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Cherwell

DISTRICT COUNCIL
NORTH OXFORDSHIRE

Committee: Executive

Date: Monday 8 July 2024

Time: 6.30 pm

Venue Bodicote House, Bodicote, Banbury, Oxon OX15 4AA

Membership

**Councillor David Hingley
(Chairman)**

Councillor Tom Beckett
Councillor Jean Conway
Councillor Rob Parkinson
Councillor Chris Pruden

Councillor Lesley McLean (Vice-Chairman)

Councillor Chris Brant
Councillor Ian Middleton
Councillor Rob Pattenden

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 7 - 16)

To confirm as a correct record the Minutes of the meeting held on 10 June 2024.

5. Chairman's Announcements

To receive communications from the Chairman.

6. Urgent Business

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

7. New Cherwell District Council Housing Allocations Scheme (Pages 17 - 102)

Report of Assistant Director Wellbeing and Housing

Purpose of report

To seek approval to consult on a new Housing Allocations Scheme

Recommendations

The Executive resolves:

- 1.1 To approve the commencement of public consultation on the reviewed and amended Housing Allocations Scheme.
- 1.2 To approve the changes to the previously agreed approach, of allocating properties that are delivered through Oxford's Unmet Housing Need. This will enable discussions and a potential agreement with Oxford City Council to progress. The approach outlined in this report is reflected in the new draft policy.

8. Council Tax Discretionary Relief policy (Section 13a) (Pages 103 - 114)

Report of Assistant Director of Finance & Section 151 Officer

Purpose of report

To inform Executive of the reviewed policy for Council Tax Section 13a (S13a) and proposed updates.

Recommendations

The Executive resolves:

- 1.1 To note the contents of the reviewed policy for Section 13a Council Tax.
- 1.2 To approve the policy for Council Tax Section 13a.

9. Non-Domestic Rate Discretionary Relief Policy (Pages 115 - 128)

Report of Assistant Director for Finance & Section 151 Officer

Purpose of report

To inform Executive of the reviewed policy for Non-Domestic Rate Discretionary Rate Relief policy and proposed updates and seek approval of the updated policy,

Recommendations

The Executive resolves:

- 1.1 To note the contents of the reviewed policy for Non-Domestic Rate Discretionary Rate Relief.
- 1.2 To approve the policy for Non-Domestic Rate Discretionary Rate Relief.

10. Local Government Productivity Plan (Pages 129 - 150)

Report of Assistant Director of Finance & Section 151 Officer

Purpose of report

On 16 April 2024 the Minister for Local Government, Simon Hoare, wrote to all councils explaining that they were required to prepare a Productivity Plan to submit to Government by 19 July 2024. This report presents a draft Productivity Plan for the Executive to consider for submission to the Government.

Recommendations

The Executive resolves:

- 1.1 To approve the Productivity Plan for submission to the Government.

11. Internal Audit and Counter Fraud Provision (Pages 151 - 178)

Report of Assistant Director of Finance & Section 151 Officer

Purpose of report

The council's Service Level Agreement with Oxfordshire County Council to provide internal audit and counter fraud Services came to an end on 30 April 2024. The council has entered into a temporary contract with Veritau Limited from 1 May 2024 to provide internal audit and counter fraud services for a period of 6 months. This report proposes an approach for the long-term provision of internal audit and counter fraud services by entering into a teckal company arrangement with Veritau Public Sector Limited.

Recommendations

The Executive resolves:

- 1.1 To agree for the council to pay a £20k fee to join Veritau Public Sector Limited and become a member in the company and delegate authority to the Assistant Director of Finance (S151 Officer) to sign the members' agreement and service contract with Veritau Public Sector Limited and any subsequent paperwork required to become a member.
- 1.2 To appoint the Assistant Director of Finance (S151 Officer) to the board of Veritau Public Sector Limited as a director of the company.

12. Finance Monitoring Report May 2024 (Pages 179 - 212)

Report of Assistant Director Finance & Section 151 Officer

Purpose of report

To update Executive on financial positions at the end of the May 2024.

Recommendations

The Executive resolves:

- 1.1 To consider and note the contents of the council's financial management report as at May 2024.
- 1.2 To approve the use of reserve requests set out in Appendix 5.
- 1.3 To approve the write offs totalling £398,796.89 set out in exempt Appendix 6.
- 1.4 To approve the reprofile of the following capital project beyond the 2024/25 financial year, this has already been assumed in Appendix 1:
40296 – S106 Ambrosden Outdoor Sports - £0.130m
- 1.5 To approve the consolidation of the three projects relating to North Oxfordshire Academy (40309 – S106 NOA Improvements - £0.678m, 40010 – North Oxfordshire Academy Astroturf - £0.134m and 40323 – NOA 3G Pitch Development - £1.600m), note the total project cost is now expected to be £1.600m, and approve the reprofile of the project beyond the 2024/25 financial year. This has already been assumed in Appendix 1.

13. Exclusion of the Press and Public

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

1 – Information relating to any individual

2 – Information which is likely to reveal the identity of an individual

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 them 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 this item be considered in public.

Should Members decide not to make decisions 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, Paragraphs 1, 2 and 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.”

14. **Finance Monitoring Report May 2024 - Exempt Appendix 6** (Pages 213 - 230)

15. **Castle Quay Relocation Project - Award of Tender**

** This report will follow **

Exempt report of Corporate Director Resources

Information about this Agenda

Apologies for Absence

Apologies for absence should be notified to democracy@cherwell-dc.gov.uk or 01295 221534 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.

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Queries Regarding this Agenda

Please contact Natasha Clark, Democratic and Elections democracy@cherwell-dc.gov.uk, 01295 221534

Shiraz Sheikh
Monitoring Officer

Published on Friday 28 June 2024

Cherwell District Council

Executive

Minutes of a meeting of the Executive held at Bodicote House, Bodicote, Banbury, Oxon OX15 4AA, on 10 June 2024 at 6.30 pm

Present:

Councillor David Hingley (Leader of the Council & Portfolio Holder for Strategic Leadership) (Chairman)

Councillor Lesley McLean (Deputy Leader of the Council and Portfolio Holder for Finance and Resources) (Vice-Chairman)

Councillor Tom Beckett, Portfolio Holder for Greener Communities

Councillor Chris Brant, Portfolio Holder for Corporate Services

Councillor Jean Conway, Portfolio Holder for Planning and Development Management

Councillor Ian Middleton, Portfolio Holder for Neighbourhood Services

Councillor Rob Pattenden, Portfolio Holder for Healthy Communities

Councillor Chris Pruden, Portfolio Holder for Housing

Apologies for absence:

Councillor Rob Parkinson, Portfolio Holder for Regulatory

Also Present:

Councillor John Broad

Officers:

Gordon Stewart, Chief Executive

Ian Boll, Corporate Director Communities

Stephen Hinds, Corporate Director Resources

Michael Furness, Assistant Director Finance & S151 Officer

Shiraz Sheikh, Assistant Director Law & Governance and Monitoring Officer

Christina Cherry, Planning Policy, Conservation & Design Manager

Celia Prado-Teeling, Performance Team Leader

Natasha Clark, Governance and Elections Manager

Officers Attending Virtually:

Mona Walsh, Assistant Director - Property

Ed Potter, Assistant Director Environmental Services

David Spilsbury, Head of Digital and Innovation

Kevin Larnar, Information Governance and Localism Manager

1 **Declarations of Interest**

There were no declarations of interest.

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

There were no petitions. The Chairman advised that he had agreed to one request to address the meeting, from Parish Councillor Tim Coggins, Chair of Heyford Park Parish Council on agenda item 6, Application for the Designation of a Neighbourhood Area for the parish of Heyford Park.

3 **Minutes**

The minutes of the meeting held on 8 April 2024 were agreed as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

4 **Chairman's Announcements**

The Chairman welcomed everyone to the first Executive meeting of the municipal year, the first meeting of the new administration and was looking forward to achieving a great deal during this period

5 **Application for the Designation of a Neighbourhood Area for the Parish of Heyford Park**

The Assistant Director Planning and Development submitted a report to consider the application for the Designation of a Neighbourhood Area for the Parish of Heyford Park.

Heyford Park Parish Council had submitted an application for the designation of the whole of their parish as a Neighbourhood Area, in order to prepare a neighbourhood development plan. The Council must determine the application.

Parish Councillor Tim Coggins, Chair of Heyford Parish Council, addressed Executive.

Resolved

- (1) That the Parish of Heyford Park be designated as a Neighbourhood Area.
- (2) That it be determined that the Neighbourhood Area should not be designated as a business area under Section 61(H) of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 (as amended).

- (3) That the existing designated Mid Cherwell Neighbourhood Area boundary be amended to exclude Heyford Park parish, as shown in the map in the Annex to the Minutes (as set out in the Minute Book).

Reasons

The area application for the designation of a Neighbourhood Area for the parish of Heyford Park has been made in accordance with Neighbourhood Planning Regulations and section 61G of the Town and Country Planning Act (as amended). As such a designation would result in the need to amend the boundary of an existing designated neighbourhood area, namely Mid Cherwell, the Council has had to consider the desirability of making such an amendment. After reviewing all the representations received, and acknowledging that the Mid Cherwell Neighbourhood Plan cannot proceed without the consent of Heyford Park PC, it is considered desirable to amend the Mid Cherwell Neighbourhood area boundary by removing Heyford Park parish from it. The creation of two separate neighbourhood areas will allow both communities to progress neighbourhood plans.

Alternative options

There are no grounds to refuse the application. The application has been made in accordance with the regulations and subject to consultation. Moreover, such a refusal will prevent the preparation of neighbourhood plans for the parish and the wider Mid Cherwell area.

6 Performance, Risk and Finance Monitoring Report End of year 2023 - 2024

The Assistant Director of Finance (Section 151 Officer) and Assistant Director – Customer Focus submitted a report on the council's performance, risk, and financial positions at the end of the financial year 2023-2024.

Resolved

- (1) That the council's performance, risk and outturn for the financial year ended 31 March 2024 be noted.
- (2) That the use of reserve requests set out the Annex to the Minutes (as set out in the Minute Book) be approved.
- (3) That the reserves movements made under the S151's delegated powers as part of the audit of prior years' statement of accounts be noted.
- (4) That the reprofiled capital budget described the Annex to the Minutes (as set out in the Minute Book), including corresponding financing from capital reserves, be approved and the 2024/25 capital programme be adjusted accordingly.

- (5) That outturn for 2023/2024, which is a balanced position after a contribution to reserves of £4.461m, be noted.
- (6) That the use of £0.285m of the Commercial Risk element of Policy Contingency to mitigate the delay in forecast lettings for some properties within 2023/24 be approved.

Reasons

This report provides a summary of the council's delivery against its business plan priorities including its, risk, and financial positions for the 2023/24 financial year.

Alternative options

Option 1: This report summarises the council's performance, risk and financial positions for the 2023/2024 financial year, therefore there are no alternative options to consider.

7 Oxfordshire Councils Charter

The Assistant Director Law and Governance submitted a report to brief Executive on the Oxfordshire Councils Charter ('Parish Charter')

Resolved

- (1) That the Oxfordshire Councils Charter be endorsed and it be agreed that Cherwell District Council become a signatory to it.
- (2) That Officers be instructed to bring a follow-up report in July 2025 assessing the impact of the charter.

Reasons

Endorsement of the Charter will be an additional assurance to Cherwell parishes that CDC remains committed to communicating and working collaboratively with them. It will encourage Cherwell parishes to become signatories and adopt the Charter principles. The Cherwell Parish Liaison Meeting is a demonstration of CDC's commitment to the charter principles.

Alternative options

Option 1: Develop a CDC/Parishes charter as an alternative to the Oxfordshire Councils Charter. This is not recommended because at the earliest stages of Charter development CDC was the prime mover in securing partnership involvement of the district and city councils on the Oxfordshire Charter.

Option 2: Propose substantial pre-launch changes to the content of the

Oxfordshire Councils Charter. This is not recommended because the Charter principles were developed through an extensive consultation process.

8 **Appointments to Partnerships, Outside Bodies, Member Champions and Shareholder Committee 2024/2025**

The Assistant Director Law and Governance submitted a report to appoint representatives to Partnerships, Outside Bodies, where these are executive functions, Member Champions and the Shareholder Committee, for the municipal year 2024/2025.

Resolved

- (1) That appointments to partnerships, outside bodies, the Shareholder Committee, Member Champions and advisory groups for the 2024/2025 municipal year be made as set out at the Annex to the Minutes (as set out in the Minute Book).
- (2) That authority be delegated to the Assistant Director Law and Governance, in consultation with the Leader of the Council, to appoint Members to any outstanding vacancies and make changes to appointments, including new appointments, as may be required for the 2024/2025 Municipal Year.
- (3) That appointed Members be reminded to update their Register of Interests as may be required, to reflect these appointments.

Reasons

It is proposed that representatives are appointed to Partnerships, Outside Bodies and as Member Champions as set out at the Appendix to the report to ensure that the Council is represented and maintains links with partnerships and outside bodies.

Delegation to the Assistant Director Law and Governance, in consultation with the Leader provides flexibility for the remainder of the Municipal Year to appoint to any outstanding vacancies, or if amendments are required to any appointments, and ensures they are made in a timely manner.

Alternative options

Option 1: Not to appoint representatives to outside bodies, partnerships and as Member Champions. This is not recommended as the internal working groups would be ineffective and the Council would not be represented on these outside bodies and could miss valuable information and opportunities.

9 **Notification of Urgent Item - Making of the Deddington Neighbourhood Plan**

The Assistant Director Planning and Development submitted a report to inform Executive of a decision taking under urgency powers by the Corporate Director Communities regarding the making of the Deddington Neighbourhood Plan.

Resolved

- (1) That the referendum result of 2 May 2024 where 93% of those who voted were in favour of the Deddington Neighbourhood Plan, which is above the required 50%, be noted.
- (2) That the urgent decision taken by the Corporate Director Communities to recommend to Council that the Plan “be made” be noted.

Reasons

In line with the constitution, this report is informing Executive of a decision that was taken by the Corporate Director – Communities under urgency powers.

Alternative options

A formal decision was required to be made. There was no known breach or incompatibility with, any EU or human rights obligations. The Council had no options or alternatives to making the Plan.

10 **Urgent Business**

There were no items of urgent business.

11 **Exclusion of the Press and Public**

Resolved

That under Section 100A of the Local Government Act 1972, the public and press be excluded from the meeting for the following item 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.

12 **Cherwell District Council Microsoft Enterprise Licensing Agreement**

The Head of Digital and Innovation submitted an exempt report in relation to Cherwell District Council’s Microsoft Enterprise Licensing Agreement.

Resolved

- (1) As set out in the exempt Minutes.

Reasons

As set out in the exempt Minutes

Alternative options

As set out in the exempt Minutes

13 **Letting of Unit 5 at Castle Quay 2**

The Assistant Director Property submitted an exempt report for the letting of Unit 5 at Castle Quay 2.

Resolved

- (1) As set out in the exempt Minutes.
- (2) As set out in the exempt Minutes.
- (3) As set out in the exempt Minutes.

