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Cherwell District Council

Executive

Minutes of a meeting of the Executive held at Bodicote House, Bodicote, Banbury, Oxon OX15 4AA, on 3 October 2022 at 6.30 pm

Present:

Councillor Barry Wood (Chairman), Leader of the Council and Portfolio Holder for Policy and Strategy
Councillor Ian Corkin (Vice-Chairman), Deputy Leader of the Council and Portfolio Holder for Regeneration and Economy
Councillor Phil Chapman, Portfolio Holder for Healthy Communities
Councillor Colin Clarke, Portfolio Holder for Planning
Councillor Nicholas Mawer, Portfolio Holder for Housing
Councillor Adam Nell, Portfolio Holder for Finance
Councillor Lynn Pratt, Portfolio Holder for Property
Councillor Dan Sames, Portfolio Holder for Cleaner and Green Communities

Also Present:

Councillor Amanda Watkins (virtual)

Apologies for absence:

Councillor Richard Mould, Portfolio Holder for Performance
Councillor Eddie Reeves, Portfolio Holder for Safer Communities

Officers:

Yvonne Rees, Chief Executive
Nathan Elvery, Chief Operating Officer Interim
Ian Boll, Corporate Director Communities
Stephen Hinds, Corporate Director Resources
Michael Furness, Assistant Director Finance & S151 Officer
Shahin Ismail, Interim Head of Legal Services & Deputy Monitoring Officer
Nicola Riley, Assistant Director Wellbeing & Housing
Richard Webb, Assistant Director Regulatory Services & Community Safety
Natasha Clark, Governance and Elections Manager

Officers in attendance virtually:

Celia Prado-Teeling, Interim Assistant Director Customer Focus
Simon Hope, Interim Head of Communications and Marketing

Declarations of Interest

There were no declarations of interest.

39 **Petitions and Requests to Address the Meeting**

There were no petitions or requests to address the meeting.

40 **Minutes**

The minutes of the meeting held on 5 September 2022 were agreed as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

41 **Chairman's Announcements**

There were no Chairman's announcements.

42 **Responding to the Cost of Living Crisis**

The Corporate Director Resources submitted a report which summarised the work the Council was undertaking with respect to the current Cost of Living situation that our residents were experiencing.

In introducing the report the Portfolio Holder for Healthy Communities, also the council's Food Champion, updated Executive on the work of the Food Insecurity Working Group that had been established by the Overview and Scrutiny Committee. The cross-party Working Group would be working with officers on the production of the Cherwell action plan, focusing on three of the priorities from the Oxfordshire Food Strategy: tackle food poverty and diet-related ill health; build vibrant food communities with the capacity and skills to enjoy food together; and, grow the local food economy through local enterprises, local jobs and local wealth generation. The Group would also be working with officers on promotional campaigns for healthy living schemes and promotions, such as the Healthy Start vouchers.

The Portfolio Holder for Healthy Communities also highlighted the warm space initiative whereby the council was working with local partners to provide a comprehensive and complementary warm space offer across the district.

Resolved

- (1) That the work that the Council is undertaking be noted.
- (2) That the Council's Food Champion and the work of the Food Insecurity Working Group be supported.
- (3) That the allocation of £250k from the COVID fund to support the Food Voucher Scheme be supported and authority to approve further expenditure be delegated to the Corporate Director Resources, in consultation with the Section 151 Officer and Portfolio Holder for Healthy Communities.

- (4) That it be agreed to successfully deliver new Central Government funding initiatives that support our communities.

Reasons

This report provides an update on work the Council is undertaking with respect to the Cost of Living Situation. The Council is committed to supporting our residents where we can help them through this current period of economic uncertainty.

Alternative options

Option 1: To reject the recommendations.

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Air Quality Action Plan

The Assistant Director Regulatory Services and Community Safety submitted a report which provided an update on the air quality monitoring carried out across the district in 2021 and the air quality data obtained, the current district Air Quality Action Plan, and other air quality related matters.

Air quality monitoring data showed significant air quality improvements over a 5-year period in the air quality management areas of the District. The Council's Business Plan included a specific commitment to "Work with partners to improve air quality" within the Supporting Environmental Sustainability priority.

Resolved

- (1) That the work undertaken by the Council its partners in relation to air quality in the District and the 2021/22 air quality monitoring data be noted.

Reasons

The Council will continue to work in partnership with the County Council to monitor air quality in the district and update the district AQAP. Proposals for the new air quality targets are being monitored and the implications will be assessed once those targets are finalised. A further annual update will be provided in 2023.

Alternative options

The council has a statutory duty to work with partners to review and assess air quality in the district and to develop air quality action plans for areas where air quality limits are exceeded. This report provides an update on the work carried out by the Council in this function and therefore there are no alternative options to be explored.

Domestic Abuse - Strategic Briefing and Support Services Contract Commissioning

The Assistant Director Regulatory Services & Community Safety submitted a report which updated the Executive on progress in Oxfordshire to meet the new statutory duties in relation to support for domestic abuse victims and to commission a new domestic abuse support services contract.

The report explained that Cherwell District Council worked in partnership with the other local authorities in Oxfordshire and the Police and Crime Commissioner to commission support services for domestic abuse victims in the county. Cherwell contributed £25k per annum to the current domestic abuse support services contract with A2 Dominion. This current contract would expire in April 2023 and therefore work was underway in preparation to tender for a new domestic abuse support services contract.

