

**Committee:** Executive  
**Date:** Tuesday 3 April 2018  
**Time:** 6.30 pm  
**Venue:** Bodicote House, Bodicote, Banbury, OX15 4AA

### Membership

<b>Councillor Barry Wood (Chairman)</b>	<b>Councillor G A Reynolds (Vice-Chairman)</b>
<b>Councillor Colin Clarke</b>	<b>Councillor John Donaldson</b>
<b>Councillor Tony Ilott</b>	<b>Councillor Mike Kerford-Byrnes</b>
<b>Councillor Kieron Mallon</b>	<b>Councillor Richard Mould</b>
<b>Councillor D M Pickford</b>	<b>Councillor Lynn Pratt</b>

## AGENDA

1. **Apologies for Absence**

2. **Declarations of Interest**

Members are asked to declare any interest and the nature of that interest that they may have in any of the items under consideration at this meeting.

3. **Petitions and Requests to Address the Meeting**

The Chairman to report on any requests to submit petitions or to address the meeting.

4. **Minutes** (Pages 1 - 6)

To confirm as a correct record the Minutes of the meeting held on 26 February 2018.

5. **Chairman's Announcements**

To receive communications from the Chairman.

## **6. Participation in the Vulnerable Persons Relocation Scheme (Pages 7 - 14)**

Report of Interim Director: Wellbeing

### **Purpose of report**

To consider Cherwell District Council's progress regarding the resettlement of six refugee families into the district as part of the Government's Vulnerable Persons Relocation Scheme (VPRS). This report also intends to inform future decision making regarding the resettlement of refugee families in Cherwell District, wider engagement in the asylum seeker dispersal programme and preparation of a bid for Controlling Migration Fund monies.

### **Recommendations**

The meeting is recommended:

- 1.1 To note the contents of the report.
- 1.2 To note the findings of the evaluation report of the Syrian Vulnerable Persons Relocation Scheme (VPRS) in Cherwell.
- 1.3 To consider resettlement of additional Syrian Refugee families within Cherwell district.
- 1.4 To support the establishment of a dedicated post to deal with Syrian Refugee work in Cherwell (funded by VPRS funding).
- 1.5 To support officers to develop a bid to the Controlling Migration Fund in relation to Cherwell district.
- 1.6 To consider participation in the Asylum Seeker Dispersal Programme in Cherwell district, and advise officers accordingly.

## **7. Notification of Urgent Action: Amendment to the Local Discretionary Rate Relief Policy for 2017-2018 (Pages 15 - 20)**

Report of Chief Executive

### **Purpose of report**

To note the urgent decision taken by the Chief Executive to revise the Local Discretionary Rate Relief Policy for 2017-2018 in order to.

### **Recommendations**

The meeting is recommended:

- 1.1 To note the urgent action taken by the Chief Executive to revise the Policy and to maximise the funding to support local businesses.

## **8. Urgent Business**

The Chairman to advise whether they have agreed to any item of urgent business being admitted to the agenda.

## **9. Exclusion of the Press and Public**

The following reports contain exempt information as defined in the following paragraphs of Part 1, Schedule 12A of Local Government Act 1972.

3 – Information relating to the financial or business affairs of any particular person (including the authority holding that information).

Members are reminded that whilst the following items have been marked as exempt, it is for the meeting to decide whether or not to consider it in private or in public. In making the decision, members should balance the interests of individuals or the Council itself in having access to the information. In considering their discretion members should also be mindful of the advice of Council Officers.

No representations have been received from the public requesting that the items be considered in public.

Should Members decide not to make a decision in public, they are recommended to pass the following recommendation:

“That under Section 100A of the Local Government Act 1972, the public and press be excluded from the meeting for the following items of business on the ground that, if the public and press were present, it would be likely that exempt information falling under the provisions of Schedule 12A, Part 1, Paragraph 3 would be disclosed to them, and that in all the circumstances of the case, the public interest in maintaining the exemption outweighs the public interest in disclosing the information.”

## **10. Community Infrastructure Grants (Pages 21 - 54)**

Exempt report of Assistant Director: Communities

## **11. Crown House Update**

\*\* Please note this report will follow as it is being reviewed and finalised \*\*

Exempt report of Chief Executive

## **Information about this Agenda**

### **Apologies for Absence**

Apologies for absence should be notified to [democracy@cherwellandsouthnorthants.gov.uk](mailto:democracy@cherwellandsouthnorthants.gov.uk) or 01295 221589 prior to the start of the meeting.

## **Declarations of Interest**

Members are asked to declare interests at item 2 on the agenda or if arriving after the start of the meeting, at the start of the relevant agenda item.