Reasons

As set out in the exempt Minutes

Alternative options

As set out in the exempt Minutes

The meeting ended at 7.00 pm

Chairman:

Date:

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

Document is Restricted

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This report is public	
New Cherwell District Council Housing Allocations Scheme	
Committee	Executive
Date of Committee	8 July 2024
Portfolio Holder presenting the report	Portfolio Holder for Housing, Councillor Chris Pruden
Date Portfolio Holder agreed report	13 June 2024
Report of	Assistant Director Wellbeing and Housing, Nicola Riley

Purpose of report

To seek approval to consult on a new Housing Allocations Scheme

1. Recommendations

The Executive resolves:

- 1.1 To approve the commencement of public consultation on the reviewed and amended Housing Allocations Scheme
- 1.2 To approve the changes to the previously agreed approach, of allocating properties that are delivered through Oxford's Unmet Housing Need. This will enable discussions and a potential agreement with Oxford City Council to progress. The approach outlined in this report is reflected in the new draft policy.

2. Executive Summary

- 2.1 The Allocations Scheme is the Policy that ensures the fair allocation of social housing properties within District and is used for the administration of the waiting list for social housing, which is part of our statutory duties.
- 2.2 The Council reviews its scheme regularly to ensure it remains compliant with legislation and is also still meeting the needs of applicants in the best way
- 2.3 Included within the existing scheme was reference to Oxford's Unmet Housing Need and how properties would be allocated when available, this followed a decision being made by Executive in 2020 regarding the allocation of these properties. The agreed approach is now considered to be undeliverable by both Cherwell and Oxford City Council.

Implications & Impact Assessments

Implications	Commentary			
Finance	There are no new financial implications outlined in the report as the existing arrangement is captured in the base revenue budget Kelly Wheeler, Finance Business Partner, 22 May 2024			
Legal	There are no direct legal implications arising from this report or the new scheme. Shahin Ismail, Interim Head of Legal Services, 28 May 2024			
Risk Management	As it is part of our statutory housing duties, to not review the policy to ensure it is compliant with legislation, is fair and inclusive and is meeting the needs of the District would present a risk. Therefore, a regular review of this policy is prudent as part of mitigating actions for this risk. This and any further risks will be managed through the Service Operational Risk, and will be escalated to the Leadership Risk Register as and when deemed necessary. Celia Prado-Teeling, Performance Team Leader, 28 May 2024			
Impact Assessments	Positive	Neutral	Negative	Commentary
Equality Impact	x			An Equalities and Climate Impact Assessment is included as an Appendices of the report
A Are there any aspects of the proposed decision, including how it is delivered or accessed, that could impact on inequality?	x			The Allocations Scheme provides a framework of how social housing is allocated within Cherwell. It ensures the prioritisation of certain household circumstances based on what the legislation or on local demand factors. The work of the team and support provided ensures that vulnerable groups are able to access the services of the team.
B Will the proposed decision have an impact upon the lives of people with protected characteristics, including employees and service users?	x			Many vulnerable groups assisted by the team and who are accessing the waiting list for housing will have protected characteristics. As part of any application, all protected characteristics that an applicant may have are captured as part of this process. This is primarily for monitoring purposes, but it does allow for adjustments to be made.
Climate & Environmental Impact		x		Policy does not relate to delivery of new homes or the quality of existing property
ICT & Digital Impact		x		Not applicable
Data Impact		x		Not applicable
Procurement & subsidy		x		Not applicable

Council Priorities	Housing that meets your needs
Human Resources	Not applicable
Property	Not applicable
Consultation & Engagement	The recommendations within the report are for the revised Allocations Scheme to proceed to public consultation.

Supporting Information

3. Background

- 3.1 As part of statutory duties, the Council manages the waiting list for social housing and also allocates social housing properties within Cherwell on behalf of Registered Providers of social housing that have housing stock within the District. The Council no longer has a significant stock holding of its own following a transfer of its housing stock to what is now Sanctuary Housing. The waiting list comprises of around 2000 households that have varying degrees of housing need. The prioritisation of this need is set out within the Allocations Scheme.
- 3.2 The Allocations Scheme provides the framework for assessment and prioritisation of housing applicants. The Allocations Scheme just covers allocation of social housing and does not cover temporary accommodation, supported accommodation, Extra Care or Shared Ownership schemes.
- 3.3 The prioritisation and administration of housing applications and applicants is outlined within legislation, however, Council's do have some flexibilities to be able to manage and administer their own schemes and prioritise certain applicant circumstances.
- 3.4 The Allocations Scheme was last reviewed in 2021. It is good practice to regularly review schemes to ensure they are compliant with legislation but also to respond to emerging trends and needs.
- 3.5 As part of the management of the waiting list and allocation of social housing, the Council has been working with Oxford City Council regarding the discharge of future allocations of property that have been developed as part of Oxford's Unmet Housing Need. Oxford's Unmet Housing Need relates to social housing being delivered outside the Oxford City boundary, but is for Oxford City Council qualified residents on the first letting. These properties are yet to be delivered in Cherwell, but arrangements covering how they will be allocated have begun and require formalising.
- 3.6 A decision by the Executive in 2020 outlined that Oxford City Council would administer the applications for the Oxford's Unmet Housing Need properties that were delivered within Cherwell and Cherwell District Council would not be involved in the process.

4. Details

- 4.1 The report and its appendices detail the principal changes that the new draft Allocations Scheme makes to the existing scheme that is currently in operation. This includes a summary table of the main changes and the rationale for the change being made.
- 4.2 However, below is a brief summary of some of the main changes proposed
- An increase in priority for those who are homeless
 - A creation of a banding for survivors of Domestic Abuse.
 - A review of the income and savings thresholds, which dictate who may be eligible to join the register
 - A change in the way overcrowded households are administered
 - Additional preference given to those covered by the Armed Forces Covenant
 - To accommodate the changes outlined within the report for the future administration of allocations for Oxford's Unmet Housing Need
- 4.3 With regard to Oxford's Unmet Housing Need, as outlined in Section 3, an approach to allocation that was previously agreed by the Executive. Following protracted discussions between parties and acknowledging the experiences of other authorities, it has been decided that the previously agreed approach may not be workable.
- 4.4 An alternative solution, that involves the Cherwell allocating the properties and administering the applications as it does routinely within District, has been discussed. This is the same approach currently being adopted or proposed by neighbouring authorities in managing the delivery of Oxford's Unmet Housing Need properties within their respective district areas.
- 4.5 This approach would also mean that Cherwell would retain control of allocations of social housing within the District, instead of another Council being involved and allocating social housing within Cherwell and its own area. Whilst additional applications to the team could create pressure on resources, it is not anticipated that pressures would be significant or would be beyond the existing resources of the team. With the agreement from the Executive for a change in approach, discussions regarding the practical allocation of these units in the future can recommence.
- 4.6 Subject to the report being approved, the new draft Allocations Scheme will begin a public consultation phase that will include all the major stakeholders involved in housing and the allocation of property. This includes partners that work for Registered Providers of social housing and statutory agencies, such as health and social care. When the consultation is complete and the responses analysed, the final version of the scheme will return to the Executive for approval.

5. Alternative Options and Reasons for Rejection

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

Option 1: Not bring forward a new Allocations Scheme. This is rejected as it is

important that the Council has Policies that are up to date with legislation and can respond to current challenges.

Option 2: Continue discussions with Oxford City regarding the previously agreed approach to allocating the unmet need properties. Both Councils have been working to deliver the agreed solution, and delivery of this may be possible. However, this is rejected as there is a concern that the approach may not be legally sound, so to continue is not considered prudent, and thus an alternative has been suggested.

6 Conclusion and Reasons for Recommendations

- 6.1 It is important that the Council has up to date policies and procedures for its statutory and key service areas and it is important that they are legislatively and operationally sound. A periodic review of policies is therefore appropriate.

Decision Information

Key Decision	Yes
Subject to Call in	Yes
If not, why not subject to call in	Not applicable
Ward(s) Affected	All wards

Document Information

Appendices	
Appendix 1	New Allocations Scheme – draft for consultation
Appendix 2	New Allocations Scheme - summary of main changes
Appendix 3	Equalities and Climate Impact Assessment
Background Papers	None
Reference Papers	None
Report Author	Richard Smith – Head of Housing
Report Author contact details	richard.smith@cherwell-dc.gov.uk 01295 221640

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Housing Allocation Scheme

TBC 2025

DRAFT

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1. Introduction and Overview

1.1 Introduction

Cherwell District Council (CDC) transferred its housing stock, which is now owned by Sanctuary Housing Group, through a Large Scale Voluntary Transfer (LSVT). Therefore, it is important to note that with the exception of a small number of units this Housing Allocation Scheme relates primarily to housing owned by Registered Providers (RPs) of social housing.

In Cherwell, the demand for social housing is greater than the number of homes available. This Housing Allocation Scheme describes how CDC prioritises housing applicants and ensures that those in greatest housing need, including as described by the legal definition of Reasonable Preference in the Housing Act 1996 (as amended by the Homelessness Act 2002, the Localism Act 2011 and the Homelessness Reduction Act 2017) (the Act), are given appropriate priority to access available social housing. Whilst CDC will nominate applicants to housing that is owned by RPs, in accordance with this Housing Allocation Scheme, RPs will also have due regard to their own lettings policies when letting their properties.

This Housing Allocation Scheme applies to:

- new applicants
- current applicants
- existing tenants of a RP who want to transfer either with their current landlord or to another RP

This Housing Allocation Scheme sets out in detail who is eligible and who will qualify to join the housing register as well as how this assessment is made. It also sets out how applicants can apply for and access housing and what service standards an applicant can expect from CDC.

The vast majority of the housing that CDC allocates under this Housing Allocation Scheme is through a Choice Based Lettings (CBL) system (www.cherwell-homechoice.org.uk) which allows applicants to view available properties and express interest by making bids.

1.2 Aims and objectives

The key objectives of this Housing Allocation Scheme are to:

- provide housing applicants in Cherwell with a fair and transparent system by which they are prioritised for affordable housing
- help applicants most in housing need
- promote the development of sustainable, mixed communities and neighbourhoods of choice
- encourage residents to access employment, education and training
- make efficient use of CDC's resources and those of its partner RPs

CDC designed this Housing Allocation Scheme to meet all legal requirements and to support and contribute towards the objectives of its Housing Strategy. CDC's Housing Strategy, and the ways in which it provides advice and assistance to home seekers on a whole range of housing options, including access to the private rented sector and low cost homeownership, can be found on CDC's website at www.cherwell.gov.uk.

1.3 The legal context

Part VI of the Act requires local authorities to make all allocations and nominations in accordance with a Housing Allocation Scheme. A summary of the Housing Allocation Scheme must be published and made available free of charge to any person who asks for a copy. A summary of this Housing Allocation Scheme is available at CDC's offices and on CDC's website. This document is the full version of the Housing Allocation Scheme and is available for inspection at CDC's main office.

The Act requires local authorities to give Reasonable Preference in their Housing Allocation Scheme to people with specific needs. This includes homeless people, those who need to move on welfare or medical grounds, people living in unsatisfactory housing and those who would face hardship unless they moved to a particular locality within the local authority's area.

The Act also requires local authorities to state within their Housing Allocation Scheme what its position is on offering applicants a choice of housing or offering them the opportunity to express preference about the housing to be allocated to them.

This Housing Allocation Scheme complies with the requirements of the Act and takes into account the various codes of guidance issued by the Ministry for Housing, Communities and Local Government including:

- Providing social housing for local people (December 2013)
- Right to Move and social housing allocations (March 2015)
- Improving access to social housing for victims of domestic abuse (January 2022)
- Improving access to social housing for members of the Armed Forces (June 2020)
- Allocation of Accommodation: guidance for local housing authorities in England (October 2023)

The Housing Allocation Scheme is drafted to ensure that it is compatible with CDC's equality duties, under the Equality Act 2010, including the duty to eliminate unlawful discrimination and to promote good relations between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and those who do not. The 9 protected characteristics are age, race (including ethnic or national origins, colour or nationality), disability, sex, pregnancy and maternity, sexual orientation, religion or belief, marriage and civil partnership, and gender reassignment.

Further, this Housing Allocation Scheme has taken into account all other relevant legislation and case law, CDC's Homelessness Strategy and Tenancy Strategy and CDC's duties under the Care Act 2014.

In summary this Housing Allocation Scheme has considered:

- CDC's statutory obligations and discretion as to who is eligible for housing allocation
- CDC's statutory obligation to provide Reasonable Preference to certain categories of applicants set out by law
- CDC's statutory obligations and discretions to grant 'additional preference' and/or to determine priority between applicants with Reasonable Preference
- the general and specific statutory discretions CDC can exercise when allocating housing in support of its Housing Strategy
- the local flexibility offered through the Localism Act (2011)

This Housing Allocation Scheme, or the manner in which CDC allocates housing under this Housing Allocation Scheme, may be amended and updated from time to time to take account of any new or updated procedures, guidance, regulations and legislation. CDC will always act in accordance with the most up to date guidance, regulations and legislation which are relevant to this Housing Allocation Scheme and will endeavour to reflect those changes in formal written updates as soon as possible.

1.4 Advice and assistance

CDC acknowledges that this Housing Allocation Scheme requires the active participation of housing applicants and to reflect this, CDC aims to provide advice and assistance to ensure that no person is disadvantaged by the way the scheme operates.

This full version of the Housing Allocation Scheme outlines:

- the procedures for applying to the Housing Allocation Scheme and for bidding for available homes
- how applicants are prioritised under this Housing Allocation Scheme
- how successful applicants will be selected by CDC
- rules on how homes will be advertised including bidding cycles and restrictive labelling
- review procedures

Applicants will also be provided with information regarding their own application which will include:

- what band is applied to their application under this Housing Allocation Scheme
- what size properties they are eligible for
- what information and documentation they need to provide for CDC to verify their circumstances and when this information will need to be provided
- the reasons for a disqualification and the period of time the applicant will be disqualified for.

In partnership with RPs, CDC endeavours for all property advertisements to provide relevant property information so that applicants can make informed choices. The CBL scheme promotes informed choices and expects to guide applicants to bid only for properties they would like to secure. Advertisements are expected to include as a minimum:

- location
- property type, size and floor level
- nature of tenancy on offer
- type of heating
- whether the property has a garden
- whether parking is available
- the amount of rent and any other charges that are payable
- at least one photo of the property
- the Energy Performance Certificate rating
- The landlord (RP)

Applicants who have any difficulty reading or understanding this Housing Allocation Scheme will be offered the following services, where required:

- an interpretation service if their first language is not English
- signing if speech or hearing is impaired
- provision of documents in large print if an applicant is visually impaired

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- a face to face or telephone appointment to explain the content of this document and information about where independent advice can be obtained about this Housing Allocation Scheme

As there are likely to be many more applicants than properties available, CDC will also provide information about other housing options. This will include:

- advice on RPs allocations outside of this Housing Allocation Scheme
- advice on renting in the private sector
- advice on available low-cost home ownership options
- advice on welfare benefits, employment, education and training
- Enhanced Housing Options Service – self-help tool via the website at www.cherwell-homechoice.org.uk

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2. Allocations and how to apply

2.1 How to make an application

To apply to join the housing register applicants must complete a housing register application form. This can be completed online at www.Cherwell-HomeChoice.org.uk.