The Domestic Abuse Act 2021 introduced new statutory duties on local authorities in relation to support for domestic abuse victims in safe accommodation. Subsequent national guidance published in the Domestic Abuse Plan 2022 included additional recommendations for prevention and perpetrator services to help reduce domestic homicides, suicides, risks, and harm to victim-survivors.

Ensuring there was an effective response to domestic abuse in Cherwell contributed to the corporate priority to promote healthy, resilient and engaged communities. In particular it supported the commitment to work with partners to reduce crime and antisocial behaviour, and it also supported the council's commitment to equalities, diversity and inclusion and work with partners to address the causes of health inequality and deprivation.

Resolved

- (1) That the work taking place across Oxfordshire to meet the new statutory duties and to commission a new domestic abuse support services contract be noted.
- (2) That it be agreed that Cherwell District Council will maintain its contribution to the costs of this contract.

Reasons

The new statutory duties relating to domestic abuse and the need to commission a new support service contract for Oxfordshire are driving considerable partnership activity in Oxfordshire. Work is progressing to bring in additional capacity to support Cherwell with this work.

The Executive is recommended to:

- a) Agree that we will continue to contribute to the cost of the Domestic Abuse support services contract for Oxfordshire at current funding levels.
- b) Agree that proposals for seeking White Ribbon Accreditation should be

developed if the council is successful in appointing a suitable candidate to the new Domestic Abuse Lead Officer post.

Alternative options

The Council could withdraw its funding for the Domestic Abuse Support Services Contract. This was discounted since this would result in the Council not meeting its statutory duties and would also lead to a significant reduction in domestic abuse support services in the district.

45 **Monthly Performance, Risk and Finance Monitoring Report August 2022**

The Assistant Director of Finance and Interim Assistant Director – Customer Focus submitted a report which summarised the Council’s Performance, Risk and Finance monitoring positions as at the end of August 2022.

Resolved

- (1) That the monthly Performance, Risk and Finance Monitoring Reports for August 2022 be noted.
- (2) That it be agreed to create an income and expenditure budget of £0.503m for the Homes for Ukraine Grant be created.
- (3) That an additional Capital Project to be included within the Capital Programme for a new mains electrical connection to accommodate the newly installed Air Source Heat Pump (ASHP) to operate at Kidlington Leisure Centre be agreed.
- (4) That the following changes to reserves as detailed in the Annex to the Minutes (as set out in the Minute Book) be approved:

Directorate	Type	Description	Amount £m
Communities	Earmarked	Works in Default	0.040
Communities	Earmarked	Castle Quay	0.671
		Total Earmarked Reserves	0.711

Reasons

This report provides an update on progress made during August 2022, to deliver the Council’s priorities through reporting on Performance, Leadership Risk Register and providing an update on the Financial Position. The Council is committed to performance, risk and budget management and reviews progress against its corporate priorities on a monthly basis.

Alternative options

Option 1: This report illustrates the Council's performance against the 2022-23 Business Plan. Regarding the monitoring aspects of the report, no further options have been considered. However, members may wish to request that officers provide additional information. Regarding the recommendation to approve changes in use of reserves, members could choose not to reject the change of use, however, the request is in accordance with the Council's Reserves Policy and within existing budgets. If Members chose not to agree to the changes in transfers to reserves, then this would mean resource would need to be found for these projects separately in future years.

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Budget and Business Planning Process 2023/24 - 2027/28

The Assistant Director of Finance submitted a report which informed the Executive of the proposed approach to the 2023/24 Budget and Business Planning Process and provides context and background information on the existing Medium-Term Financial Strategy and information on latest government announcements relevant to the Strategy.

Resolved

- (1) That the Budget and Business Planning Process for 2023/24 be approved.
- (2) That a five-year period for the Medium-Term Financial Strategy to 2027/28 and five-year period for the Capital Programme to 2027/28 be approved.

Reasons

The Council has a legal obligation to set a balanced budget and ensure it maintains a suitable level of reserves each year. The process laid out in this report will allow Cherwell District Council to develop budget proposals that will allow it to meet these legal obligations.

Alternative options

The Council has a legal obligation to set a balanced budget and evaluate its level of reserves to ensure they are held at a suitable level. Therefore, there are no alternative options other than to carry out a budget process that reviews the levels of reserves and identifies a budget proposal that can be delivered within the overall level of resources available to the Council.

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Urgent Business

There were no items of urgent business.

The meeting ended at 7.25 pm

Chairman:

Date:

Annex to Minutes - Reserves and Grant Funding

Uses of/ (Contributions to) Reserves

Specific requests

Directorate	Type	Description	Reason	Amount £m
Communities	Earmarked	Works in Default	An allocation of Reserves is required to enable the Housing Standards Team carry out Works in Default in order to meet Housing Authority duties for the protection of public health and abatement of nuisances and other duties as prescribed in legislation.	0.040
Communities	Earmarked	Castle Quay	Use of reserve to allocate to Castle Quay. This income had previously been budgeted to be used for capital adaptations at Castle Quay.	0.671
Total Earmarked Reserves				0.711