

# Annual Report 2021-2022



## Foreword by Cllr Wood and Yvonne Rees

Welcome to Cherwell District Council's annual report, providing an overview of our performance and our key achievements, from April 2021 to March 2022.

Our commitment to you, our residents, has always been to ensure the continued and efficient delivery of public services. There have been challenges, not least COVID-19, which has continued to put pressure on councils everywhere. But we are proud that our teams continue to adapt our services to rise to that challenge and ensure you can continue to have confidence in the services you receive.

In February, we agreed a budget which responds to long term funding uncertainties. It makes savings to ensure we responsibly balance our books, but also puts the services you value the most on a firm footing.

Our vision for the district remains as clear as ever. We are an ambitious authority, committed to making Cherwell a district where it is easy to live a healthy, fulfilled life, with high quality employment and housing is available for all.

In the past 12 months we have made some substantial achievements. Rolling out a new weekly food waste service was the biggest change to bin rounds in 10 years. We are now emptying new silver caddies from 69,000 residences and every month these collections are generating enough green electricity to power 51 homes for a whole year.

Behind the scenes, work is ongoing to decouple our strategic relationship with Oxfordshire County Council. We are already embracing new partnerships, with an agreement now in place

for our expert mechanics to service West Northamptonshire Council's bin lorries.

Over the summer we ran our most popular holiday activity hubs yet, with over 6,500 places filled, and a renewed focus on providing food and engaging activities for the children who needed it. Our family activity programme, FAST, is also going from strength to strength. It has been held up as an example by Sport England, and its approach will soon be adopted across Oxfordshire, in partnership with the county, and the other district and city councils.

We also continue to be a council that believes in and invests in our communities. Over summer the new hotel and supermarket opened as part of the Castle Quay Waterfront development in Banbury. And this summer we will welcome the Light to the development, a game-changing cinema and entertainment venue.

The council has been proactive in securing more of the kinds of homes people need. A £2.6 million investment of government Oxfordshire Housing and Growth Deal funding is being put to work to create high quality affordable homes, to include zero-carbon social housing and extra care housing to allow people to live independently as they age.

We are proud to serve you, our residents. We encourage you to read on to find out more about the good things that have been accomplished in your area over the past 12 months.



A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Barry Wood'.

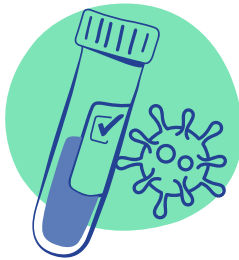
**Councillor Barry Wood**  
Leader,  
Cherwell District Council



A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Yvonne Rees'.

**Yvonne Rees**  
Chief Executive,  
Cherwell District Council

## Responding to the Pandemic



**During 2021-22, COVID-19 continued to have a profound impact on residents and businesses across Cherwell. Our teams worked hard to adapt quickly to the regular changes to the rules and guidance set by government and Public Health England, supporting those living and working in the district. This included:**

Supporting NHS colleagues with the delivery of the county's vaccination programme, and working with the NHS and GPs to run an outreach service to reach out to people who had not yet responded to their invitation for a COVID-19 vaccine and offering them support to get an appointment.

Working with local authority partners to run a local contact tracing service, which successfully traced 15,379 people across the county during 2021-22. The team contacted local COVID-19 cases which NHS Test and Trace had been unable to reach within 24 hours.

Participating in a county-wide COVID secure team – a joint initiative by Oxfordshire's councils to provide advice to local businesses and help ensure they were complying with national regulations. The team won a Regulatory Excellence Award from the Office for Product Safety and Standards (OPSS) in 2021 for demonstrating excellent regulatory practice in response to the pandemic.

Supporting our partners in the NHS and Banbury Town council to operate a symptom-free testing site, which supported our local residents in order to help stop the spread of the virus.

## Supporting Ukraine



Our Councillors unanimously passed a motion on Monday 28 February, denouncing Russia's invasion of Ukraine and pledging to respond to requests to assist and welcome Ukrainian refugees. We continue to support Ukrainian nationals and their sponsors as part of a multi-agency, county-wide response team.

For more information visit [www.oxfordshire.gov.uk/ukraine](http://www.oxfordshire.gov.uk/ukraine)

# Our priorities

The 2021/22 business plan set out four strategic priorities supported by a number of programmes, projects and actions set out within the council's performance management framework.