Assisted completion of an application form over the phone is available for those who do not have internet access or those who require additional help to complete the online form.

CDC aims to assess applications and notify applicants of the outcome of their housing register application within 15 working days of the application being submitted. If further information or documentation is required, CDC aims to notify applicants of the outcome within 15 working days of all required information or documentation being submitted.

If the required supporting information or documentation is not provided by the applicants, the application cannot be made active. If the information is not received within 15 working days of the application being submitted the application will be closed.

More information about how to apply for social housing in Cherwell is available on CDC's website.

An applicant who requires assistance should call CDC's Customer Service Team on 01295 227004 or email housingregister@cherwell-dc.gov.uk.

2.2 Bidding for available properties

Once applicants are accepted onto the housing register they can start bidding for properties. CDC advertises all properties through its nomination agreements with partner RPs through its Choice Based Letting (CBL) scheme. The eligibility of applicant's bids received will be checked against the labelling used in the advertisement. Any ineligible bids will be skipped. Where multiple bids are received for the same property, the allocation of that property will be based on the Band applied to the application and waiting time. See section 7.3 for more information on how applications are prioritised.

2.3 What are 'Allocations' under this scheme?

An 'allocation' of accommodation under this Housing Allocation Scheme is the nomination by CDC of a person to be an Assured or an Assured Shorthold tenant of a RP's housing accommodation. Often the tenancy offered by the RP will be a 'Starter Tenant' meaning that the RP will grant an Assured Shorthold Tenancy for a set 'probationary' period (usually 12 months). Provided that the tenant successfully completes the 'probationary' period the RP will grant an Assured Tenancy.

2.4 Exempt Allocations – Accommodation provided for lettings that is not covered by this scheme

The following are not 'allocations' under this scheme:

- a) an introductory / starter tenancy becoming a secure / assured tenancy
- b) provision of non-secure temporary accommodation in discharge of any homelessness duty or power

3. Choice and constraints

3.1 Policy on expressing choice of rehousing area

The choice of housing that CDC can offer is limited by the housing available and the responsibilities it has to some groups in housing need, such as those found to be statutorily homeless.

Most applicants will be able to bid using Choice Based Lettings (CBL) to apply for properties they have been assessed as eligible for across Cherwell. There are some circumstances in which this will not apply which are outlined in section 9.1 (auto-bidding).

CDC requests that applicants state those areas where they believe they cannot live due to fear or actual violence, harassment or domestic abuse at the point they make an application to the housing register. When considering if offers of housing are reasonable, CDC must be satisfied that such actions would likely to be carried out in those areas. Consideration must also be given as to how an allocation in Cherwell would provide a place of safety for those at risk.

3.2 Statutory Homeless Applicants

All statutory homeless households owed the homeless relief duty as defined in Section 189B of the Act will be placed on automatic bidding at the point a relief duty is accepted.

To discharge a statutory homeless duty the local authority will make 1 final offer of housing. To be deemed a final offer the accommodation must be reasonable and suitable for the needs of the household. This may be social housing, private rented or supported accommodation. An application to the Housing Register will be suspended until the suitability and reasonableness of the final offer is confirmed. Refusal of a reasonable and suitable final offer will result in the housing register application being closed and the applicant being disqualified from re-joining the housing register for a period of 6 months.

Whilst we consider each applicant's personal circumstances; given the good transport links and access to employment, education, health and support services throughout our district it is likely an offer anywhere within Cherwell will be considered suitable as a final offer.

As above, applicants must state if there are areas where they believe they cannot live due to fear or actual violence, harassment or domestic abuse at the point they make an application to the housing register. When considering if offers of housing are reasonable and suitable, CDC must be satisfied that such actions would likely to be carried out. Consideration must also be given as to how an allocation in Cherwell would provide a place of safety for those at risk.

3.3 Move-on from Supported Accommodation

CDC has protocols in place with providers of supported accommodation to assist clients who are ready to move-on to independent living. A Band 2 will be applied to the applications of households who are approved for move-on from supported accommodation which acknowledges that such accommodation is a scarce resource and should be made available as soon as possible for the next household who requires support.

Auto-bidding will be applied to applications of those approved for Move-on .

The council will make 1 final offer of housing to facilitate an approved move-on. To be deemed a final offer the accommodation must be reasonable and suitable for the needs of the household. This may be social housing, private rented or further supported accommodation. An application to the Housing Register will be suspended until the suitability and reasonableness of the final offer is confirmed. Refusal of a reasonable and suitable final offer of housing will result in the housing register application being closed and the applicant being disqualified from re-joining the housing register for a period of 6 months.

Whilst we will consider each applicant's personal circumstances; given the good transport links and access to employment, education, health and support services throughout our district it is likely an offer anywhere within Cherwell will be considered suitable as a final offer.

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4. Eligibility and qualification criteria

This section provides detail on how CDC determines whether any applicant is eligible and qualifies to join the housing register.

4.1 Who can apply to the Housing Register

Anyone can apply to join the housing register. On receipt of an application to join the housing register, CDC will consider:

- whether the applicant/s are eligible for an allocation of social housing
- whether the applicant/s meet the qualification criteria (outlined in section X)

4.2 Young person under 18 years

In order to qualify to join the housing register, any applicant or joint applicant aged 16 or 17 years old must meet one or more of the following conditions as being:

- accepted as homeless under Part VII of the Housing Act 1996
- over the age of 16 where a referral for assistance has been made by Social Services authorities under Section 27 of the Children Act 1989
- a young person who is deemed a relevant or eligible child under the Children (Leaving Care) Act 2000 as amended.

In each case, CDC will undertake a joint assessment with Social Services of the applicant's housing, care and support needs to ensure that adequate support is available.

In order to secure accommodation any person under 18 years of age must provide details of a suitable guarantor who will sign the applicant's tenancy agreement. Applicants under the age of 18 who are eligible can only be considered for supported accommodation provided by CDC's RP partners unless accepted as statutory homeless or in exceptional circumstances.

4.3 Care leavers

Any person over the age of 18 who is a care leaver, having been looked after by Oxfordshire Children's Services under Section 20 of the Care Act 2014, and has been accommodated anywhere within the county of Oxfordshire, or outside the district, will be treated as if they have a local connection to Cherwell District and therefore qualify to apply for housing accommodation under this Housing Allocation Scheme. Care leavers who have been placed in the district by another local authority for a considerable period will also be given consideration.

4.4 Councillors, employees and their close relatives

This Housing Allocation Scheme is designed to ensure that CDC (and any relevant organisation) is transparent and equitable when letting homes to staff, its Councillors or any of their relatives. This Housing Allocation Scheme is open to any eligible applicant who meets the qualification criteria. Council staff, Councillors and their relatives are treated as any other applicant and will not gain any advantage or any preferential treatment in the course of their application, nor shall they be disadvantaged. For further information see Appendix 2.

4.5 Members of the Armed Forces

Certain members of the Armed Forces community are exempt from any residency requirements, which prevents local authorities from applying a local connection test to disqualify such applicants from their housing registers and this is reflected in our local connection criteria. We retain discretion to deal with individual cases where there are exceptional circumstances and are aware that such circumstances may arise in relation to the wider Armed Forces community. We recognise that the requirement for Service personnel to move from base-to-base can impact on other family members, including for example adult children who also may no longer be able to remain in the family home.

Local authorities are required to frame their Housing Allocation Scheme to give additional preference to certain members of the Armed Forces community, where they fall within one or more of the reasonable preference categories and have urgent housing needs. These are:

- a) Former members of the Regular Armed Forces
- b) Serving members of the Regular Armed Forces who are suffering from a serious injury, illness or disability which is wholly or partly attributable to their service.
- c) Serving or former members of the Reserve Armed Forces who are suffering from a serious injury, illness or disability which is wholly or partly attributable to their service.
- d) Bereaved spouses or civil partners of those serving in the Regular Forces where (i) the bereaved spouse or civil partner has recently ceased, or will cease, to be entitled to reside in Ministry of Defence accommodation following the death of their Service spouse or civil partner, and (ii) the death was wholly or partly attributable to their service.

To give this additional preference, CDC will seek to allocate a suitable home through a direct match for members of the Armed Forces community as outlined above in cases where a Band 1 (urgent housing need) has been applied to their application.

4.6 Who can and cannot be included on a housing register application

The persons who can be included on a housing application must be members of the applicant's immediate family who normally live with the applicant. Any other person will only be included on an application if CDC is satisfied that it is reasonable for that person to live with the applicant. This will exclude lodgers or anyone subletting from the applicant. Anyone over 16 years included on an application as part of a household will also be included in the full assessment of the applicant and any joint applicant's income, savings, capital and assets.

For the purposes of this Housing Allocation Scheme a child is defined as someone who is either under the age of 16 or who is still dependant on the applicant e.g. due to continuing education.

4.7 Who cannot be accepted onto the Housing Register

CDC will refuse an application to join the housing register in the following circumstances:

4.8 Those who are not eligible

Persons from abroad

A person may not be allocated accommodation under Part VI of the Act 1996 if he or she is a person from abroad who is ineligible for an allocation under s.160ZA.

There are two categories for the purposes of s.160ZA:

- i. a person subject to immigration control - such a person is not eligible for an allocation of accommodation unless he or she comes within a class prescribed in regulations made by the Secretary of State (s.160ZA(2)), and
- ii. a person from abroad other than a person subject to immigration control - regulations may provide for other descriptions of persons from abroad who, although not subject to immigration control, are to be treated as ineligible for an allocation of accommodation (s.160ZA(4)).

The regulations setting out which classes of persons from abroad are eligible or ineligible for an allocation are the Allocation of Housing and Homelessness (Eligibility) (England) Regulations 2006 (SI 2006 No.1294) ('the Eligibility Regulations').

Persons who can produce evidence of an in-time appeal of their leave to remain will be treated as though they continue to have leave to remain.

4.9 Those who are disqualified

4.9.1 Unacceptable behaviour

CDC will disqualify an applicant from the housing register if the applicant, or any member of their household, has behaved in an unacceptable way as described in this Housing Allocation Scheme and at the time of their application to the housing register, they are still considered by CDC to be unsuitable to be a tenant by reason of that behaviour.

CDC considers that unacceptable behaviour includes the following circumstances:

Fraud or deception

Applicants will not qualify to join the housing register in cases where they have:

- Obtained a tenancy by deception, including by making false, misleading or omissive statement(s).
- Payed money or money's worth to obtain a social tenancy including by exchanging properties with another social tenant.
- Made false, misleading or omissive statement(s) in connection with a housing register application, homelessness application or benefit claim or award.

Convictions, anti-social behaviour and breaches of tenancy

Applicants will not qualify to join the housing register in cases where they have:

- Been evicted from private or social rented housing for any form of anti-social behaviour or illegal subletting, or where there has been formal action taken by the landlord in relation to the applicant, the applicant's household or his/her visitors for causing a nuisance, annoyance or otherwise anti-social behaviour to others including, but not limited to neighbours, visitors, the landlord or a person employed in connection with the exercise of the landlord's management functions.
- Used their property for an immoral or illegal purpose.
- Been convicted of a criminal offence that makes the tenant unsuitable to be a tenant, including in relation to domestic violence.
- Been subject to an injunction or order in relation to their anti-social behaviour inside or outside of the home.
- Assaulted, threatened or abused the landlord, a person employed in connection with the exercise of the landlord's management functions, CDC or one of the CDC's partner agencies including, but not limited to, providers of housing and housing related support services.
- Been responsible for the deterioration of a property, its fixtures, fittings or furniture provided for use under the tenancy and the deterioration was due to neglectful or deliberate acts by applicant, the applicant's household or his/her visitors.

Rent arrears and other housing related debts

Applicants will not be disqualified from the housing register for having housing related debt including but not limited to rent arrears, service charges, chargeable repairs (including Cherwell Bond Scheme or temporary accommodation debt) or associated court costs and fees.

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However, applicants must ensure that a repayment plan is in place to reduce any housing related debt as this must be cleared or substantially reduced before an offer of accommodation can be made by a provider of social housing.

Applicants will not be nominated to an RP for a potential offer of accommodation unless outstanding housing related debt is cleared in full or the applicant can evidence that substantial efforts have been made to address their housing related debt.

Substantial efforts would typically include a sustained repayment pattern over a period of at least 12 months and with any housing related debts outstanding being no more than the equivalent of 8 weeks' rent.

CDC will be sympathetic toward former service personnel or former partners of service personnel who have accrued mesne profit debt. Occupants of Service Families Accommodation who remain in residence following the expiry of a notice to vacate and have become irregular occupants can be charged mesne profit charges for trespass. This may occur after service personnel leave the Armed Forces, or estranged partners remain in occupation after a relationship breakdown. CDC understands that housing costs support for mesne profit charges is not available within Universal Credit, nor is Housing Benefit available to those living in a Crown Property. As a result, occupants may accrue mesne profit debt. Occupants may provide a copy of their notice to vacate or Certificate of cessation of Entitlement to Service Families Accommodation as evidence that they are no longer able to occupy their home.

4.9.2 Duration of disqualification

Other than in exceptional circumstances, the maximum period of disqualification will be 5 years from the date of the last incident of, or conviction for, unacceptable behaviour as defined by this Housing Allocation Scheme. The minimum period of disqualification will be 12 months.

CDC will use the following matrix as a guide for officers to determine the appropriate period of disqualification for unacceptable behaviour:

	Low culpability	Medium culpability	High culpability
Low harm	12 months	24 months	36 months
Medium harm	24 months	36 months	48 months
High harm	36 months	48 months	60 months

The following examples may be used by officers to determine the levels of culpability and harm in applying the above matrix, however, the list is not exhaustive and other matters can be taken into account at the officers' discretion. Any reference to an applicant also includes the joint applicant and any member of his or her household:

Example of factors indicating higher culpability:

- Applicant has a previous history or pattern of unacceptable behaviour or convictions
- Failure to respond to warnings in relation to unacceptable behaviour
- Applicant knowingly and purposefully provided false, misleading or ommissive information
- Abuse of power or position of trust
- Gratuitous violence or wilful damage or vandalism caused

- Use of weapons, or involvement in gangs

Examples of factors indicating lower culpability:

- First or only one incident of unacceptable behaviour
- Applicant has carelessly but inadvertently provided inaccurate information
- Actions were as a result of a negative environment or circumstances and evidence demonstrates that this has now positively changed.

Examples of factors indicating a higher degree of harm:

- Multiple or vulnerable people were directly affected or targeted including minority groups or those with protected characteristics.
- A person has been physically, psychological or emotionally harmed or threatened by the applicant or his/her actions
- Sustained behaviour or incident
- The offence or incident was directed at public sector workers or workers acting in connection with the landlord's management functions.
- High value of damage to property

Examples of factors indicating lower degree of harm

- No act of violence or lasting psychological harm on another person
- A high degree of provocation was directed at the applicant
- Mental illness or disability affected the decisions made
- The direct role taken in carrying out the action/s was minimal
- Full cooperation and remorse following the incidents
- Accidental or low value of damage to property

If further unacceptable behaviour occurs during the period where the applicants are disqualified, further periods of disqualification from the housing register may be applied in relation to that behaviour.

After the relevant period of disqualification from the housing register has elapsed, the applicants must re-apply to the housing register for an up to date assessment of their eligibility, qualification and housing circumstances to be completed.