## **Local Government and Finance Act 1992 – Budget Setting, Contracts & Supplementary Estimates**

Members are reminded that any member who is two months in arrears with Council Tax must declare the fact and may speak but not vote on any decision which involves budget setting, extending or agreeing contracts or incurring expenditure not provided for in the agreed budget for a given year and could affect calculations on the level of Council Tax.

## **Local Authorities (Executive Arrangements) (Meetings and Access to Information) (England) Regulations 2012**

This agenda constitutes the 5 day notice required by Regulation 5 of the Local Authorities (Executive Arrangements) (Meetings and Access to Information) (England) Regulations 2012 in terms of the intention to consider an item of business in private.

## **Evacuation Procedure**

When the continuous alarm sounds you must evacuate the building by the nearest available fire exit. Members and visitors should proceed to the car park as directed by Democratic Services staff and await further instructions.

## **Access to Meetings**

If you have any special requirements (such as a large print version of these papers or special access facilities) please contact the officer named below, giving as much notice as possible before the meeting.

## **Mobile Phones**

Please ensure that any device is switched to silent operation or switched off.

## **Queries Regarding this Agenda**

Please contact Natasha Clark, Democratic and Elections  
natasha.clark@cherwellandsouthnorthants.gov.uk, 01295 221589

**Yvonne Rees**  
**Chief Executive**

Published on Thursday 22 March 2018

## Cherwell District Council

### Executive

Minutes of a meeting of the Executive held at Bodicote House, Bodicote, Banbury, OX15 4AA, on 26 February 2018 at 4.30 pm

Present: Councillor Barry Wood (Chairman), Leader of the Council  
Councillor G A Reynolds (Vice-Chairman), Deputy Leader of the Council

Councillor Colin Clarke, Lead Member for Planning  
Councillor John Donaldson, Lead member for Housing  
Councillor Tony Ilott, Lead Member for Financial Management  
Councillor Mike Kerford-Byrnes, Lead Member for Change Management, Joint Working and IT  
Councillor Kieron Mallon, Lead Member for Public Protection and Community Services  
Councillor D M Pickford, Lead Member for Housing  
Councillor Lynn Pratt, Lead Member for Estates and the Economy

Also Present: Councillor Alan MacKenzie-Wintle  
Councillor Neil Prestidge  
Councillor Sandra Rhodes  
Councillor Barry Richards  
Councillor Nigel Simpson

Apologies for absence: Councillor Richard Mould, Lead Member for Performance

Officers: Yvonne Rees, Chief Executive  
Adrian Colwell, Executive Director: Place and Growth  
Cecilie Booth, Interim Assistant Director of Finance  
David Peckford, Deputy Manager – Planning Policy and Growth Strategy  
James Doble, Assistant Director: Law and Governance / Monitoring Officer  
Natasha Clark, Interim Democratic and Elections Manager

#### 104 **Declarations of Interest**

There were no declarations of interest.

#### 105 **Petitions and Requests to Address the Meeting**

There were no petitions or requests to address the meeting.

106 **Urgent Business**

There were no items of urgent business.

107 **Minutes**

The minutes of the meeting held on 5 February 2017 were agreed as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

108 **Chairman's Announcements**

There were no Chairman's announcements.

109 **Submission of the Partial Review of the Cherwell Local Plan 2011-2031-  
Oxford's Unmet Housing Needs**

The Executive Director for Place and Growth submitted a report to seek approval for the submission of the Partial Review of the adopted Cherwell Local Plan 2011-2031 to the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government for independent examination.

**Resolved**

- (1) That, having given due consideration, the responses to the consultation on the Proposed Submission draft of the Partial Review of the Local Plan be noted.
- (2) That the supporting documents relevant to the preparation of the Partial Review of the Local Plan be noted.
- (3) That the Schedule of Focused Changes and Minor Modifications to the Proposed Submission draft of the Partial Review of the Local Plan (annex to the Minutes as set out in the Minute Book) be approved.
- (4) That the Proposed Submission Draft of the Partial Review (July 2017) (Annex to the Minutes as set out in the Minute Book) incorporating the Schedule of Focused Changes and Minor Modifications (Annex to the Minutes as set out in the Minute Book) be approved as the Submission draft of the Partial Review of the Cherwell Local Plan 2011-2031.
- (5) That Full Council be recommended to approve to submit the Submission draft of the Partial Review of the Cherwell Local Plan 2011-2031 to the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government for independent examination with all necessary prescribed and supporting documents.
- (6) That the Executive Director for Place and Growth be authorised to make any necessary, presentational changes to the Submission draft

of the Partial Review and to necessary prescribed and supporting documents before the meeting of Full Council.