## Housing that meets your needs



We are committed to delivering affordable housing, raising the standard of rented housing and finding new and innovative ways to prevent homelessness. Also, to promote innovative housing schemes, we will deliver the Local Plan and support the most vulnerable people in the district.



## Leading on environmental sustainability



We are committed to deliver on sustainability and in the commitment to be carbon neutral by 2030, promoting the green economy and increasing recycling across the district. This priority includes the protection of our natural environment and our built heritage, working in partnerships to improve air quality in our district and the reduction of environmental crime.



## Healthy, resilient and engaged communities

We are committed to enabling all residents to lead an active life, improving and developing the quality of local sports and leisure facilities and promoting health and wellbeing in our communities. Also, supporting community and cultural development, working with our partners to address the causes of health inequalities and deprivation, and to reduce crime and anti-social behaviour.



## An enterprising economy with strong and vibrant local centres



We are committed to supporting business retention and growth, developing skills and generating enterprise; also, securing infrastructure to support growth in the district and securing investment in our town centres. This priority also contributes towards allowing communities to thrive and businesses to grow, promoting the district as a visitor destination, and working with businesses to ensure compliance and promote best practice.



# Equalities

**Our equalities framework “Including Everyone” reinforces our commitment to honouring and protecting the diverse strengths of individuals and building inclusive communities.**

**Under this framework we have seen a number of achievements:**

We were shortlisted as finalists for the 2021 LGC (Local Government Chronicle) Awards for the joint Equalities, Diversity and Inclusion Framework, recognising our council’s commitment to culture change and employee engagement.

We were one of 150 organisations to achieve a Stonewall Bronze Award for our work promoting LGBTIQ+ inclusion in our workplace.

Multiple mentoring, engagement and training sessions were delivered throughout the year to support senior leaders, staff and councillors in their understanding of the themes covered by the framework.

We joined the Sunflower Scheme, demonstrating our commitment to the promotion of the awareness and acceptance of visible and invisible disabilities.



# Including Everyone

Equalities, diversity and inclusion framework



# Our priorities: Housing that meets your needs



**£3.4m**

## Helping our vulnerable communities with essentials

As part of a **£3.4m package of support** allocated from the Household Support Fund, Community Advice Hubs distributed vouchers to anyone struggling to afford the essentials.



## Helping home improvements

**139 homes** were improved through enforcement action



## Supporting housing needs

The housing team assessed an estimated **2,648 new housing register applications**, allocating **452 homes**

## Supporting Refugees



We are working with our partners across Oxfordshire to support those coming to Cherwell via the different government schemes

## Helping our landlords

**14 landlords** received financial support through the Cherwell Bond Scheme and Landlord Home Improvement Grant, improving the quality and availability of affordable housing across the district.



## Delivering Affordable homes

**1,107 homes** were delivered during the year, of these **452** were affordable homes (64%)



Of the affordable homes delivered, **173** received some of their funding from the Growth Deal.



## Awards

Our Build! team were finalists in the Inside Housing awards – with The Admiral Holland development recognised in the **best affordable housing** development category.



*Build!*® | A Cherwell District Council Initiative



## Enabling our residents to be independent

**701 households** had adaptations made to their accommodation that enabled vulnerable people to remain living independently.



## Finding a home

Our housing team helped **69 people** who were rough sleeping into suitable accommodation.



## Helping our tenants



**£102,000** was secured from the government to help private sector tenants clear rent arrears or secure alternative accommodation.



# Our priorities: Leading on environmental sustainability



## Food collection services



Our new, food collection service signed up **31,100** residents and delivered **69,000** caddies in March 2022, the first month of operation

## Food waste collection record

A new food waste collection record for the district was reached, collecting **29 tonnes** in one day and **525 tonnes** of waste during March

## Protecting our wild habitats



Cherwell's **Community Nature Plan** continued its funding of projects that, with the support of community partners, protect and enhance wild habitats.

## Success recycling



**55.3 per cent** of the waste collected in the district was recycled or composted.



## Reducing Environmental impact

A **£6 million grant** from the Department of Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy (BEIS) was used to reduce the environmental impact of heating our leisure centres and other corporate buildings by installing air source heat pumps and solar panels.