If the applicant has a change in their circumstances during a period of disqualification from the housing register, they may submit a new application for this to be assessed and considered. Any further application will be assessed in accordance with this Housing Allocation Scheme.

4.9.3 No local / district connection to Cherwell

Applicants without a local connection to Cherwell will not qualify to join CDC's housing register. In order to be considered to have a local connection to Cherwell applicants will need to either:

1. have resided in Cherwell for a period of at least 6 out of the last 12 months continuously prior to an application to join the housing register
2. have previously resided in Cherwell for 3 out of the past 5 years
3. have a contract of employment to work within Cherwell for a minimum of 16 hours per week excluding short-term, marginal, temporary and voluntary work. Employees on 'zero hour' contracts must demonstrate a consistent previous record of, or clear expectation to work for a minimum of 16 hours per week.

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4. have a contract of employment as a Category 1, 2, 3 or 4 key worker (as defined by section 7.4 of this scheme) to work in Oxfordshire for a minimum of 16 hours per week excluding short-term, marginal, temporary and voluntary work. Employees on 'zero hour' contracts must demonstrate a consistent previous record of, or clear expectation to work for a minimum of 16 hours per week.
5. have immediate family members, who currently live in Cherwell and have lived in Cherwell for at least the last 5 years, where there has been frequent contact and there is a clear commitment to, and / or dependency on, those family members immediately prior to the date of application.
6. be a household with a Right to Move
7. be leaving the care of Oxfordshire Children's Services;
8. be a household who CDC has a duty or agreement to secure accommodation for through a national Government resettlement scheme
9. be living in a refuge or other form of safe temporary accommodation in the district having escaped domestic abuse in another local authority area.
10. be part of an agreed reciprocal arrangement with another local authority. Or
11. have a special reason for needing to live in the area

Exceptions to the above local connection requirements are:

- Those who are currently serving in the Regular Armed Forces or who were serving in the Regular Forces at any time in the 5 years preceding their application to join the housing register.
- Bereaved spouses or civil partners of those serving in the Regular Forces where (i) the bereaved spouse or civil partner has recently ceased, or will cease, to be entitled to reside in Ministry of Defence accommodation following the death of their Service spouse or civil partner, and (ii) the death was wholly or partly attributable to their service.
- Serving or former members of the Reserve Armed Forces who are suffering from a serious injury, illness or disability which is wholly or partly attributable to their service.
- Divorced or separated spouses or civil partners of Service personnel who need to move out of accommodation provided by the Ministry of Defence following a breakdown in their relationship with their Service spouse or partner.
- Existing social housing tenants, who need to move into CDC's district, either from another local authority area in England, or from one location to another within Cherwell, for work related reasons to avoid hardship (Right to Move Applicants).

Immediate family members are defined by CDC as parents, children, siblings, grandparents or grandchildren (in each case including step relatives and fostered or adopted children), where there is evidence of frequent contact, commitment to, and/or dependency on, those family members.

In order to establish a local connection to Cherwell through a period of residence as above this must be a settled address of the applicant's own choice. As such a period of residence will not contribute towards establishing a local connection for the purpose of this Housing Allocation Scheme when the applicants reside in Cherwell because they are:

- in prison
- resident in a bail hostel or other such accommodation
- detained under the Mental Health Act
- receiving hospital treatment
- in occupation of a mobile home, caravan or motor caravan which is not placed on a registered residential site

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- in occupation of a holiday letting, this includes a permanent building, hotel or bed and breakfast accommodation for the purposes of a holiday
- placed in temporary or private sector accommodation by another housing authority
- placed in supported accommodation by another local authority
- a rough sleeper who moved to Cherwell from another district and who retained a local connection to another authority at the time of moving.

Applicants should note that the above list is illustrative only and not exhaustive. CDC retains discretion to determine whether any individual applicant can establish a local/district connection or not based on each applicant's individual circumstances.

Some homes in Cherwell will be built with the purpose of meeting the unmet housing needs of Oxford. As such CDC will seek to allocate these homes on the first letting to those who have a local connection to Oxford. For this purpose, the local connection criteria outlined in this section is applicable to those with Oxford connections as well as Cherwell connections and where the word Cherwell is detailed in this section this can be read to also include Oxford. Applicants with a connection to Oxford will receive additional preference for the first letting of those homes built to meet Oxford's unmet housing needs. Those with a local connection above which is not connected to Oxford will receive additional preference over those who do not for all other homes.

4.9.4 Homeowners

Regardless of the level of equity held, applicants or members of their household who already own their own home (including freehold, leasehold, under a mortgage, shared ownership or having marital rights to any of these) will not, subject to the exceptions below, qualify to join the housing register.

- Owner occupiers aged 55 and over who cannot stay in their own home as it does not meet their medical or mobility needs, require sheltered or extra-care housing and do not have sufficient financial resources to meet their housing needs in the private sector or elsewhere and could not resolve this by selling their owned home. These applicants will qualify for sheltered or extra care accommodation only.
- Owner occupiers who can demonstrate that their specific circumstances mean that they need to apply for social housing as detailed in a medical and/or social/welfare need assessment which stipulates the nature of the accommodation that is required which can be provided by social housing but cannot be obtained by the applicant in the private sector and this could not be resolved by the applicant selling his/her owned home.
- Owner occupiers who are experiencing financial hardship and are unable to financially sustain their accommodation and have been assessed by the Housing Options or Housing Allocations Team who have confirmed this to be the case based on the evidence supplied.

CDC will also take into consideration any previous disposal of assets which will include disposals for nil (for example, transfer of ownership) or below market rate value. Previous homeowners who have transferred or disposed of their home, as above, will not qualify to join the housing register.

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Applicants will be asked to provide evidence of their income, savings and assets if an affordability assessment is required. If applicants fail to provide sufficient evidence, then their application cannot be assessed and will not progress further.

If an assessment has to be made, for example on medical grounds, consideration will be given to the following:

- whether the applicant can sell their current home
- the expected equity after the proposed sale of the property
- the applicant's current financial circumstances and commitments
- whether the applicant could obtain a mortgage
- the supply and affordability of private rented or other forms of accommodation suitable for the applicant's specific needs
- whether the applicant's housing need can be met in the private sector, taking into consideration the cost of housing in Cherwell

Homeowners who qualify to join the housing register because of exceptional circumstances must make best endeavours to ensure that the owned property is sold within 12 months of accepting an offer of social housing.

4.9.5 Sufficient financial resources

Applicants with financial assets (including capital, savings, stocks, bonds, shares and unit trusts but not including disability related welfare benefits) that when combined with their gross annual household income exceeds £60,000 will not qualify to join the housing register. For applicants who require 3-bedroom homes or larger the cap on financial assets and gross annual household income is £80,000.

This calculation will take into account the gross annual household income and financial assets of the main applicant, joint applicant and their spouse, civil partner and/or partner where they are to reside in the accommodation together as well as any other adult household members who are not in full-time education. A combination of income and financial assets in excess of £60,000, or £80,000 for households who require 3-bedrooms or larger is sufficient to enable applicants to secure accommodation in the private sector.

This assessment does not apply to existing social housing tenants in Cherwell who are seeking to down-size.

Special consideration and exception may be given to applicants who require larger or more specialist accommodation in cases where it can be evidenced that the typical accommodation required cannot be obtained in the private sector based on the level of income and financial assets they have.

Any lump sum received by a member of the Armed Forces as compensation for an injury or disability sustained on active service will be disregarded for the purpose of this assessment.

Where appropriate CDC will take into account any previous disposals of financial assets which will include disposals for nil (for example, transfer of ownership) or below market rate value.

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Applicants will be asked to provide evidence of their income and financial assets and if this is not provided an application cannot be assessed and will not progress further.

The £80,000 financial assets and gross household income cap as detailed above for applicants who require 3-bedrooms or more is in line with the gross household income cap for grant funded affordable home ownership as set out in Home England's Capital Funding Guide (as at 29 February 2024). As such the £80,000 cap in this Housing Allocation Scheme may be increased or decreased to remain in line with any updates to this guidance.

4.9.6 Refusal of offers from the Housing Register

Applications will be disqualified from the housing register for six months in cases where an offer of accommodation which the council considers to be suitable has been refused in the following circumstances:

- All households accepted by CDC under the Homeless Relief Duty or Main Duty who have refused one suitable offer of accommodation and to whom the homelessness duty has been discharged by CDC under Part VII of the Act 1996.
- Applicants awarded a Move-on Priority from supported accommodation who have refused one suitable offer of accommodation.
- All other applicants who have refused three suitable offers of accommodation

In these cases, applicants will be advised of their right to request a review of the suitability of the accommodation offered.

4.9.7 How serious offenders are dealt with under this scheme

At the time an application is made, an applicant must declare if they or anyone who will be residing with them has a conviction of a criminal offence or anti-social behaviour order. These will be taken into consideration when assessing if an applicant qualifies to join the housing register.

CDC will take advice and guidance from other agencies, including the police and probation services, to assess the risk to the community of any applicant who has been convicted of an offence and who may present a risk to potential neighbours and/or communities.

CDC's housing department must cooperate with the Multi-Agency Public Protection Arrangements (MAPPA) in Oxfordshire. Applicants subject to MAPPA arrangements can apply for properties in the normal way. If successful, the Responsible Authority will decide if the property is a suitable allocation for the individual.

Applicants have the right to request a review of any decision made by CDC regardless of whether they are subject to MAPPA. For more information on reviews see section 11.

5. The Banding Scheme

CDC determines the relative priority that is applied to each application to the housing register. CDC is required to give Reasonable Preference in this Housing Allocation Scheme to certain categories of applicant. These Reasonable Preference categories cover:

- People who are homeless as defined by Part VII of the Act
- People who are owed a duty by CDC under section 190(2), 193(2) or 195(2) of the Act.
- People occupying insanitary, overcrowded or otherwise unsatisfactory housing
- People who need to move on medical or welfare grounds (including grounds relating to a disability) (for further information see Appendix 4 and 5)
- People who need to move to a particular locality within Cherwell to avoid hardship to themselves or others

5.1 The Structure of the Banding Scheme

The banding scheme consists of four bands as summarised in this section.

- Band 1 – **Urgent** need to move
- Band 2 – **Significant** need to move
- Band 3 – **Moderate** need to move
- Band 4 – **Low** need to move

5.1.1 Band 1 Categories – Urgent need to move

Hospital discharge

Those who are in hospital or a drug or alcohol rehabilitation centre and cannot be discharged because they need a secure base to continue their recovery and are homeless. Or, have a home but cannot be discharged because it is unsuitable for their recovery or medical needs and cannot be made suitable through adaptations due to cost, structural difficulties or the property cannot be adapted within a reasonable amount of time. Therefore the applicant cannot be discharged until suitable housing is secured.

Urgent Health or disability

See health and disability table Appendix 4.

Urgent Social, Welfare and Hardship

See social, welfare and hardship table Appendix 5.

High Risk Domestic abuse

High risk victims of domestic abuse, subject to a Multi-Agency Risk Assessment Conference (MARAC) when this is part of an agreed safety plan with CDC.

Urgently overcrowded lacking 2 or more bedrooms

The household is lacking 2 or more bedrooms in order to have a separate bedroom for each:

Married or cohabiting couple

Adult aged 16 years or older

Pair of children aged 0-15 years of the same gender

Pair of children aged under 10 years regardless of gender

Under-occupation of social tenancies in Cherwell

RP tenants who under-occupy social housing and who wish to move to a property with fewer bedrooms than their current home, in cases where the larger property will be re-allocated to Cherwell residents who are eligible to join CDC's housing register.

Ex Armed Forces personnel who have sustained serious injury, medical condition or disability during service

Existing or former member of the armed forces or reserve forces who needs to move to suitably adapted accommodation because of a serious injury, illness, medical condition or disability which he or she, or a member of their household, has sustained which is wholly or partly attributed to their service. This category only applies where the applicant's current accommodation does not have the adaptations or facilities required in relation to the medical condition and cannot reasonably be adapted to meet the required needs.

Private sector properties subject to Prohibition Order, Demolition Order or Overcrowded Notice

Prohibition or Demolition Order served, preventing the applicant (who is a legitimate tenant or owner of the dwelling and would otherwise have rights to occupy) from occupying the whole dwelling or let room. Or Overcrowding Notice served, requiring the applicant(s) to cease occupation of their sleeping accommodation.

Safeguarding Children / Vulnerable Adults

Serious threat to the well-being of a child or vulnerable adult and their accommodation is a contributory factor to the risk. These are cases where a move is required to mitigate the risk to the child or vulnerable adult as confirmed by a Senior Manager in Children's Services / Adult Service or equivalent subject to a Child / Adult Protection Conference and agreed by the Housing Options or Allocations Manager.

Elderly social housing tenants in Cherwell who wish to move to sheltered accommodation

Elderly applicants who will be releasing general needs social housing.

Release of adapted social housing

Where a tenant does not require the adaptations in their current social housing property and will therefore be releasing an adapted property by moving and there is a suitable applicant on the housing register for the adapted property which will be released through a move. Band 1 may be applied if the applicant still requires adaptations provided the adaptations required are different from those in their current home.

Approved move-on from Care

Band 1 will be applied in accordance with protocols between CDC's Housing service and Oxfordshire County Council's Children's service department. The applicant must be a former relevant child as defined by the Children's Leaving Care Act 2002 and be a young person at risk.

Approved adopter or foster carer lacking adequate bedrooms

Approved or current long-term foster carer or adopter lacking one or more bedrooms in order to commence or continue with the arrangement. Long-term fostering is a fostering arrangement for a period of 3 years or more. Adopters or long-term foster carers must provide supporting documentation from social care that confirms they have been approved to adopt/foster and alternative accommodation is required or that they will be approved to adopt/foster once satisfactory accommodation is obtained. Short-term foster arrangements and 'kinship' arrangements will be considered on a case-by-case basis if a letter of support is provided by the Service Manager of Fostering Services outlining an urgent need for alternative accommodation.

Statutory Homeless Households

All accepted statutory homeless households as defined by Part VII of the Act who are owed a Relief or Main Housing Duty under section 189b or 193(2).

5.1.2 Band 2 Categories – Significant need to move

Homeless households found not to be in priority need

A verified homeless applicant that has approached CDC for assistance under homelessness relief duties or the relief duty has expired and CDC is satisfied that the applicant is homeless, not in priority need and not homeless intentionally (section 192 of the Act).

People at risk of homelessness

Those owed a Prevention Duty under section 192 of the Act, as at risk of homelessness within 56 days as determined by the council's Housing Options Team. This will be reviewed as part of on-going case work at least every 28 days.

Significant Health or Disability

See health and disability matrix Appendix 4.

Significant Social, Welfare and Hardship

See social, welfare and hardship matrix Appendix 5.

Domestic abuse

Victims or survivors of domestic abuse who are at significant risk of experiencing further domestic abuse in their current home and it is therefore unreasonable for them to continue to occupy the accommodation. Applicants who do not wish to make a homeless application or move to temporary or refuge accommodation will be referred for safety planning. A move to another area of Cherwell must be agreed with CDC in accordance with a safety plan to acceptably reduce the level of risk.

