. Finally, the brief offers policy considerations to support the resumption of consistent Council sessions in Adado District.

The data were collected through eleven key informant interviews conducted remotely in August–September 2026. Participants included district councillors, the district secretary, local government officials, and civil society organisations (CSOs).

Legal Mandate and Meeting Practice in Adado

Respondents consistently described a clear gap between the legally mandated meeting schedule and current Council practice. Under Article 31 of the Galmudug State Local Government Law (Law No. 004/2020), the District Council is required to convene once every three months, with each session lasting twenty days. The Chairperson holds primary responsibility for calling sessions, but the law also allows one-third of Council members to request that a session be held, providing a formal channel for members to trigger

a meeting independently of the Chairperson. The Council's internal by-laws further set out procedures for convening and conducting Council sessions, including the process through which members may request a meeting without relying solely on the Chairperson. The law also requires that a quorum be confirmed before any vote is taken (Article 34) and that Council and committee proceedings be formally recorded in written minutes (Article 35).

Respondents noted that this schedule was followed with relative consistency in the Council's earlier years. Since its formation in August 2022, the Council held around eight formal sessions up to November 2024, during which meetings generally proceeded with the required quorum and were formally documented through recorded minutes. No formal Council session has taken place since November 2024, marking a clear break from the Council's earlier meeting pattern and a significant departure from the legally mandated quarterly schedule.

Drivers and Consequences of Irregular Oversight

Respondents identified budget constraints as the principal driver of irregular Council meetings. Convening a formal session involves costs such as councillor allowances, transport, and basic administrative and logistical expenses. Councillors also reported that they have not received salaries since assuming office, making it difficult for some members to cover the personal and household costs associated with attending meetings. Given the local government's limited financial resources, these costs have made it increasingly difficult to convene sessions as frequently as required by law.

While limited local revenue and the absence of remuneration could be significant constraints on councillors' participation, these factors may also point to gaps in councillors' understanding of their institutional roles, responsibilities, and incentives. Evidence from local governance in Somalia suggests that some councillors have entered office with expectations of financial compensation rather than viewing the position primarily as a form of community service (Isak, 2024).

At the same time, limited local revenue is a challenge that councils need to address through greater revenue mobilisation and improved financial management, rather than waiting for revenues to increase before fulfilling their core functions. This raises questions about how well the responsibilities and nature of the councillor role are understood and whether financial expectations have become intertwined with participation in Council affairs.

Local government respondents did not point to political calculations or security conditions as significant factors, framing the irregularity primarily as a resourcing problem rather than a deliberate effort to avoid scrutiny. One councilor explained:

> *"The primary constraint has been budgetary. The local government carries a wide range of responsibilities, yet the resources available to meet them remain very limited. As a result, it became increasingly difficult to sustain regular Council meetings and to fulfill the associated financial obligations to Council members, including allowances and other forms of support. This is the principal reason the meetings could not be maintained at their previous frequency."*

However, a civil society member indicated that there had been recurrent disputes within the Council's leadership, involving the Mayor and Deputy Mayor, which had disrupted the Council's regular meetings.

The absence of regular full-Council sessions has narrowed the space for members to review district affairs collectively. Respondents described reduced opportunities for members to question and follow up with the administration, weakening day-to-day accountability.

Regarding budget oversight, the lack of regular sessions has similarly limited the Council's ability to jointly review how available resources are being used. Decision-making has also been affected: while committees continue to handle matters within their mandates, decisions that require full-Council approval have stalled in the absence of plenary sessions.

Respondents were clear, however, that these gaps have not resulted in a halt in service delivery. In the absence of full-Council sessions, the Executive Committee, comprising the Mayor, Deputy Mayor, and Secretary, has continued to manage the day-to-day operations of the local government, while Council committees have continued their respective oversight and follow-up responsibilities within their mandates. Routine administrative matters, including those falling within the administration's own responsibilities, have therefore continued to be handled even as formal Council oversight has lapsed.

Committee-level activity has remained a consistent feature of Council functioning throughout this period. Each committee continues to address issues within its designated area of responsibility, indicating that while full-Council oversight has lapsed since November 2024, Council-level engagement with district affairs has not stopped entirely.

In this sense, the issue is not simply whether services continue to be provided, but whether public resources are managed accountably and whether available resources translate into the adequate services and priorities that residents expect from their local government.

Coordination, Recourse, and Prospects for Reform

Respondents did not describe the irregularity of full-Council sessions as having significantly affected coordination with the Galmudug regional government or international partners operating in Adado. Day-to-day coordination has continued through the local administration and Council committees, with respondents locating the main gap specifically at the level of formal plenary sessions rather than in routine engagement with external actors.

Formal recourse mechanisms for delayed sessions remain in place. Council members can raise the matter directly with the Chairperson, and the law allows one-third of members to request that a session be convened. Residents, for their part, can raise concerns through their Council representatives and the local administration. Respondents indicated that these channels remain available in principle, although their practical effectiveness depends on the circumstances, particularly the resources needed to organise and hold formal sessions.