## **Reasons**

This report presents the Partial Review of the Cherwell Local Plan 2011-2031 – Oxford's Unmet Housing Needs for approval and subsequent presentation to Council as a 'Submission' Local Plan. Upon approval by Council the Plan would be submitted to the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government for independent examination.

Consultation on the Proposed Submission Plan commenced on 17 July 2017 and extended to 10 October 2017. A total of 1460 representations were received in response to the consultation. They have been considered by officers in reviewing whether the Partial Review (the Plan) is 'sound' and legally compliant - the tests of the independent examination of the Plan that commences upon the Plan's submission.

The view of officers is that the Plan is sound but that a number of 'focused changes' and 'minor modifications' should be made to it in the interests of its improvement, clarification and updating and to address minor presentational, grammatical and typographical issues.

## **Alternative options**

Officers have considered all reasonable alternatives in preparing the Partial Review of the Local Plan. This is documented in the Sustainability Appraisal presented at Appendices 5, 6 & 7. The Plan as presented is considered to be sound, legally compliant, and, in the view of officers, would result in sustainable development.

The following alternative options are open to Members but are not recommended for the reasons as set out below:

### *Option 1: Not to approve the Plan*

Joint work with the other Oxfordshire councils has revealed that Cherwell and other Districts need to meet additional housing need for Oxford. In accordance with paragraph B.95 of the adopted Local Plan, this triggered the Partial Review process to be completed within two years of adoption (from July 2015). Officers consider the proposed Partial Review of the Plan to be sound and legally compliant. Not to approve the Plan would lead to a reconsideration of how the whole District would contribute in meeting the identified housing need in the context of the statutory Duty to Cooperate. There would be significant uncertainty for partner authorities, local communities and the development industry.

### *Option 2: Not to approve the Plan and seek significant changes*

New, significant changes would need to be considered by officers on an evidential basis before the Plan could be re-presented to Members for approval. Changes involving new planning considerations may require re-consultation. The consideration of significant changes would lead to delay.

### *Option 3: To approve the Plan and seek changes.*

Changes would need to be considered by officers to determine whether they would affect the submission of the Plan for examination; whether they would be significant; and, whether they need to be considered on an evidential basis. Changes involving new planning considerations may require re-consultation. The consideration of significant changes would lead to delay.

## 110 **Oxfordshire Housing and Growth Deal**

The Chief Executive submitted a report to consider the Oxfordshire Housing and Growth Deal (the Deal) announced by Government in the November Budget, which provides £215 million of additional government funding for Oxfordshire, along with a package of planning freedoms and flexibilities for the Oxfordshire authorities.

The outline agreement made it clear that full agreement of the Deal was subject to agreement by each local authority and the Oxfordshire Local Enterprise Board (OxLEP) board (referred to collectively as the “Oxfordshire Partners”).

The deal also required a detailed delivery plan to be agreed by Oxfordshire Partners, Homes England and the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government (MHCLG) by 31 January 2018.

In presenting the report, the Lead Member for Planning confirmed that all other local authorities in Oxfordshire had approved the Deal.

### **Resolved**

- (1) That Full Council be recommended to agree to the Oxfordshire Housing and Growth Deal (the Deal).
- (2) That Full Council be recommended to agree the Delivery Plan as the basis for the Deal; noting that elements will be updated as detailed work programmes develop.
- (3) That Full Council be recommended to delegate authority to the Chief Executive in consultation with the Leader and the Growth Board, to make minor changes to the Delivery Plan that may be required to secure agreement with Government.
- (4) That Full Council be recommended to delegate authority to the Chief Executive in consultation with Leader and the Growth Board, to agree the Year 1 affordable housing delivery programme, phasing and processes specified in the Delivery Plan.
- (5) That Full Council be recommended to agree to appoint Oxfordshire County Council as the accountable body in respect of the Oxfordshire Housing and Growth Deal.
- (6) That Full Council be recommended to delegate authority to the Chief Executive in consultation with the Leader and the Growth Board, to review the terms of reference of the Growth Board and agree any



amendments and any appropriate inter-authority agreements required to support the Delivery of the Housing and Growth Deal.

- (7) That Full Council be recommended to delegate authority to the Chief Executive in consultation with the Leader to take any other decisions arising from agreement to the Oxfordshire Housing and Growth Deal, until the revised terms of reference of the Growth Board are in place.
- (8) That Full Council be recommended to agree to participate in the preparation of a Joint Statutory Spatial Plan (JSSP) for Oxfordshire in accordance with the timescales set out in the Delivery Plan and in accordance with Section 28 of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 (Districts only) with the milestones for progressing the JSSP being contingent on Government delivering the Planning Freedoms and Flexibilities as described in the Delivery Plan.