Significant overcrowding

The household is lacking 1 bedroom in order to have a separate bedroom for each:

Married or cohabiting couple

Adult aged 18 years or older

Pair of children aged 0-17 years of the same gender

Pair of children aged under 10 years regardless of gender

Armed Forces with discharge date

Those who are due to be discharged or have already been discharged from the regular armed forces who will cease to be entitled to MoD accommodation following their discharge OR

Those who were serving in the regular armed forces at any time in the 5 years preceding their application for an allocation of social housing and have been unable to secure suitable settled accommodation OR

Bereaved spouses or civil partners of those serving in the regular forces where (i) the bereaved spouse or civil partner has recently ceased, or will cease to be entitled to reside in Ministry of Defence accommodation following the death of their spouse or civil partner, and (ii) the death was wholly or partly attributable to their service.

A Band 2 under this category can be applied 12 months prior to the official discharge date – documentary evidence will be required.

Unsatisfactory Housing

A suitably qualified officer of CDC (typically an Environmental Health Officer (EHO) or Environmental Health Technical Officer (EHTO)) has either:

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- Assessed the property using the Housing Health and Safety Rating System (HHSRS) and identified one or more Category 1 or Category 2 hazards and has confirmed that the occupant(s) cannot be reasonably expected to remain in the property whilst the required works are carried out or the works cannot be carried out within a reasonable timescale. Or
- Identified breaches of Management Regulations in a House of Multiple Occupation (HMO) and has confirmed that the occupant(s) cannot be reasonably expected to remain in the property whilst the required works are carried out or the works cannot be carried out within a reasonable timescale.

Households with a Right to Move

An existing social housing tenant who needs to move to Cherwell to avoid hardship and a move to Cherwell would resolve the hardship because the tenant works or has been offered work in Cherwell and has a genuine intention and expectation to take up the work. Work of a short-term, marginal, ancillary or voluntary nature is excluded for this purpose but apprenticeships are included.

Approved Move-On from Supported Housing

An applicant who is considered ready to move to independent accommodation on the recommendation of the allocated support worker and in agreement with CDC's Housing Options Team. Information will need to be provided by the support worker to demonstrate that the applicant has acquired the necessary skills to live independently and have this approved by the Housing Options Team. Ongoing support needs must also be assessed and, where appropriate, a support plan must be in place. Auto-bidding will be applied to applications approved for Move-on

5.1.3 Band 3 Categories– Moderate need to move

Moderate overcrowding

The applicant's household is overcrowded as per the bedroom standard in Appendix 3 and lacking 1 bedroom, because one of a pair of children of the same gender have reached the age of 16 years, but both children are still under 18 years.

Tied Accommodation

Applicants living in tied accommodation relating to their employment, and who have received formal notice of termination of their employment and tenancy through no fault of their own. This category will only apply where there is clear documentary evidence that the employer is terminating the employment and the use of the accommodation within 12 months.

Agricultural workers

CDC will apply Band 3 to displaced agricultural workers in accordance with the requirements of the Rent (Agriculture) Act 1976. In reaching a decision on whether an applicant is to be prioritised for housing on these grounds, CDC will need to be satisfied that:

- the dwelling from which the agricultural worker is being displaced is needed to accommodate another agricultural worker and the farmer cannot provide suitable alternative accommodation for the displaced worker
- the displaced worker needs re-housing in the interests of efficient agriculture
- the farm is sold and the property will no longer be available

Intentionally homeless

Applicants who qualify to be on the Housing Register but have been deemed to have made themselves intentionally homeless as defined by the Act. If an applicant is still on the housing register 12 months after the decision that they are intentionally homeless, their application will be reviewed and re-assessed with the appropriate Band then applied to reflect their current housing circumstances.

Moderate Health or Disability

See health and disability matrix Appendix 4.

Moderate Social, Welfare and Hardship

See social, welfare and hardship matrix Appendix 5.

5.1.4 Band 4 Summary – Low need to move

Applicants who are eligible and qualify to join the housing register but do not meet the criteria for any further priority to be applied under the terms of this Housing Allocation Scheme.

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6. Types and sizes of properties that applicants will be considered for

When deciding the size and type of property that applicants will be eligible for, CDC will normally allocate accommodation in accordance with bedroom standard outlined in Appendix 3. There are, however, circumstances in which CDC may deviate from this and these circumstances are detailed in this section.

6.1 Social and welfare

Applicants with a need to move on social and welfare grounds will be required to provide supporting information and be assessed in line with the social and welfare table in Appendix 5. Applicants who are considered to have a need to move based on requirements for specific adaptations, property sizes or types due to assessed social or welfare issues will only be considered for properties that will meet those requirements and therefore resolve the need to move.

6.2 Medical assessment and adapted homes

Applicants who have a medical need will be asked to complete an online medical form, which will be assessed by CDC. For further details see Appendix 4. Applicants who are considered to have a need to move based on requirements for specific adaptations, property sizes or types due to assessed medical reasons will only be considered for properties that will meet those requirements and therefore resolve the need to move.

6.3 Pregnant applicants

CDC will take an expected child into account in determining the minimum/maximum bedroom need of an applicant, subject to evidence of the pregnancy at 25 weeks. A decision on a housing register application based on the sex of a child (such as a decision involving band or bed need) will not be made until the child is born and the sex of the child is therefore confirmed.

6.4 Extra room allowed for non-resident, overnight carers

Applicants with a disability or a long-term health condition who have a non-resident, overnight carer may be allocated an extra bedroom.

To qualify for an extra bedroom, they will need to show:

- they reasonably require overnight care and that this care is provided, and
- supporting evidence that shows the need for an overnight carer, this could be in the form of a support plan that has been formulated by adult social care that evidence that overnight care is required, and
- one or more persons regularly stay overnight to provide care there is a need for an extra bedroom that is used by a carer or carers for overnight stays as part of caring for the applicant or the applicant's partner, and
- that they receive Personal Independence Payments or Attendance Allowance which highlight the need for care tasks during the night or show why they do not apply/ have chosen not to claim.

If an applicant does not receive Personal Independence Payments or Attendance Allowance they must provide CDC with sufficient evidence, as requested on a case by case basis, to show that overnight care is required.

Note: Although applicants can choose to apply for a property larger than their needs so they can accommodate carers, carers may not always be taken into account for housing benefit or universal credit payments for extra bedrooms unless the carer is actually in residence at the property.

6.5 Children / access to children

For the purpose of this Housing Allocation Scheme, a child is defined as someone who is under the age of 18 . See Section 3.2 for information regarding applications from 16-17 year olds.

Where parents do not live together the children will be treated as living with the parent who provides their main or principal home. This is for CDC to determine. CDC will not allocate a bedroom in more than one home for each child/children unless there are exceptional circumstances. In cases where parents have shared care arrangements in place, these will be considered on a case-by-case basis taking into account any formal arrangement, court order and/or social service involvement. The recipient of child benefit and/or universal credit child element, or other child related welfare benefits will be a relevant consideration when CDC determines the main or principal home of each child for the purpose of housing allocation.

6.6 Fostering and adoption

Families undertaking long term fostering may be able to include foster children as part of their application to ensure that they are eligible for the appropriate sized property. Long term fostering is fostering for a period in excess of three years (not necessarily involving the same child or children). It is essential that written confirmation of the fostering arrangement is obtained from Social Services. Consideration will be given to this in assessing the application. Short term fostering will normally be discounted but will be considered on a case-by-case basis.

Families who are in the process of adopting a child may be able to include adopted children as part of their application to ensure that they are eligible for the appropriate sized property. In order to have an adopted child included in the household, applicants will be required to have applied to an appropriate adoption agency and be able to provide proof and supporting documentation that the applicant has been approved as a prospective adopter or is in the final stages of obtaining approval.

Note: Although applicants can choose to apply for property larger than their needs so they can foster, foster children may not always be taken into account for housing benefit or universal credit payments for extra bedrooms unless the foster child is actually in residence at the property.

7. Choice Based Lettings (CBL) Scheme

7.1 Statement on choice

Applicants to the housing register are able to play an active role in choosing which available properties they want to be considered for by being in control of placing 'bids' through the CBL website cherwell-homechoice.org.uk.

The Housing Allocation Scheme:

- allows a range of applicants to be considered for accommodation
- gives applicants a choice of locations within Cherwell
- allows applicants to consider a range of property types
- applies auto bidding (see section 9.1 for further details) and time limited priority to certain applicants for further details see section 9.

7.2 Overview

CDC's CBL scheme process is as follows:

- a. available properties are advertised weekly (over a six day period)
- b. applicants apply for properties that meet their housing needs
- c. applicants can apply for up to three properties in any advertising cycle
- d. when the advertising cycle is complete shortlists are created from those who have applied and sorted into priority order (as defined in the Housing Allocation Scheme – see section 7.3 and 7.5)
- e. the applicant (normally the one at the top of the list) is selected to be nominated by CDC to the landlord for a provisional offer to be made
- f. the landlord accepts or rejects the nomination
- g. the landlord offers the property to the successful applicant
- h. the applicant accepts or rejects the offer
- i. the results of shortlisting are published on CDC's website

If the landlord rejects the nomination or the applicant rejects the offer,

- a. the property will either be offered to the next eligible applicant on the shortlist in which case the process outlined above will be followed until either:
 1. the landlord accepts a nomination and an eligible applicant accepts an offer in which case a tenancy will be entered into; or
 2. there are no further eligible applicants on the shortlist; then
- b. the property will be advertised in the next lettings cycle. Landlords are only required to advertise a property on 2 cycles and if the property remains not let after 2 cycles can let the property through other means.

Properties may be re-advertised if shortlists become out of date before a nominee has been accepted by the landlord. This is because the shortlist will need to be refreshed as multiple applicants within the shortlist will have had changes in their circumstances (such as a change to the Band applied to their application) and new applicants will have joined the housing register. This will only happen when shortlists are over 6 weeks old.

7.3 Priority order

Once the advertising period has closed the system will automatically create a shortlist of applicants for each property into priority order (as determined in accordance with this allocations scheme – see below in this section 7.3 for more information). The successful applicant for each property will normally be the one who is eligible for the size and type of property being offered and who is in the highest band. Where there is more than one applicant in that band, priority will be decided by the date the band was effective.

Shortlists can also be ordered with additional priority given to the following:

1. Specific applicant types (Transfers, Homeless, Approved Move-On)
2. Those with a parish or village connection
3. Medical needs for ground floor accommodation
4. Medical need for level access showers (Mobility 1) or Wheelchair accessible accommodation (Mobility 2)
5. Keyworkers
6. Right to Move applicants
7. District Connections to Cherwell or Oxford
8. Size of household
9. Those in employment, education or training

7.4 Date order

There are two dates used to determine the order of priority when deciding which applicant to nominate for a property. These are:

the Registration date – the date the application is received by CDC

the Effective date - the date that the information, or where necessary all supporting documentation is received by the council to enable CDC to determine the application and a band 1, 2, 3 or 4 is applied. (This will be the same as your registration date if your application goes straight into bands 1, 2, 3 or 4)

This will help ensure that if applicants with the same Band bid on the same property, the applicant with the longest waiting time will receive an offer of accommodation first.

Where two applicants with the same effective date in the same band apply for the same property the applicant with the earliest registration date will be given priority for an offer of accommodation. If both applicants also have the same registration date then a Senior Housing Officer will determine which applicant is given priority on a case-by-case basis.

7.5 Moving between Bands

If applicants move down from a higher Band (e.g. 1 or 2) to a lower Band (e.g. 2 or 3), the effective date that the earlier higher Band was applied will be retained as the effective date of the new, lower Band.

If applicants move from a lower Band to a higher Band then the effective date of the higher Band will be the date on which the higher Band is applied or, if sooner, the date on which the information was provided that resulted in a higher Band being applied.

Regardless of any previous changes in Band, the effective date of a Band 4 will be the

date on which the most recent application was submitted.

7.6 Direct match

It may be necessary to nominate a particular applicant directly to a particular property to make best use of housing stock and to resolve cases involving significant or uncommon housing needs.

Direct matches will typically account for less than 5% of all lettings each year and must be authorised by a Senior Housing Officer or more senior officer. Indicative examples of when a direct match may be carried out include:

- A low demand property that has been advertised on one letting cycle and has not been successfully let but would resolve the housing need of an applicant who is homeless or at risk of homelessness.
- A property that is immediately ready to let and would meet the needs of an applicant who is homeless or at risk of homelessness and is able to move immediately.
- A disabled adapted property that would meet the specific, uncommon disabled housing needs of an applicant, such as a family with a disabled household member that requires a ground floor room with a level access shower.
- A property that has been adapted with disabled facilities to meet the needs of a specific applicant or his/her household.
- A 1 or 2-bedroom property that would meet the needs of an under-occupier of 3+ bedroom social housing within the district where the move would allow the larger property to be re-allocated through the housing register.
- A property that is let through the Housing First scheme, or similar schemes introduced from time-to-time, in order to accommodate applicants within specific cohorts such as specific refugees or those with a history of rough sleeping.

Note: Allocation of Extra-Care Housing is subject to separate allocations arrangements (see Appendix 6) and whilst direct matches of applicants are carried out these will not be advertised as having been let on the choice-based lettings website.

7.7 Nominations

Subject to the exceptions set out in section 7.5 of the Housing Allocation Scheme CDC would normally nominate the applicant at the top of the shortlist, providing they meet the criteria specified in the advert, still qualify and are eligible to be on CDC's housing register.

If an applicant is next on the shortlist for more than one property they will be contacted and asked to express a preference for the property they would like to be considered for. Nominated applicant's details will be made available to the RP of the property. Applicants will be unable to place further bids once they have been nominated until an offer is rejected or accepted.

Applicants should note that the RP which owns the property that they are nominated to will consider their own policy and eligibility criteria when making the decision as to whether an offer of the accommodation can be made.

7.8 Quota arrangements

CDC groups applications into the following three primary categories:

- a. General Needs
- b. Transfers
- c. Statutorily Homeless

CDC uses these categories to determine how to apply quotas for allocations of affordable housing.

The three categories can be broken down into:

Transfer applicant

A transfer applicant is a secure tenant or an assured tenant of CDC or CDC's RP partners who lives in Cherwell and whose application has been accepted onto CDC's housing register.

Statutorily Homeless applicant

This will include those who have been accepted for the Homeless Relief Duty, Main Housing Duty or those without a priority need once the 56 day Relief Duty has expired, if verified to be homeless and who did not become homeless intentionally.

General needs applicant

General register applicants are all other applicants who have been accepted onto CDC's housing register.

When advertising available housing, preference can be given to different categories of applicant including, for example:

- a. transfer applicants
- b. homeless applicants
- c. applicants in particular Bands
- d. applicants in employment, education or training

As a guide, CDC uses the following quotas when advertising available housing:

General needs (including 3% to key workers and 1% to social tenants needing to move for work)	40%
Transfers	30%
Statutorily Homeless	30%

CDC is keen to encourage applicants to seek employment, education or training and to achieve this, adopts a guide quota of 30% of all advertisements each year to give preference to applicants in employment, education or training.

Property adverts will clearly identify when preference is being allocated in this way.