## Helping our communities with Fuel poverty



Through the Green Homes Grant, we helped **30 households** in fuel poverty to improve the energy efficiency of their homes.



## Electric charging

We launched Oxfordshire's **first Park and Charge** hub in Bicester, providing electric vehicle charging for drivers who cannot access off-road parking.



## Penalties



**1,093 fly tips** were reported, and **321 abandoned vehicles** were dealt with – leading to 3 prosecutions and 20 fixed penalty notices.



## Recycling in weight

**10,123 tonnes** of dry recycling and **20,576 tonnes** of food and garden waste were collected.



# Our priorities: An enterprising economy with strong and vibrant local centres



## Business after COVID-19

The government's Welcome Back Fund scheme funded new planting, benches, picnic tables, cycle racks and planters. Kidlington's Lyne Road Green hosted a popular tree-planting event and Bicester enjoyed a 'Welcome Back Pop-Up Art Gallery', with independent artists selling their wares.



## Business grants

We continued to distribute government COVID-19 grant schemes to Cherwell businesses and other organisations. The council has awarded a total of **10,700 grant payments** to businesses, totalling **£55.5m** since the start of the pandemic.

## Superfast broadband

98 per cent of the district now has superfast broadband, with **90,000 connections** being added through the year.



## Supporting the Visitor Economy

To promote the district and relevant businesses, we worked in partnership with Experience Oxfordshire on their new digital Oxfordshire Hospitality and Visitor Guides



## Supporting our Young entrepreneurs

Young entrepreneurs aged 15-18 across the district were inspired at the Young Enterprise Christmas Trade Fair. The national initiative helps them set up and run their own companies over the course of a school year.



## Free business support

We provided a programme of business resilience support to Cherwell businesses, offering free expert advice and confidential support to help companies recover, adapt and develop their businesses, as well as creating effective business resilience plans to cope with any future shocks or changes.

## Working in Partnership

A three-year contract has been secured to service and maintain West Northamptonshire's 33 bin lorries and other waste vehicles.



## Supporting our towns

Castle Quay Waterfront in Banbury saw the opening of the new Lidl supermarket and 117 bedroom Premier Inn, as well as a new pedestrian footbridge over the Oxford Canal.

## Supporting our local businesses

Government COVID-19 funding enabled us to commission market summaries for Banbury, Bicester and Kidlington. They offer both existing and incoming businesses a valuable insight into the district's commercial and business potential.





# Our priorities: Healthy, resilient and engaged communities



## Supporting our children to be active

**41 schools** benefited from Youth Activators to help give children more support to take part in physical activity.



**7,912 individuals** and **3,012 families** took part in the FAST programme, with activities based at schools, parks and other community settings.

## Supporting our diverse communities



Through Active Reach, **324 people**, primarily from the south Asian community, took part in a range of sports tailored to respect cultural requirements.

## Supporting the wellbeing of our vulnerable adults



**282 adults** with long term physical or mental health conditions were given easier access to physical activity as part of the **Move Together** initiative.



## Bicycle repair

The Dr Bike project fixed **282 bikes**, across 23 sessions, helping hundreds of children and adults to get back in the saddle.

## Cycle training for our children



The partnership between Cherwell and British Cycling delivered training for 'breeze ride' leaders in Bicester and training for 150 children in primary schools.

## Raising funds for local causes



The Cherwell Lottery supported **93 local causes** raising £81,198 and providing annualised funds of £30,000.



## Active schools



**39 out of the 47 schools** in the district took part in Street Tag, a family-friendly game app that rewards primary school pupils, communities and schools for physical activity.



## Activity packs



Cherwell's communities team, in partnership with Age Friendly Banbury, gave away **over 100 activity and information packs**, including seeds for residents to grow.

## Leisure centres



Cherwell's leisure centres reported a total of **1,301,656 visits**.

## Interactive data

The Story Map tool is the first of its kind and now helps us target support to those who need it most in our communities.

It was developed in partnership with Active Oxfordshire, Sport England and Public Health England.



## How we spend your money



Below you can see in detail how these funds have been used.