### **Reasons**

This Deal is the only one of its kind in the UK, so far. It provides a significant level of additional level of additional resources for infrastructure and affordable housing to support the planned growth of Oxfordshire. Growth which in Cherwell is directed by the adopted Local Plan (itself based on the 2014 SHMA).

The protection offered by the bespoke planning freedoms will be significant allied with the strategic direction which a Countywide Spatial Plan will provide for shaping the growth which the development of the Oxford to Cambridge corridor will bring.

### **Alternative options**

No alternative options are identified.

The meeting ended at 4.40 pm

Chairman:

Date:

This page is intentionally left blank

## Cherwell District Council

### Executive

3 April 2018

#### Participation in the Vulnerable Persons Relocation Scheme

### Report of Interim Director of Wellbeing

This report is public

#### Purpose of report

To consider Cherwell District Council's progress regarding the resettlement of six refugee families into the district as part of the Government's Vulnerable Persons Relocation Scheme (VPRS). This report also intends to inform future decision making regarding the resettlement of refugee families in Cherwell District, wider engagement in the asylum seeker dispersal programme and preparation of a bid for Controlling Migration Fund monies.

#### 1.0 Recommendations

The meeting is recommended:

- 1.1 To note the contents of the report.
- 1.2 To note the findings of the evaluation report of the Syrian Vulnerable Persons Relocation Scheme (VPRS) in Cherwell.
- 1.3 To consider resettlement of additional Syrian Refugee families within Cherwell district.
- 1.4 To support the establishment of a dedicated post to deal with Syrian Refugee work in Cherwell (funded by VPRS funding).
- 1.5 To support officers to develop a bid to the Controlling Migration Fund in relation to Cherwell district.
- 1.6 To consider participation in the Asylum Seeker Dispersal Programme in Cherwell district, and advise officers accordingly.

#### 2.0 Introduction

- 2.1 The Syrian VPRS was launched in January 2014 to provide sanctuary to several hundred vulnerable Syrians over 3 years. In September 2015, the scheme was expanded to resettle 20,000 Syrians in need of protection by 2020. Then in July 2017 the eligibility criteria for the VPRS was extended to all those fleeing the

conflict of Syria regardless of nationality. The primary purpose of the scheme is to resettle refugees in a way that:

- Secures national security and public protection
- Has the wellbeing of the vulnerable persons and the welcoming communities at the centre of decision making
- Delivers value for money for the UK taxpayer

- 2.2 In January 2016 Cherwell District Council pledged to support the Government with its commitment to assist vulnerable Syrians and agreed to resettle 6 families into the district under the VPRS complementing efforts in the other Oxfordshire district/city councils.
- 2.3 In January 2017, Senior Members in Cherwell District Council received a request from the Churches in Bicester Group to resettle a total of 50 Syrian Refugees (this would equate to around 12 families)
- 2.4 With the 6<sup>th</sup> family due to arrive during Spring 2018 the council will have fulfilled its initial pledge. This creates an opportunity to consider whether Cherwell District Council wishes to see more families resettled into the district under the VPRS and consider if there is support for engagement in associated Government programmes such as the asylum seeker dispersal programme. There is also additional government funding (Controlling Migration Fund) available relating to this area of work that the Council could bid for.

### **3.0 Report Details**

- 3.1 In the local arrangements for VPRS, in Cherwell the Council has been the lead agency in resettling families into the district linking with the South East Strategic Partnership for Migration (SESPM) and the Home Office.
- 3.2 The Housing Team has taken overall responsibility for the project and overseen all aspects of the project delivery to ensure families resettled into the district are supported to the VPRS requirements. However, a number of other departments have also been involved in the resettlement process including Community Services, Revenue and Benefits and Communications Team.
- 3.3 The Council has procured the services of Connection Support to deliver the required support to individuals being resettled into the district. Connection Support are a long-established and well regarded support agency working predominantly in Oxfordshire but also providing services in Buckinghamshire and Milton Keynes. Connection Support has experience and expertise in this type of support work supporting refugees in Oxford City.
- 3.4 As well as providing support to the refugee families, Connection Support also utilise help and support from volunteers who are able to offer particular skills such as providing informal English lessons, acting as translators for the family and befriending families. All volunteers working with families undergo a Disclosure Barring Service (DBS) check. Connection Support also co-ordinate volunteers, churches and community groups to adopt rooms within the secured accommodation to help ensure the property is furnished ready for each families arrival.
- 3.5 Various other agencies assist with the resettlement of refugee families:

- Oxfordshire County Council: identify school places for the children; social care teams if the family has social care needs
- Oxfordshire Clinical Commissioning Group: involvement at the beginning of the resettlement process and the decision whether a family are to be resettled into the district depending on whether they have the ability to support any identified health issues individuals may have.
- Thames Valley Police: check that the proposed accommodation is not within an area with known problems that could put the families at risk, meet the family within the first few weeks of arrival and put a priority response alert on the families' addresses in case any incidents occur.
- Job Centre Plus: assists families to apply for benefits upon their arrival.

3.6 Cherwell District Council have secured accommodation for refugees' families within the private rented sector. This was a conscious decision to ensure that the limited resource of social housing available within the district was not taken away from local residents in housing need. The Council has also focused on securing larger accommodation for families being resettled as part of the VPRS. This decision has been made because:

- The greatest housing need on the Council's housing register is for 1 and 2 bedroom properties
- Larger families also allow the Council to claim more funding for the programme to make it more financially viable and deliverable at nil cost to the Council

3.7 Officers have undertaken an evaluation of the project to fully understand what has worked, what has not worked so well, the implications this project has had on local services and the resources needed to resettle more families within the district.

3.8 The purpose of this evaluation was to provide an overview of the work that has been completed to date, identify lessons learnt during the resettlement process and provide recommendations for the future.

3.9 The key headlines from the evaluation of the project are outlined below.

3.10 Cherwell District Council is well placed to resettle refugees within the district as:

- There are strong partnerships with other statutory and voluntary partners which have helped the delivery of the project to date
- There is considerable community support, especially from within faith groups
- All of the children from the refugee families have been able to access education
- The refugee families are extremely satisfied with the help and support they have received and continue to receive
- A good range of services/facilities are available for families to access

3.11 The evaluation has highlighted some difficulties including:

- A lack of services in certain parts of the District, in particular in Kidlington and to a lesser extent in Bicester although this does not prevent families from being supported as required
- Difficulty with accessing a dentist for families living in Bicester
- Conflicting priorities between the requirements of the VPRS to attend language classes and requirements to receive benefits at the Job Centre Plus is difficult but is understood to be experienced elsewhere within the country and not specifically an issue just in Cherwell

- Securing accommodation for families that is affordable has been difficult and it has been necessary to use some of the funding from Central Government to bridge the gap between local housing allowance and rent levels charged by landlords.

- 3.12 The evaluation has shown that the resettlement of refugees has been very successful to date. The project has been delivered at minimal cost to the Council as all expenses have been funded completely from the money payable by Central Government to Cherwell District Council to support and resettle families. The contribution that the Council has made towards the project is on officer time which has had a small impact on the Housing Team's resources to deliver other services.
- 3.13 Despite some difficulties being identified through the evaluation, these would not prevent Cherwell District Council from being able to resettle more families into the district and appropriate plans could be devised to ensure these types of issues are mitigated moving forwards.
- 3.14 In addition to the VPRS there are some associated Government programmes that Cherwell District Council should be aware of and consider if they would like to offer their support.
- 3.15 *Dispersal of Asylum Seekers* - In March 2016 all Local Authority Chief Executives in the UK received a request from the Director General of UK Visas and Immigration (UKVI) team to participate in permitting people seeking asylum to live in their areas. The UKVI are experiencing a shortage of accommodation within their existing dispersal areas and are looking for local authorities to participate within the dispersal scheme to increase the number of locations available to them throughout the UK. The UKVI have contracted providers to secure accommodation within areas that have provided agreement for them to source accommodation for people seeking asylum. The contracted accommodation providers are required to source and maintain any accommodation used and will need to submit any proposals to the local authority for approval being the property can be used. Asylum seekers receive asylum support payments of £37.75 per week. Once a decision is made on their application, they have between 21 and 28 days to vacate the property. If the decision is positive the local housing connection will be with the local authority area in which they have been accommodated, although new refugees may choose to move to larger urban centres of population. The overriding aim of the scheme is to have as many local authorities participating as possible, spreading the demand across the country. If Cherwell District Council were to support the Asylum seeker dispersal programme in their areas the staff resource and input would be minimal. The main consideration would be the impact on availability of private rented accommodation for use by the VPRS and local residents in housing need.
- 3.16 *The Controlling Migration Fund* – The Controlling Migration Fund is designed to support local authorities in England who are experiencing pressures on services from either:
- Illegal migration
  - Legitimate migration