7.9 Key workers

For the purpose of this Housing Allocation Scheme a key worker is defined as: An employee in a role that provides a vital local service that is essential to the wellbeing of society and for which there is a demonstrable shortage of local labour. This includes the following categories of key workers:

Category No.	Type	Examples of the roles that are likely to be considered key workers under this Housing Allocation Scheme (this is a non-exhaustive list. Examples are illustrative only and may change over time)
Category 1	National Health Service	All clinical staff.
Category 2	Support workers in health roles	Care assistants, healthcare support workers, maternity support workers, nursing assistants, occupational therapy assistants, physiotherapy assistants, assistant practitioners, radiography assistants, speech and language therapy assistants, senior care assistants.
Category 3	Adult social care roles	Day care assistants, day care officers, domiciliary care workers, activities workers, home care workers, nursing assistants in nursing homes or hospices, personal assistants, reablement assistants, residential care workers, senior home care workers, support workers.
Category 4	Local authority and Government agency workers	Including social workers, occupational therapists, educational psychologists, rehabilitation officers, planning officers, environmental health officers, Connexions personal advisors, clinical staff.
Category 5	Fire and rescue staff	Uniformed fire and rescue staff below principal level.
Category 6	Teachers and nursery nurses	Qualified teachers in any Local Education Authority school or sixth form college, or any state-funded Academy or Free School; qualified nursery nurses in any Oxfordshire County Council nursery or pre-school.

Category 7	Universities and colleges	Lecturers at further education colleges; lecturers, academic research staff and laboratory technicians at Oxford Brookes University or any college or faculty within the University of Oxford.
Category 8	Police and probation officers	Police officers and community support officers; probation service officers and other operational staff who work directly with offenders; prison officers including operational support.
Category 9	Ministry of Defence staff:	Servicemen and servicewomen in the Navy, Army or Air Force; clinical staff.

A person in a role that is not included on the above list may apply to be given key worker status under this Housing Allocation Scheme. Such applications must be made in writing and will be considered by the Housing Options and Allocations Manager or Senior Officer, taking into account the definition stated and evidence provided from the person's employer.

7.10 Additional priority or preference

In some cases, greater priority in shortlists will be given to applicants who meet certain criteria. This may be to make best use of housing stock (for example, larger homes, ground floor or adapted homes), meet these needs of specific groups (for example key workers or homeless households) or meet the needs of local communities (for example those in rural locations or areas experiencing anti-social behaviour).

The following preference categories may be applied to property adverts which will result in those applicants within each category receiving additional priority in the shortlist for those properties:

- a) transfer applicants
- b) homeless applicants
- c) applicants approved for move-on from supported accommodation
- d) applicants with a medical need for ground floor accommodation
- e) larger households
- f) Applicants with a need for a level access shower or similar (Mobility 1)
- g) Applicants with a need for wheelchair accessible accommodation or similar (Mobility 2)
- h) applicants in employment, education and training
- i) social tenants with a Right to Move
- j) key workers
- k) applicants in need of sheltered accommodation
- l) applicants with a local connection to Cherwell
- m) applicants with a local connection to Oxford City
- n) applicants with a local connection to specific village locations
- o) Applicants within specified age ranges

7.11 Local Lettings and Sensitive Lettings Plans

CDC may from time to time agree a Local Lettings or Sensitive Lettings Plan for specific properties, areas or developments to reflect local circumstances. Any Local Letting Plan will have regard to housing management considerations such as the social mix of

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tenants, density, age range, community stability and specific housing management issues being experienced in the local area.

Where a property is advertised in accordance with a Local Lettings or Sensitive Lettings Plan, the letting will be made to the applicant with the highest band (and oldest effective date where more than one application is within the same band) and who meets the eligibility criteria of the Local Lettings or Sensitive Lettings Plan.

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8. Applicants with an urgent or significant housing need

Applicants who are considered to have an urgent or significant housing need will be monitored for a three-month period from the date Band 1 or 2 is applied to their application. During this time applicants are reasonably expected to place bids for suitable properties which are advertised.

After three months, if the applicant has not received an offer of accommodation CDC will review the application. In conducting the review CDC will take into consideration the following factors:

- a) Has the applicant placed any bids for advertised properties?
- b) Have there been any properties advertised that would have met the applicant's needs?
If so, CDC will consider the reasons why they chose not to bid or investigate why they were unsuccessful.
- c) Does the applicant have a specific need for property that has not been available in the time period?
- d) Have they received appropriate support and help in accessing the Choice Based Letting scheme?
- e) Do the person's circumstances remain the same or has the need for alternative housing reduced?

Having considered the above factors, CDC may re-assess the Band applied to the application or extend the priority for a further three months. The Band applied to an application can be reviewed and changed at any time if the applicant's circumstances change.

8.1 Automatic bidding for homeless and move-on applicants

When an application is placed on automatic bidding, the applicant is still able to place three bids on available properties of their choice. However, if there are suitable properties available and the applicant has not used their three bids, CDC's computer system will place up to three bids per letting cycle on properties the applicant is eligible for on the applicant's behalf. Properties that the computer system bids on may be outside of the areas of choice that an applicant wishes to live in. There may be areas that are excluded by agreement that are unsuitable for an applicant and a nomination to properties in those areas will not be made.

Auto bidding will be applied to all applicants who are accepted by CDC under the Homeless Relief Duty or Main Duty who from the date the homelessness duty is accepted and to those applicants who are approved for Move-on from supported accommodation.

Vulnerable applicants who do not have an advocate to bid on their behalf can also request that automatic bidding is applied to their application to ensure that bids are placed.

9 Rural housing

9.1 Rural lettings schemes

To help sustain rural communities, on the initial letting of properties on new affordable housing developments in rural areas which are not rural exception sites, a target of 50% of all lettings will be advertised with additional priority given to applicants who have a connection with the village in-line with the terms of the Section 106 agreement or Section 10.3 below and have been accepted onto CDC's housing register. If there are no eligible applicants with a connection to the village, priority may then be given to applicants from surrounding villages if this is stipulated in the Section 106 agreement for the housing development.

On the re-letting of existing affordable housing properties in rural areas a target of one in three properties will be advertised with additional priority given to applicants who have a village connection in line with the Section 106 agreement or Section 10.3 below and accepted onto CDC's housing register. If there are no eligible applicants with a connection to the village, priority may then be given to applicants from surrounding villages if this is stipulated in the Section 106 agreement for the housing development. If there are no eligible applicants in those surrounding villages, the property will be available to all other eligible applicants as normal.

Should there be no local connection parameters detailed within a S106 the default assessment of local connection will be that as expressed within this Housing Allocation Scheme detailed below in section 10.3.

9.2 Rural exception sites

Rural exception sites are developments which are outside the village boundary, which would not normally be given planning permission but CDC has determined to grant planning permission as an exception because of a specific need for affordable housing, for local people who cannot afford market priced housing in that area. The housing is granted planning permission on the basis that it must remain affordable in perpetuity.

When affordable housing is built on rural exception sites, or planning obligations are attached to other affordable housing developments, there may be restrictions on the occupancy of these homes. These restrictions are intended to help ensure that applicants with a village connection and who are in housing need as defined in the Housing Allocation Scheme have first priority for nomination to any social or affordable rented properties.

This means that applicants must not only meet the eligibility / qualification criteria for joining the housing register but also the requirements detailed in the S106 agreement or nominations agreement for each individual site.

Should there be no local connection parameters detailed within the S106 or nominations agreement then the default assessment of local connection will be that expressed within the allocations scheme as detailed in section 10.3 below.

9.3 Village or parish connection for rural lettings

To establish a qualifying village or parish connections the applicant (or joint applicant) must meet at least one of the following criteria:

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- have lived in the village for the last five years
- be employed in the village for a minimum of sixteen hours per week and the employment is not of a short-term nature
- have ten years previous residence in the village if not currently residing there
- be over 55 or with a disability requiring support on health grounds from close relatives currently living in the village
- have close relatives (as defined at section 3.6.2.3) living in the village for a period of at least the last five years.

Where applicants have a strong connection with a village, CDC will ask them to detail this on their application. This will enable the connection to be verified and for the applicant to be given additional priority where applicable, for any social housing in areas where they hold such a connection. If an applicant is successful, they will be required to provide proof of their connection before they can be approved for the nomination.

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10. Refusal of offers, reviews and complaints

10.1 Refusal of offers

In circumstances where an applicant has successfully bid but has refused three suitable offers of accommodation their application will be closed and they will be disqualified from re-applying to join the housing register for 6 months from the date of the third refusal.

If an applicant successfully bids for a property but the RP is unable to contact the applicant using the telephone and email contact details recorded on the application within 2 working days of the first attempted contact, this will be considered as a refusal of an offer. The applicant who is uncontactable will be skipped and the next eligible applicant on the shortlist will be nominated.

The exception to this rule is for homeless household where CDC has accepted a Homeless Relief Duty or Main Duty or those approved for Move-on from supported accommodation, who are eligible for one offer of accommodation only and refusal of their offer will result in the discharge of the council's homelessness duty or removal on the Move-on priority. Homeless applicants will have a right of review under sections 202 and 204 of the Act. Those with a Move-on priority also have a right to have the decision reviewed.

10.2 Reviews procedure

A request for review must be made in writing within 21 days of the applicant being notified of CDC's decision. CDC will determine the review within 8 weeks of the request or such longer period as may be agreed with the applicant.

The review must be considered on the basis of policy, law and known fact at the date of review. When conducting the review, CDC will consider any representations, written or otherwise, made by the applicant or on the applicant's behalf.

If further information is required, the review period within which the decision should be made may be extended by agreement with the applicant. Reviews will be carried out by a senior member of staff at CDC or delegated to an appropriate organisation or officer who was not involved in the original decision.

If the applicant is still dissatisfied, a report can be prepared for consideration by the Strategic Housing Team Leader.

In the event of an applicant remaining aggrieved, the next step to be considered is a complaint via CDC's Corporate Complaints Procedure or to Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman.

Applicants may have a right to challenge CDC's decisions via the courts and should seek independent legal advice in the event that they are aggrieved with any decision made by CDC.

10.3 Review of suitability / discharge of duty for homeless applicants

Whether or not a Homeless applicant accepts an offer of accommodation to discharge a homeless duty, they have the right to request a review of the suitability of the accommodation they have been offered, under section 202 and section 204 of the Act.

10.4 Annual review of applications

In order to keep the housing register up to date all applications are subject to an annual review. The review is intended to ensure the applicant still wishes to be considered for accommodation and that the most up to date information about their housing circumstances is held. Applicants who fail to respond to either the review or reminder letter within 28 days will have their application closed.

10.5 Complaints

An applicant who is not satisfied with the service that they receive may register a complaint with CDC's complaint procedure by telephone, e-mail or in person. All complaints will be acknowledged and investigated in accordance with CDC's complaints procedure.

If you have a complaint, please use one of the following methods to contact CDC:

- Complete the compliment/comment/complaint form available from the website
- Visit one of CDC's offices
- Write to Complaints, Customer Service Centre, Cherwell District Council
- e-mail complaints@cherwell-dc.gov.uk

11 Fraud and deliberately worsening circumstances

11.1 Misleading or fraudulent Information

Under Section 171 of the Act, it is a criminal offence for an applicant to knowingly or recklessly give false information or knowingly withhold information which a local authority has reasonably required her/him to provide. Where there is suspicion or an allegation that an applicant, or any person acting on behalf of an applicant, has either provided false information or has withheld information, the application will be suspended whilst an investigation into that application is conducted.

If the outcome of any investigation is that the applicant, or any person acting on behalf of an applicant, did not provide false information or there was no withholding of information or such was not found to be withheld knowingly, then the application suspension will be lifted and reinstated to its previous position within the Housing Allocation Scheme meaning that the applicant should not be disadvantaged as a result of the investigation.

If CDC discovers an applicant directly, or through a person acting on his or her behalf, has given false information or deliberately withheld required information CDC will consider legal action. If CDC takes legal action and an applicant is found to be guilty of an offence under this section, the applicant will be liable on summary conviction to a fine not exceeding level 5 on the standard scale (£5,000). CDC will disqualify the applicant from the housing register for a period of up to five years.

In addition to the potential for legal action and disqualification from the housing register ground 5 in Schedule 2 of the Housing Act 1985 (as amended by Section 146 of the Act) enables a landlord to seek possession of a tenancy which it has granted as a result of a false statement by the tenant or a person acting at the tenant's instigation.

11.2 Deliberately worsening housing circumstances

In cases where an applicant or members of their household acted in good faith by moving from more suitable housing circumstance to less suitable housing circumstances this will not affect the Band applied to the application.

In cases where a deliberate act or omission is identified that was carried out with the intention to receive greater priority for alternative housing, the change to less suitable circumstances will be disregarded by CDC. The Band applied to the application will instead be determined by the applicant's previous housing circumstances, before the deliberate act or omission was carried out.

12. Allocations outside of the Housing Allocation Scheme and non-general needs housing

12.1 Sheltered and extra care housing

Only applicants that meet the minimum age criteria can be considered by CDC for nomination to sheltered accommodation. Applicants will also need to meet any additional eligibility criteria specified by the landlord. For further details see Appendix 6.

12.2 Supported Accommodation

Supported housing will be available only for applicants who are eligible for that particular type of accommodation and the related support. For example, some supported housing is provided exclusively for people with learning difficulties, or for young people leaving care. Where accommodation is available only for applicants who satisfy such special criteria, this will be clearly labelled on advertisements placed on the CBL website (HomeChoice).

12.3 Oxford City Council's unmet housing needs

Some social housing in the Cherwell has been built, or will be built in future, on specific sites to meet Oxford City's unmet housing needs. When these properties are allocated, priority will be given to housing applicants who have a local connection to Oxford. Cherwell housing register applicants who wish to also be prioritised for these properties must have a local connection to Oxford.

13. Confidentiality, data protection and information sharing

Any information provided as part of the application process is handled sensitively and subject to appropriate confidentiality in accordance with the General Data Protection Regulations.

CDC shall comply with the requirements of the Data Protection Legislation and any equivalent or associated legislation in relation to the storing, processing and sharing of Personal Data in connection with this Housing Allocation Scheme and will not knowingly do anything or permit anything to be done which might lead to a breach of the Data Protection Legislation.

Applicants have the right to request a copy of any personal information held by CDC. This is known as a Subject Access Request.

13.1 Sharing personal information

Personal information obtained from or about an applicant that applies to the housing register will only be used in ways that the applicant reasonably expects to process their application. All applicants must read and agree to Cherwell District Council's Privacy Notice in order to submit an application to join the housing register.

Applicants are made aware at point of application to the housing register that by submitting a housing register application their data will be stored, processed and shared as expected in order for CDC to provide the services requested, to assess their eligibility, qualification and priority for housing in accordance with this Housing Allocation Scheme.

The details provided by the applicant in relation to each housing register application and documents provided, either directly or via other professionals, will primarily be used in the following ways:

- to assess the application for social housing and determine the level of housing need in accordance with this scheme
- shared with other statutory and voluntary agencies including other housing providers, health trusts, support providers, police, probation, social services and other local authorities as appropriate in order to assess the housing register application
- shared with Private RPs of social housing (e.g. Housing Associations) prior to an offer of social housing being made
- shared with private rental landlord(s), past or present as necessary to request tenancy references in relation to the applicant/s or members of his/her household.
- Shared with other CDC departments.
- For statistical recording and reporting including to government departments such as the Department for Levelling Up, Communities and Housing.