When asked what single change would most improve Council scheduling, participants consistently pointed to the need for a dedicated and predictable budget for Council sessions. They explained that reliable funding would enable the Council to follow the legally mandated three-month meeting schedule more consistently. Participants from civil society and Council members also noted that this would require stronger financial and logistical support from the Federal Government, the Galmudug Government, and development partners, along with better advance planning.

The expectation of financial and logistical support from higher levels of government and development partners points to a broader challenge in implementing federalism and decentralised local governance in practice. This expectation suggests that reliance on higher authorities remains deeply embedded in how district governance is understood. While resource constraints are real, continued dependence on the Federal Government for core Council functions risks undermining local autonomy and responsibility, leaving decentralisation largely formal rather than functional.

Participants also pointed to domestic revenue generation as a potential longer-term solution. Rather than relying primarily on external support, one councillor highlighted that strengthening local taxation and directing a greater share of locally generated revenue towards district priorities could improve the local government's ability to finance Council operations, including regular sessions and councillor compensation. However, the councillor acknowledged that current domestic revenue remains insufficient to cover these costs on its own:

> *"We also need to look at our own local revenue. If we can strengthen tax collection and make better use of the revenue generated in the district, it could help us support the Council ourselves, including the costs of regular meetings and councilors' compensation. That would reduce our dependence on outside support. But at the moment, what we collect locally is still not enough to cover these costs on its own."*

However, increasing local revenue alone may not improve Council functioning or service delivery unless existing revenues are transparently managed and subject to effective oversight.

Conclusion

The findings show that the main challenge facing Council oversight in Adado is not a breakdown in local governance altogether, but the prolonged absence of formal, full-Council sessions through which accountability and representation are exercised. While the local administration and Council committees have continued to support day-to-day governance, the absence of regular Council meetings has reduced opportunities for councillors to collectively discuss budgets, spending priorities, and issues affecting residents.

This gap also has implications for local public financial management. Regular Council engagement provides an important forum for discussing budget priorities, reviewing the use of public resources, and strengthening accountability. Stronger accountability in revenue collection and public spending can help ensure that limited resources are better aligned with community priorities and service needs. In this sense, Council oversight, revenue mobilisation, resource management, and service delivery are closely connected.

Addressing this gap will require predictable financial support for Council operations and sessions, including appropriate remuneration or allowances for councillors, as well as essential transport, administrative, and logistical costs. It will also require stronger local revenue collection and accountability mechanisms, continued support from the Galmudug State, and sustained attention to restoring the legally mandated meeting schedule. Civil society organisations can contribute by monitoring whether Council meetings are held regularly, raising public awareness of the Council's mandate, and encouraging greater transparency and accountability in local governance.

Policy Considerations

This brief presents the following policy considerations to support the resumption of consistent and effective Council oversight in Adado District:

1. **Establish a dedicated Council meeting budget:** The Galmudug State and development partners should support a predictable, ring-fenced budget line for District Council sessions to remove the principal financial barrier to holding sessions on the legally mandated three-month schedule.
2. **Restore the mandated meeting schedule through advance planning**: The Council Chairperson and Secretariat should establish an advance annual calendar of sessions, supported by early budgetary and logistical planning, to reduce the risk of sessions being repeatedly postponed.
3. **Strengthen local tax and revenue collection**: Adado District should improve the collection and management of locally generated revenue, with a clear portion of domestic revenue allocated to support essential Council functions, including regular sessions and councillor compensation. The Galmudug and Federal Governments, alongside development partners, should provide technical and financial support to strengthen the district's revenue systems and gradually reduce reliance on external funding.
4. **Monitor representation to sustain inclusive oversight**: Local authorities should continue to monitor whether the resumption of regular Council sessions maintains balanced representation across clans, neighbourhoods, and interest groups as sessions become more frequent.
5. **Strengthen civic monitoring and advocacy**: Civil society organisations in Adado should monitor the Council's compliance with its legally mandated meeting schedule, raise public awareness of the Council's role in local accountability and representation, and engage Council and local government officials to encourage regular and transparent meetings.

References

- *Isak, F. Y. (2024). Understanding the formation and operation of local councils in Southwest, Hirshabelle, and Galmudug states. From https://somalipublicagenda.org/wp-content/uploads/2024/02/SPA_Research_Report_No_13-The-formation-operation-of-local-councils2.pdf*

This governance brief is the fifteenth in a series of District Council-driven research publications under our EU- funded project, Increased Opportunities for Somali Citizens' Scrutiny of Fiscal and Financial Governance, which examines critical issues related to fiscal governance and federalism at the district level. The topics explored in this series are identified through close collaboration with District Council members, and Civil Society Organizations' CSOs) representatives during workshops held in Bosaso, Adado, and Jowhar on a quarterly basis, ensuring the research remains grounded in local governance realities.

Somali Public Agenda
Mogadishu Somalia
+252(0)85 8358
info@somalipublicagenda.org
<https://www.somalipublicagenda.org>

@somalipubagenda