The Fund is available for local authorities to apply for over four years 2016/17 – 2019/20 and focuses on responding to problems caused by high migration into localities and is designed to help deliver benefits to the local population. The fund consists of two elements –

- 1) A local service impact element of £100m (£25m each year) to help English local authorities ease pressures on local services
- 2) An enforcement part of £40m to enforce action of those in the UK illegally to reduce pressures on local areas

The funding will consider proposals across a broad range of activities. Areas of work that officers have identified (informed by the VPRS evaluation) as potential areas to bid for funding for are:

- Help to build community cohesion and encourage integration such as English as a second language (ESOL)
- Opportunities to work collectively with other local authorities to reshape services – possibly a shared service dimension and/or working with other local authorities within the county
- Improve local intelligence data to help improve the understanding migration is having on the local area

## **4.0 Conclusion and Reasons for Recommendations**

- 4.1 Based upon the success of the programme to date, there is an opportunity for Cherwell District Council to resettle additional Syrian Refugee families into the district. A further 6 families would approximately equate to 50 individuals in total. This would align with the request made to senior politicians from the Churches in Bicester group in January 2017.
- 4.2 If further families are resettled, Cherwell District Council should continue to source accommodation from the private rented sector for VPRS use. Also the Council should continue to focus on securing 3 and 4 bedroom properties. This would ensure smaller accommodation is not being taken away from others in the district in housing need and ensures that the Council has sufficient funding available to support the families being resettled.
- 4.3 If Cherwell District Council choose to resettle more families into the district consideration needs to be given to how these families will be supported. The existing contract with Connection Support is to provide support to 6 families for the first year of their resettlement only. The Council could consider delivering the support in-house but this would require recruitment of additional staff and would be a significant commitment by the Council to deliver this in-house. Also an assessment would need to be made about whether the Council's officers have the appropriate skills and knowledge to deliver this type of support. The preferred way forward at this stage is that a procurement exercise would be undertaken to secure a support provider for a subsequent phase of VPRS in Cherwell District.
- 4.4 The evaluation has highlighted that the resettlement of refugees into the district requires significant amounts of officer time to be committed to ensure families are resettled successfully and that a joined up approach is achieved with other statutory agencies and partners. If further families are resettled, it is proposed that a dedicated member of staff is employed using some of the funding available to support the programme moving forwards to help the Council deliver the project further.

## **5.0 Consultation**

- 5.1 As part of the evaluation officers have asked families to complete a short satisfaction survey about the support they have received to help them resettle into the district to date. The responses were completed with the help of volunteers. The feedback overall was extremely positive with all families advising they had been extremely satisfied with the support they have received from Connection Support. The majority of families were extremely satisfied with the accommodation secured for them.

## **6.0 Alternative Options and Reasons for Rejection**

- 6.1 The following alternative options have been identified and rejected for the reasons as set out below.

Option 1: To approve the findings of the evaluation as recommended in this report and commit to the resettlement of a further 6 families into the district. However, not approve the dedicated staff resource that has been requested. This would mean that considerable amounts of existing staff time would be spent on this project diverting this resource from other housing activities.

Option 2: Not to resettle any more refugees into Cherwell district. By not accepting any more families into the district, the Council may receive criticism that it is not continuing to help families beyond the 6 families already pledged.

Option 3: To resettle less than 6 refugees into Cherwell district. Officers expect to have resettled approximately 30 individuals into the district once the 6 family arrive in the spring. Due to the uncertainty about the number of people within each family arriving until accommodation has been secured there is potential for the Council to not be able to fulfil the petition's request to resettle 50 refugees.

Option 4: To resettle more than 6 refugees into the district. Resettling more families into the district at this time would be difficult. Staff resources in excess of the dedicated post being requested would need to be made available to the project and it would be difficult to find enough private rented accommodation for families.

## **7.0 Implications**

### **Financial and Resource Implications**

- 7.1 The project is supported with a funding package for Cherwell to claim and is expected to be delivered at nil cost to the council.

Comments checked by:

Kelly Wheeler, Principal Accountant for Operations and Delivery Directorate, 01327 322230, Kelly.wheeler@cherwellandsouthnorthants.gov.uk



## Legal Implications

- 7.2 The project will not give direct rise to any legal implications, however there are ancillary issues around the services which the Council will need to procure in order to provide the package of support to the families which are located in the district and an EU compliant procurement process will need to be followed. The in-house legal team will assist in drawing up and negotiating contracts with suppliers as was the case on the initial families which were assisted through this scheme.