14. Monitoring and evaluation

To help ensure that the Housing Allocation Scheme meets its aims and objectives it will be monitored and evaluated on an annual basis. Any major amendments to the allocations scheme in response to evaluation will only be made following consultation with all relevant stakeholders in accordance with s.168 (3) of the Act.

14.1 Publication of results

The results of shortlisting are published on the choice-based lettings website (HomeChoice). The information provided can be used to help applicants decide which properties to apply for, by giving them a better idea how popular a particular property or area is and how long they would normally have to wait. The results which are published will not contain any personal details relating to the applicant. The results of the shortlist which are published are not in any order and will not reveal which applicant was successful.

Applicants who have expressed an interest in the particular property but are unsuccessful may request more personalised feedback on why they were unsuccessful.

14.2 Equality and diversity

CDC is committed to promoting and facilitating equality of access to social and affordable housing regardless of a person or household's age; disability; gender reassignment; marriage and civil partnership status; pregnancy and maternity; race including ethnic or national origins, colour or nationality; religion or belief; sex; and sexual orientation. CDC can provide performance data to help evidence how we meet these requirements. Where concerns arise on individual cases, the monitoring will include a review of the data or issue of concern, and an action plan agreed where necessary. Any concerns should be raised with Head of Housing Services, stating the grounds for their concern.

14.3 What discretion is built into the scheme?

From time to time a situation may arise that is not predicted by this Housing Allocation Scheme but the needs or circumstances are exceptional or significant.

Where a case is considered exceptional or significant by the Strategic Housing Team Leader or Head of Housing Services and a higher or lower priority should therefore be justifiably applied rather than the band which the housing Housing Allocation Scheme would typically indicate should be applies, CDC retains discretion to apply a different level of priority.

The Strategic Housing Team Leader or Head of Housing Services may also withdraw adverts/properties from being advertised in justifiable circumstances not predicted by this Housing Allocation Scheme, including where a letting/advertisement cycle has already ended. Such cases are expected to be exceptional and therefore few in number.

Appendix 1: Definition of Terms

Affordable housing	Housing that you rent or part rent / buy from a council or registered provider
Allocation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The selection process by which a person becomes a secure or introductory tenant of housing accommodation held by a housing authority <i>or</i> • The nomination process by which a person becomes an assured or assured shorthold tenant of housing accommodation held by a registered provider.
Children	Are defined as dependents, in a household, under the age of 18 or who are still dependant on the applicant e.g. due to continuing education
Choice Based Lettings	The advert-based system that CDC uses so that applicants on the housing register can apply for properties. Applicants are assessed, properties are advertised and applicants apply for them
Disabled adapted properties	Disabled adapted properties are properties that have been specially built or adapted for people with disabilities
Effective date	Date used to prioritise applications in a band based on the date that CDC assess which band an applicant should be placed in
General needs properties	General needs properties are suitable for applicants who do not have a need for sheltered accommodation or specially built or adapted properties. They include bedsitters and house, flats and maisonettes of any size
General register applicant	Applicants who have been accepted onto our housing register as being eligible to apply for social housing
Homeless applicant	Applicants found to be homeless, in a priority need group and where a duty to offer housing has been accepted under sections 193 or 195 of Part VII of the Act
Housing Register	The housing register is the waiting list administered by the council to identify applicants who it will nominate for housing from its partner RPs.
Joint Applicants	<p>Joint applicants may be:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • married couples • partners living together • others who wish to set up home together
Approved Move-on	Applicants who have been assessed by a support worker as ready to move-on from supported accommodation where the council have an agreed move-on protocol
Nomination agreement	A legal agreement between CDC and the RP which states how applicants will be nominated for vacancies by CDC, the number of vacancies that must be offered to CDC for nomination and any special priorities such as village or local connection

Appendix 1

Registration date	The date the applicant's Housing application was submitted
Registered Provider (RP)	The official name for housing associations, housing co-operatives and housing companies that are registered with Homes England
Right to Move Applicant	Social housing tenants who have a reasonable preference because of a need to move to Cherwell to avoid hardship, and need to move because the tenant works in the district or they need to move to take up an offer of work
Section 106 Agreement	An agreement between CDC and a property developer governing the development of residential housing within the district
Secure tenancy	Tenancies granted by local authorities whenever granted and tenancies granted by registered providers before 15 January 1989
Sheltered housing	Sheltered housing is housing with visiting or residential staff
Social housing	Affordable housing that you rent or part rent / buy from a council or RP
Tied accommodation	Accommodation provided for and subject to employment
Transfer applicant	A transfer applicant is a secure tenant or an assured tenant of one of our partner RPs who lives in Cherwell and whose application has been accepted onto CDC's housing register

Appendix 2: Councillors, board members, employees and their close relatives

Staff, board members, councillors and their relatives are treated as any other applicant and will not gain any advantage or any preferential treatment during the application process, nor shall they be disadvantaged.

The following procedure will be undertaken to ensure that any nomination will be subject to a high level of scrutiny:

- The staff member who is applying to the housing register must have no direct input into any decisions regarding their application. This includes not inputting or assessing any information in relation to their application onto the housing allocations system or changing or amending any details at any time.
- Staff members must also have no involvement in the inputting of the application or awarding of priority for any of their relatives
- Applications should be clearly marked on the housing allocation system that the application is that of a staff member, board member, councillor or any of their relatives
- When such an applicant has bid for a property and is next in line to be nominated to an available property, the details of the nomination must be scrutinised and signed off by CDC's Strategic Housing Team Leader or Housing Services Manager.

If an offer of a property is to be made to an officer at Assistant Director level or above then the offer must be agreed by the Assistant Director of Wellbeing.

Appendix 3: Bedroom and Space Standard

1.0 Bedroom Standard

For the purpose of allocating accommodation in accordance with this Housing Allocation Scheme, the council will allocate a separate bedroom to each:

Married or cohabiting couple
Any other single adult aged 16 years or older
Pair of children aged 0-15 of the same gender
Pair of children aged under 10 years regardless of gender
Overnight carer – see section 5.4

The table below gives examples of the bedroom entitlement for adults and children:

Household size	Number of bedrooms to be allocated (if any eligibility criteria is met)
Single person under 35	Studio or 1 bedroom
Single person over 35	Studio or 1 bedroom
Adult Couple	1 bedroom
2 applicants not couple	2 bedrooms
Household with 1 child	2 bedrooms
Household with 2 children	2 or 3 bedrooms depending on age/sex of children
Household with 3 children	3 bedrooms

A former adult couple formerly considered to require one bedroom will not be considered to require two bedrooms, or therefore be considered overcrowded if the relationship has ended and two separate bedrooms are not available.

Applicants with a need for an additional bedroom due to the medical needs of the household will be assessed on a case-by-case basis taking into account the supporting documents provided. For children who are unable to share bedrooms due to medical needs applicants are encouraged to provide information to help assessing officers conclude this assessment, including:

- Evidence of a medical diagnosis
- Evidence that the child is in receipt of DLA or PIP
- Supporting statements from specialist medical professionals which detail the need for the separate bedroom

An offer of a larger property than the bedroom standard in these cases will be subject to an affordability assessment before an offer can be made. Applicants should also ensure that the property will be affordable for themselves.

Please note: households in receipt of benefits to pay their rent will only receive payment for property up to a maximum of 4 bedrooms.

2.0 Space standard

The space standard below is used as a guide to determine if bedroom sizes are inadequate:

Room's floor space in square metres	Number of people able to occupy
4.6 - 6.4	0.5
6.5 - 8.3	1
8.4 - 10.1	1.5
10.2	2

Anyone aged 10 or over counts as 1 person

Children aged 1 to 9 count as 0.5

Children under 1 year count as 0

Discretion for low demand properties and under-occupiers

CDC may on occasion relax bedroom standard restrictions for low demand properties including those which have not been successfully let on an initial letting cycle or to help encourage and facilitate under-occupiers of social housing to downsize. This may include allowing under-occupation of properties and where properties are advertised may include giving priority to certain categories of applicant such as applicants who are already under-occupying social housing who are moving to downsize. For example, a single applicant moving from a 3-bed to a 2-bed property. Applicants nominated to a property will need to pass an affordability assessment carried out by the RP, as normal, prior to receiving an offer of a tenancy.

Definition of Household types

Single person under 55	One person household with no resident children A woman who is less than 25 weeks pregnant
Couple	Married, Cohabiting, Civil Partnership & same sex couples without resident children or with a woman who is less than 25 weeks pregnant
Family	Single parent or couple (as defined above) with minimum of one dependent child, who lives with parent(s) as the main or principal home. A woman who is 25 weeks or more pregnant
Insecure Households	Separate households sharing accommodation with no formal rights to occupy
Older Persons	One person household and couples over 55 years
Other	Any other household group including friends, sibling and families with non-dependent children

Appendix 4: Health and disability assessments

Applicants should complete CDC’s medical form in order to allow for a thorough assessment of medical needs. The below table will be used by CDC as a guide to determine the level of priority that should be applied to an application based on medical needs and gives illustrative rather than exhaustive guidance. In line with the guidance in the table, CDC will consider the severity and impact of the housing situation on the medical condition rather than only the severity of the medical condition itself.

Any supporting information that is provided alongside the application and medical form, including information from medical professionals, will also be considered and given appropriate importance when considering which band may apply in accordance with the table below.

	Band 3	Band 2	Band 1
Mental Health	Prescribed medication alongside short-term, time-limited secondary care intervention. For example, Talking Space. Or referred to, or previous intervention received from a secondary care service with medication ongoing. In all cases housing must be the cause or significant aggravating factor in the mental health issue.	Anti-depressant or anti-psychotic medication with sustained secondary care input. The care that is provided is vital to maintain community living and the housing situation is a significant factor in the illness and mental health is likely to deteriorate if housing need is not addressed. Secondary care input to be considered when no medication prescribed due to other factors e.g. pregnancy, conflict with other medication. Alternatively a mental health specialist planned treatment programme where housing is a significant factor in the plan and some support is needed to prevent admission into a psychiatric unit, or immediate deterioration in their health where housing issues are directly related to illness and relationships within the household are seriously affected by mental health issues.	Immediate discharge from a psychiatric hospital following treatment where housing is a significant factor in the treatment plan or cannot be discharged to previous accommodation due to high risk. High support needs required to prevent re-admission.

<p>Mobility</p>	<p>Home slightly unsuitable to meet their needs with low risk of harm e.g. some difficulty accessing essential facilities such as the toilet, bathroom, bedroom. Adaptations would be feasible.</p>	<p>Home is increasingly unsuitable to meet their needs with moderate risk of harm e.g. increased difficulties accessing essential facilities e.g. toilet, bathroom, bedroom – or are unable to access essential facilities. Care or severely modified living is required and housing is a significant factor in maintaining community living. Adaptations are not an option or have been refused by the landlord.</p>	<p>Home not suitable following discharge from hospital in relation to a permanent medical condition where no adaptations are possible and applicant is at risk of serious harm. Or unsuitability of home is preventing discharge.</p>
<p>Children – Physical disability</p>	<p>Children who have difficulty accessing essential facilities e.g. bathroom, toilet bedroom or a child’s disability restricts use of the house by other family members e.g. increased bathroom usage. Health and safety not affected. Adaptations would be feasible.</p>	<p>A child who has increasing difficulty or already cannot access essential facilities e.g. toilet, bathroom, bedroom without assistance and health and safety is affected. The Occupational Therapy Service or Physiotherapist has made recommendations that adaptations are required but are not possible or practicable.</p>	<p>Home not suitable following discharge from hospital in relation to a permanent medical condition where no adaptations are possible, and child is at risk of serious harm. Or unsuitability of home is preventing discharge.</p>
<p>Children / Vulnerable Adult – Behavioural</p>	<p>Behavioural problems which affect the household and are made worse by the housing situation. Health care professional, health visitor and/or family support worker involvement to provide some individual care to child/vulnerable adult and/or parents/carers/family.</p>	<p>Behavioural problems which affect the household and are made worse by the housing situation – and which could potentially cause moderate harm to self and household. Involvement from community paediatrician, consultant, social services, education or health services.</p>	<p>Children / vulnerable adult with behavioural problems have caused, or is continuing to cause, serious harm to the child or the household. Ongoing multi-agency involvement from community paediatrician, psychologist, social services, education or health services.</p>

<p>Independence (relates to giving or receiving care)</p>	<p>Independence is affected by inability to access essential facilities. Need occasional informal care / support from family or home carer.</p>	<p>Independence is affected by inability to access essential facilities without a high level of care / support from family or home carer.</p> <p>Qualifies for County Council care provision, but the County Council are unable to provide the care due to the applicant's accommodation.</p>	<p>A high level of formal medical care / support is needed and cannot be sustained in the medium term due to current accommodation.</p>
<p>Carer</p>	<p>Currently living arrangements for carer have a negative impact on quality of life and would be improved by a move to more suitable accommodation.</p>	<p>Carer's health deteriorating due to currently living arrangements/ housing making it difficult to continue with care arrangements. Supported by medical evidence.</p>	<p>Carer's health is deteriorating due to currently living arrangements/ housing and there is an imminent breakdown of care arrangements. Supported by medical evidence.</p>
<p>Sensory environmental</p>	<p>There are some concerns that the accommodation is affecting sensory medical issues. Adaptations would be feasible.</p>	<p>There are serious and sustained concerns with sensory medical issues that can be mitigated by moving home. Adaptions may be possible but not practicable. Health services are involved and support a move.</p>	<p>There is an urgent need to prevent serious harm from occurring, due to sensory medical issues. Adaptions are not possible. Health services are involved and support a move.</p>

Appendix 5: Social, Welfare and Hardship assessments

The below table will be used by CDC as a guide to determine the level of priority that should be applied to an application based on social, welfare or hardship issues and gives illustrative rather than exhaustive guidance.

Band 1
Emergency cases due to fire, flood or other disaster
Exceptional need not covered elsewhere in the scheme as directed by Head of Housing or Assistant Director
Family member of social tenant in the district with at least 12 months verified prior residence with the family member and no right of succession to the property (or to the property size) following the death of the tenant in cases where a move would prevent homelessness or exceptional hardship.
Emergency cases due to fire, flood or other disaster
Band 2
There is a significant need to move in order to give or receive essential care, support or access specialised medical treatment.
Significant need to move not covered elsewhere in the scheme.
The applicant or a member of their household has a physical or learning disability which is significantly impacted by their current housing
Key workers who need to move to take up or continue with an existing permanent position within Oxfordshire.
Need for sheltered housing only
The existing home moderately limits the care and support that can be provided to the applicant or someone in their household.
Band 3
Accommodation is required with appropriate care and support and the applicant could not be expected to find their own accommodation, such as young adults with learning difficulties who wish to live independently in the community
The environment around the home has moderate detrimental effect on the quality of life of the household
Inadequate room sizes: The household has an adequate number of bedrooms as per the bedroom standard, but the bedroom sizes are inadequate by at least 1 person, as per the space standard taking into account all bedroom sizes the applicant's household has access to. See appendix 3
Split households with insufficient bedrooms: The property has a sufficient number of bedrooms to accommodate all occupiers as per the bedroom standard, but two or more households are sharing, and the applicant's household is left short of a bedroom due to genuine and justifiable bedroom allocation. This may also include an adult couple with access to only one bedroom where the relationship has ended.
Financial hardship: Current accommodation is financially unsustainable, and a long-term resolution is unlikely. More affordable accommodation is a key factor in resolving the financial situation.
Need to move to take up employment, education or training within the district.
No Fixed Abode. Cases where the applicant has no principal, settled address but is not deemed to be homeless.
Accommodation is required with appropriate care and support and the applicant could not be expected to find their own accommodation, such as young adults with learning difficulties who wish to live independently in the community

Appendix 6: How sheltered and extra care housing is allocated

1. Sheltered housing

Applicants with evidenced support needs who meet the minimum age criteria can be considered for sheltered accommodation. They will also need to meet the eligibility criteria specified by the landlord which may on occasion state that no support needs are required. Applicants also need to be eligible and qualify for social housing as per this housing Housing Allocation Scheme.