### Where did our funding come from?

£0.120m came from government grant

£7.704m from council tax

£10.171m from business rates

£4.423m from new homes bonus

### This adds up to:

£22.418m - our funding for 2021-2022

The Council monitors both its ongoing budget position and the performance of the organisation on a monthly basis to enable the Executive to make timely decisions on any changes that are required. With this robust process the Council has demonstrated it is fiscally responsible and with this strong end of year financial position has set the organisation in a good place for the year to come

## Where did we spend our funding?

Here is where we spent our 2021-2022 funding and what services each directorate covers.

**£10.667m - Environment and Place** Environmental Services, Growth and Economy and Planning and Development

**£6.797m - Customers, Organisational Development and Resources**

Customers, Cultural Services, IT, Communications, Strategy, Insight finance and Human Resources

**£1.312m - Housing Services**

Housing

**£3.273m - Public Health and Wellbeing** Healthy Place

Shaping and Wellbeing

**£0.320m - Commercial Development, Assets and Investment**

Legal, Procurement and Contracts, Property and Investments, Growth and Commercial Programmes and Regulatory Services

**-£0.381m - Executive Matters**

Includes corporate costs and income including pension and interest payments.

The above results in an underspend of £0.430m



# Performance Summary

## Listening and Learning

Throughout the year, we provided and continue to provide opportunities to our residents to have their say. Whether it is through customer satisfaction surveys, consultations on budgets, new projects and services, talking to local business organisations or feedback through our website, we are keen to listen to what you like and what needs to be improved.

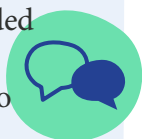
To participate in live consultations and sign up to notifications of future consultations, access [letstalk.cherwell.gov.uk](https://letstalk.cherwell.gov.uk) or email [consultation@cherwell-dc.gov.uk](mailto:consultation@cherwell-dc.gov.uk)

## Get in touch

If you have any feedback, please contact us by emailing us at [customer.service@cherwell-dc.gov.uk](mailto:customer.service@cherwell-dc.gov.uk) or call customer services: 01295 227001

Or, write to us:  
Cherwell District Council  
Customer Services  
Bodicote House  
Banbury  
Oxfordshire  
OX15 4AA

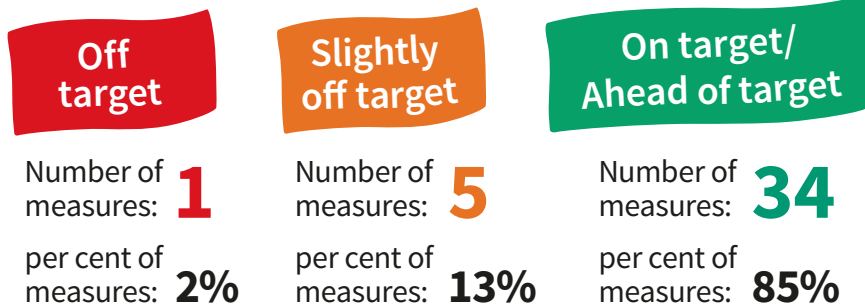
Find and email your ward councillor via: [cherwell.gov.uk/findmycouncillor](https://cherwell.gov.uk/findmycouncillor)



Below summarises the progress we have made delivering against the activities, tasks and projects outlined in our business plan under each of the four strategic priorities.

We use a **red – amber – green system**, where green refers to a target wholly met, amber to a target narrowly missed and red to a target missed by 10 per cent or more.

For more information click [here](#).



## In summary...

Performance against our targets remains strong. Out of 40 measures, one didn't meet the target at the end of 2021/22. We have started to see recovery in certain areas affected by COVID-19 such as housing interventions and visits to the leisure centres. There were five measures slightly off target and the remaining 34 measures reached or surpassed the targets for 2021/22. It has been a tough year for everyone, but we have continued to make improvements to our services.

## Customer Service figures

From April 2021 to March 2022, our friendly team responded in the midst of COVID-19, through our enhanced phone offer, a safe space online and COVID safe meeting arrangements when necessary:

**104,374** phone calls  
**59,492** emails processed  
**1,253** customer appointments  
**453** face-to-face meetings  
**81.18** per cent customer satisfaction **88.12** per cent felt that they were treated fairly by the contact centre advisor  
**90.17** per cent of queries were resolved first time