Comments checked by:

Chris Mace, Solicitor, 01327 322125,

Christopher.mace@cherwellandsouthnorthants.gov.uk

## 8.0 Decision Information

### Key Decision

**Financial Threshold Met:** Yes

**Community Impact Threshold Met:** No

### Wards Affected

Potentially any ward in the district.

### Links to Corporate Plan and Policy Framework

Thriving Communities & Wellbeing:

- Prevent homelessness
- Safeguard the vulnerable
- Provide and support health and wellbeing

### Lead Councillor

Councillor John Donaldson, Lead Member for Housing

## Document Information

Appendix No	Title
None	
Background Papers	
None	
Report Author	Jo Barrett, Joint Housing Manager Supported by Gillian Spencer, Team Leader Housing Strategy & Partnerships & Chris Weight, Housing Partnerships Officer

<b>Contact Information</b>	Jo Barrett, 01327 322369 <a href="mailto:Joanne.barrett@cherwellandsouthnorthants.gov.uk">Joanne.barrett@cherwellandsouthnorthants.gov.uk</a> Gillian Spencer, 01327 322161 <a href="mailto:Gillian.spencer@cherwellandsouthnorthants.gov.uk">Gillian.spencer@cherwellandsouthnorthants.gov.uk</a>
--------------------------------	-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------

## Cherwell District Council

### Executive

3 April 2018

<p><b>Notification of Urgent Action: Amendment to the Local Discretionary Rate Relief Policy for 2017-2018</b></p>
------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------

### Report of Chief Executive

This report is public

#### Purpose of report

To note the urgent decision taken by the Chief Executive to revise the Local Discretionary Rate Relief Policy for 2017-2018 in order to.

#### 1.0 Recommendations

The meeting is recommended:

- 1.1 To note the urgent action taken by the Chief Executive to revise the Policy and to maximise the funding to support local businesses.

#### 2.0 Introduction

- 2.1 In the Spring Budget 2017, the Chancellor announced £300m funding for local councils to help local businesses facing an increase in their business rates following the 2017 Revaluation. Any unspent funding will be returned to central government. The total funding for Cherwell District Council in 2017-2018 is £736,000.
- 2.2 Each billing authority is required to devise its own Discretionary Relief Scheme for the financial year 2017-2018. The Policy for Cherwell District Council was agreed by Executive on 4 September 2017.
- 2.3 Initial analysis and financial modelling showed that 127 businesses may qualify for the Relief and were invited to make an application. Take-up has been very low and removing the need for an application process and making automatic awards has not resulted in maximisation of the funding.

#### 3.0 Report Details

- 3.1 In order to spend the funding in 2017/18 further financial modelling has been carried out and options considered. This has resulted in some changes to the Policy for 2017-2018:

- A change in the qualifying criteria to exclude the requirement for the ratepayer to be in occupation of the property as at 31 March 2017. This enables support to be given to businesses who occupy after 1 April 2017.
- Removal from the exclusions ratepayers occupying on or after 1 April 2017 and properties which were not on the Rating List on 1 April 2017.

3.2 The changes to the Policy will result in expenditure of £733,999 (99.7% of the total funding) for Cherwell District Council. The Policy will be reviewed for 2018-2019.

## **4.0 Conclusion and Reasons for Recommendations**

4.1 The timescale for making use of this funding is extremely tight and exceptional arrangements are therefore necessary. The taking of urgent action associated with the proposals set out in this report give the Council the best chance of utilising the available funds and delivering consequent benefits to local businesses. In accordance with the Constitution, the urgent action is reported to Executive for information.

## **5.0 Consultation**

Lead Member for Financial Management

Supported the use of urgency provisions to take a decision to ensure no delay to the Policy changes and subsequent use of funding

Chairman of Scrutiny Committee

Agreed to waive call in of the decision taken using urgency provisions to ensure no delay to the schemes commencing

## **6.0 Alternative Option and Reasons for Rejection**

6.1 The following alternative option has been identified and rejected for the reasons given below.

Option 1: Not to note the report. This is not recommended as the urgent action has been taken and it is a constitutional requirement for it to be reported to the body that would ordinarily have taken the decision.

## **7.0 Implications**

### **Financial and Resource Implications**

7.1 There are no financial implications arising directly from this report as it is reporting urgent action already taken.

Comments to be checked by: Cecilie Booth, Interim Deputy Section 151 Officer, Cecilie.booth@cherwellandsouthnorthants.gov.uk

## Legal Implications

- 7.2 There are no legal implications arising directly from this report as it is reporting urgent action already taken.

Comments checked by: Chris Mace, Solicitor, 01327 322125,  
[@cherwellandsouthnorthants.gov.uk](mailto:cherwellandsouthnorthants.gov.uk)

## Risk Implications

- 6.3 There are no risk implications arising directly from this report as it is reporting urgent action already taken.

Comments checked by: Louise Tustian, Team Leader, Strategic Intelligence and Insight Team, 01295 22 1786; [louise.tustian@cherwellandsouthnorthants.gov.uk](mailto:louise.tustian@cherwellandsouthnorthants.gov.uk)

## 8.0 Decision Information

### Key Decision

**Financial Threshold Met:** No

**Community Impact Threshold Met:** No

### Wards Affected

All wards

### Links to Corporate Plan and Policy Framework

Corporate Priorities: Sound budgets and customer focused council.

### Lead Councillor

Councillor Tony Ilott, Lead Member for Financial Management.

## Document Information

Appendix No	Title
1	Local Discretionary Rate Relief Policy 2017-2018 (amended)
Background Papers	
None	
Report Author	Belinda Green Revenues and Benefits Manager
Contact Information	01327 322182, <a href="mailto:belinda.green@cherwellandsouthnorthants.gov.uk">belinda.green@cherwellandsouthnorthants.gov.uk</a>

This page is intentionally left blank



## **Local Discretionary Business Rate Relief Scheme for 2017/18**

### **1. Introduction**

The Local Discretionary Business Rate Relief Scheme applies for the period 1 April 2017 to 31 March 2018 only. Under the scheme relief will only be provided where a qualifying ratepayer's bill has increased due to the 2017 Revaluation.

The assistance Cherwell District Council is able to offer under the scheme is limited by the funding provided. The funding allocation is £736,000 for 2017/18,

### **2. Qualifying Criteria**

- 2.1 All other mandatory reliefs must have been applied for prior to an application for Local Discretionary Business Rate Relief being considered.
- 2.2 The 2017 Rateable Value must be £200,000 or less.
- 2.3 Where a property is formed following a split, merger or reorganisation a new calculation will be carried out.
- 2.4 Where a qualifying ratepayer's 2016/2017 or 2017/2018 business rates bill is reduced for any of the following reasons the amount of relief will be reduced or removed accordingly:
  - A reduction in rateable value in the 2010 Rating List or 2017 Rating List
  - The provision of a certificated rateable value for the 2010 Rating List or a historical change
  - The application of any additional relief or exemption
  - Any other relevant reason

### **3. Exclusions**

- 3.1 Relief will not be awarded to the following types of ratepayers and properties:
  - Precepting bodies (County, District and Parish Councils)
  - Banks, building societies and other major financial institutions
  - Multi-national businesses or large chains
  - Businesses which occupy 3 or more properties

- National Health Service
- Charities
- Central Government bodies

3.4 Unoccupied properties

3.5 Where the award of relief would not comply with EU law on State Aid.

#### **4. State Aid**

Ratepayers will be required to confirm that they have received any other State Aid that exceeds €200,000 in total including any other rates relief being granted for premises other than the one to which the declaration relates, under the De Minimis Regulations EC 1417/2013.

Further information on State Aid law can be found at <https://www.gov.uk/state-aid>

#### **5. How will the Local Discretionary Business Rate Relief be calculated?**

Local Discretionary Business Rate Relief will be calculated after any or all of the following have been applied:

- Exemptions and other reliefs
- Transitional arrangements

#### **6. Application Process**

The Council will automatically award business rates relief to qualifying businesses.

The amount of relief awarded this year will be subject to review such that the total relief doesn't exceed the funding allocation from government of £736,000.

This policy will be published on the Council's website [www.cherwell.gov.uk](http://www.cherwell.gov.uk).

#### **7. Appeals**

All appeals must clearly state the ground(s) and be made in writing to: Revenues and Recovery Team, Cherwell District Council, Bodicote House, Bodicote, Banbury OX15 4AA.

Any appeal will be judged in line with this policy and the decision is to be taken at the sole discretion of the Chief Finance Officer in consultation with the Joint Revenues and Benefits Manager. All appeals will be reviewed within 4 weeks of submission of all necessary information. All decisions taken on appeals are final and the outcome will be recorded and advised to the ratepayer in writing. If an appeal is successful, rate relief will be backdated for the full eligible period within the 2017/18 financial year.



By virtue of paragraph(s) 3 of Part 1 of Schedule 12A  
of the Local Government Act 1972.

Document is Restricted

This page is intentionally left blank

By virtue of paragraph(s) 3 of Part 1 of Schedule 12A  
of the Local Government Act 1972.

Document is Restricted

This page is intentionally left blank