Some sheltered housing in Cherwell is allocated directly by RPs of social housing who will maintain their own waiting list for each sheltered housing scheme. Applicants who are seeking sheltered housing are therefore encouraged to register with social housing providers that have sheltered schemes in the district. CDC's website (www.cherwell.gov.uk) contains information about the sheltered schemes in the district including contact details.

It is sometimes a condition of sheltered housing schemes that tenants agree to take the Care Line or Warden Services. Separate charges are made for these services on top of the rent.

2. Extra Care Housing

Extra care housing provides older people who have care needs with their own home and tenancy within a support and care environment. This helps ensure that appropriate personal and housing support are available as required. CDC has nomination rights to some extra-care schemes in Cherwell. A tenant may move into a scheme with no or low needs but can access further care as and when the need arises as they get older or frailer. Extra care housing can remove the need for residential care for older people in some cases.

People who have assessed care needs will have them provided for by either a Personal Care Support Team, who are based on site 24 hours a day, and will be able to give care to tenants when this is required, or a support team of their choice.

The allocations panel will have to take a number of things into consideration when allocating a property. These factors include, but are not limited to, the nominations agreement for each scheme, individual circumstances, available care hours, existing needs and numbers of tenants with dementia in the Extra Care Scheme.

All applicants will be registered and assessed for housing in line with CDC's housing Housing Allocation Scheme and must be eligible to access social housing.

To be eligible for Extra Care Schemes applicants must:

- Be over 55 years of age or meet the eligibility criteria specified by the landlord
- Be eligible for social housing as per this Housing Allocation Scheme
- Be assessed by the Extra Care Scheme Manager for support that is provided.
- Be deemed suitable for the Extra Care Scheme, without support needs that are unable to be met or would be detrimental to the scheme itself or other tenants
- Be prepared to agree to the Extra Care Scheme tenancy agreement

- Be made aware of the costs of moving into the Extra Care Scheme before a letting is carried out. This is especially in regard to care costs where these will not be covered by Housing Benefit.

Residents in the Extra Care Scheme will be offered the opportunity to have their care provided by the contracted care provider.

It should be noted that for couples where one partner is below 55 years of age the couple may be granted a tenancy but it will be a sole tenancy only in the name of the person who is over 55 and therefore meets the criteria above. The younger partner would not be granted succession to the tenancy unless the partner meets the criteria detailed above, at the point at which an application for succession is made.

3. Extra Care Housing Allocations Panel

The Extra Care Housing Allocations Panel (the Panel) will require an up to date social care assessment in an agreed format outlining the prospective tenant's housing and social care needs and a medical/social history to enable the Panel to arrive at an informed decision as regards whether their needs can be met within the scheme.

The Allocations Panel comprises:

- a. A Scheme Manager
- b. A CDC Housing Officer
- c. A representative of Adult Social Care

When considering a referral for an applicant with care needs the panel will take into account as a minimum:

- a. the housing and support need of the applicant
- b. care hours required and the balance of needs within the Extra Care Scheme
- c. which property size is most appropriate for the applicant, taking into account the size of property in which the applicant has expressed as a preference
- d. whether the applicant has a local connection to the area
- e. the nominations agreement that applies to the extra-care scheme

An allocation to an extra-care scheme will only be made via this Panel and will be completed via a direct match as opposed to being advertised on the CBL website (www.cherwell-homechoice.org.uk). This panel will convene, either in person or using any form of information communication technology whenever a vacancy arises.

A potential tenant must also undertake a pre-offer interview with the Extra Care Scheme Manager and be shown the facilities at the Extra Care Scheme to ensure that all parties are comfortable with the responsibilities and expectations of a tenancy within an Extra Care Scheme. This also gives the prospective tenants an opportunity to find out more about the Extra Care Scheme and to make an informed decision about moving. On completion of a successful Extra Care Scheme visit a tenancy is offered and paperwork completed by the Extra Care Scheme Manager.

If this visit raises issues as to the suitability of a tenancy, every step will be taken to resolve the situation in discussion with all parties. A further assessment or Panel discussion may be convened, or further housing related support may be necessary.

If identified issues cannot be resolved (or resolved within an agreed timescale with the provider), the tenancy will be offered to the next suitable person identified by the Panel or Rehousing Officer – again subject to a successful home or Extra Care Scheme visit.

The Extra Care Scheme Manager will inform all applicants refused an offer of a tenancy and will give reasons for the decision. An appeals process can be invoked where any party wishes to dispute the decision reached by the Panel.

4. Property type and size

All applicants are eligible for a one or two bedroom property and are invited to express their preference. However, the final decision on the size of property allocated to the applicant will be made by the Panel, taking into account the applicant's preference, affordability and the government's guidance on bedroom allowance.

CDC Housing Allocation Scheme review 2024

Summary of proposed key revisions

Various revisions and updates to the Housing Allocation Scheme are proposed which add further detail to existing policies, clarify processes or remove duplication.

Below are the key revisions proposed which represent a change to policy:

Section and summary of change	Proposed wording	Rationale
<p>Section 3.5</p> <p>New Section “Armed Forces”</p> <p>Allow a direct allocation of housing to certain members of the Armed Forces who have urgent housing needs.</p>	<p>The proposed key wording in this section is as follows:</p> <p><i>“To give this additional preference, CDC will seek to allocate a suitable home through a direct match for members of the Armed Forces community as outlined above in cases where a Band 1 (urgent housing need) has been applied to their application.”</i></p>	<p>This revision helps ensure compliance with Section 166A(3) Housing Act 1996 which requires local authorities to give additional preference to certain members of the Armed Forces community, where they fall within one or more of the reasonable preference categories and have urgent housing needs. The proposed wording ensures that all those members of the Armed Forces community with Urgent Housing Needs (Band 1) will be given this additional preference through CDC allocating housing through a direct match.</p>
<p>Section 3.6.2.3 Qualification Criteria Local Connection criteria: Special reasons</p> <p>Specifically include within the local connection criteria those applicants living in domestic abuse refuges or being accommodated through</p>	<p>The following additions to the local connection criteria are proposed:</p> <p><i>“8. be a household who CDC has a duty or agreement to secure accommodation for through a national Government resettlement scheme.</i></p> <p><i>9. be living in a refuge or other form of safe temporary accommodation in the district having escaped domestic abuse in another local authority area.”</i></p>	<p>Currently cases which meet these categories will typically qualify to join the housing register as they are considered to meet the existing criteria of “have a special reason for needing to live in the area”.</p> <p>Separately outlining these categories will provide consistency and clarity to those applicants that they will qualify to join the CDC housing register, rather than needing to be considered as a special case.</p>

<p>national resettlement schemes.</p>		
<p>Section 3.6.2.3 Qualification Criteria Local connection criteria: Oxford City residents</p> <p>Extend the local connection criteria to include applicants with a connection to Oxford City so that housing due to be built in Cherwell to meet Oxford’s needs can be allocated to them.</p>	<p>The following additional wording is proposed:</p> <p><i>“Some homes in Cherwell will be built with the purpose of meeting the unmet housing needs of Oxford. As such CDC will seek to allocate these homes on the first letting to those who have a local connection to Oxford. For this purpose, the local connection criteria outlined in this section is applicable to those with Oxford connections as well as Cherwell connections and where the word Cherwell is detailed in this section this can be read to also include Oxford. Applicants with a connection to Oxford will receive additional preference for the first letting of those homes built to meet Oxford’s unmet housing needs. Those with a local connection above which is not connected to Oxford will receive additional preference over those who do not for all other homes.”</i></p>	<p>Some housing which is due to be built in Cherwell is being built for the purpose of meeting Oxford City’s unmet housing needs. CDC will allocate these homes in accordance with this housing allocation scheme. Those with a connection to Oxford City will be prioritised for an allocation of these homes. As such, those with a connection to Oxford City (whether or not they have a connection to Cherwell) will need to be able to join the CDC housing register. Those with a connection to Cherwell (whether or not they have a connection to Oxford) will receive priority for other homes allocated within Cherwell so will not be disadvantaged by Oxford City residents joining the CDC housing register.</p>
<p>Section 3.6.2.5 Qualification criteria: Financial resources</p> <p>Increase the household assets/income cap from £60,000 to £80,000 for those applicants who require 3+ bedroom homes.</p>	<p>Additional wording in section 3.6.2.5 as follows:</p> <p><i>“For applicants who require 3-bedroom homes or larger the cap on financial assets and gross annual household income is £80,000.</i></p> <p><i>The £80,000 financial assets and gross household income cap as detailed above for applicants who require 3-bedrooms or more is in line with the gross household income cap for</i></p>	<p>Currently applicants are disqualified from joining the housing register if they have financial assets that when combined with their annual gross annual household income exceeds £60,000. This applies to all applicants irrespective of the size of the accommodation they require and has not increased for a number of years despite inflationary pressures. £60,000 is still sufficient to secure 1 or 2-bedroom private accommodation in Cherwell however can be</p>

	<p><i>grant funded affordable home ownership as set out in Home England’s Capital Funding Guide (as at 29 February 2024). As such the £80,000 cap in this Housing Allocation Scheme may be increased or decreased to remain in line with any updates to this guidance.”</i></p>	<p>insufficient to secure larger family homes in some locations.</p> <p>An £80,000 cap is therefore proposed for those requiring 3+ bedrooms which is also consistent with the qualification criteria set by Homes England for other forms of low-cost home ownership (such as shared ownership or First Homes).</p>
<p>Section 4.1.1 Band 1 Categories: Statutory Homeless Households</p> <p>Increase the priority for Statutory Homeless Households from Band 2 to Band 1.</p>	<p>The proposal is to move the below category from Band 2 to Band 1:</p> <p>“Statutory Homeless Households <i>All accepted statutory homeless households as defined by Part VII of the Act who are owed a Relief or Main Housing Duty under section 189b or 193(2).”</i></p>	<p>Moving statutory homeless households up from Band 2 to Band 1 acknowledges that these household have more urgent housing needs than those in the other Band 2 categories such as those who are at risk of homelessness but not yet homeless. Applicants in this category are likely to be occupying emergency or temporary accommodation and so need to be able to move-on to secure settled accommodation as soon as possible.</p>
<p>Overcrowding Sections:</p> <p>4.1.1 Band 1 Categories Urgent overcrowding</p> <p>And</p> <p>4.1.2 Band 2 Categories Significant overcrowding</p> <p>And</p> <p>4.1.3 Band 3 Categories Moderate overcrowding</p>	<p>The 3 new categories proposed for overcrowded households are:</p> <p>“Band 1: Urgently overcrowded lacking 2 or more bedrooms <i>The household is lacking 2 or more bedrooms in order to have a separate bedroom for each: Married or cohabiting couple Adult aged 16 years or older Pair of children aged 0-15 years of the same gender Pair of children aged under 10 years regardless of gender</i></p>	<p>Overcrowding is the most common reason for applicants to apply to join the housing register. The current scheme groups the majority of overcrowded households into Band 2 which results in the same waiting times for overcrowded households. Waiting times for larger family homes (3 and 4-bedroom homes) have become particularly long. However, some households are more significantly overcrowded than others.</p> <p>The proposed separation of overcrowding categories gives greater priority (Band 1) to applicants who are lacking 2 bedrooms or more to allow for a separate bedroom for each:</p>

<p>Separate overcrowded households into 3 categories with differing levels of priority</p>	<p>Band 2: Significant overcrowding <i>The household is lacking 1 bedroom in order to have a separate bedroom for each:</i> <i>Married or cohabiting couple</i> <i>Adult aged 18 years or older</i> <i>Pair of children aged 0-17 years of the same gender</i> <i>Pair of children aged under 10 years regardless of gender</i></p> <p>Band 3: Moderate overcrowding <i>The applicant's household is overcrowded as per the bedroom standard in Appendix 3 because one of a pair of children of the same gender have reached the age of 16 years, but both are still under 18 years."</i></p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Married or cohabiting couple 2. Child who has reached the age of 16. 3. Pair of children aged 0-15 years of the same gender 4. Pair of children aged under 10 years regardless of gender <p>A Band 2 or 3 will apply if applicants are lacking 1 bedroom as above.</p> <p>A Band 3 will only apply in cases where applicants are lacking 1 bedroom because they do not have two separate bedrooms for two children of the same gender where one child has reached the age of 16, but is not yet 18 years old.</p>
<p>Section 4.1.2 Band 2 Categories: Domestic Abuse</p> <p>Introduce a new category to increase the options and choice for survivors of domestic abuse who may wish to remain in their homes.</p>	<p>Proposed addition of new Band 2 category:</p> <p><i>“Domestic abuse</i> <i>Victims or survivors of domestic abuse who are at significant risk of experiencing further domestic abuse in their current home and it is therefore unreasonable for them to continue to occupy the accommodation. Applicants who do not wish to make a homeless application or move to temporary or refuge accommodation will be referred for safety planning. A move to another area of Cherwell must be agreed with CDC in accordance with a safety plan to acceptably reduce the level of risk.”</i></p>	<p>Applicants who are at risk of domestic abuse may wish to make a homeless application with any local authority (including CDC) but this is not always an appropriate or suitable solution for them. For example, not all survivors of domestic abuse will want or need to be accommodated in a refuge or temporary accommodation away from their current home. Some will also want to retain a greater level of control and choice regarding their temporary and/or future home than that which can be offered when applicants are homeless. The proposed introduction of this new category means that those applicants who want or need to, may remain in their current home, with appropriate safeguards in place, until they secure more appropriate housing through the housing register. Those applicants who are high</p>

		<p>risk and subject to a Multi-Agency Risk Assessment Conference (MARAC) may be eligible for Band 1 as normal or may wish/need to make a homeless application to be temporarily accommodated away from their current home.</p>
<p>Appendix 3: Bedroom and Space Standard: Discretion for low demand properties</p> <p>Extend the discretion to relax bedroom standard restriction to encourage under-occupiers of social housing to downsize.</p>	<p>A revision to this section is proposed to include provisions for under-occupiers of social housing so that the section now reads:</p> <p><i>“3. Discretion for low demand properties and under-occupiers</i></p> <p><i>CDC may on occasion relax bedroom standard restrictions for low demand properties including those which have not been successfully let on an initial letting cycle or to help encourage and facilitate under-occupiers of social housing to downsize. This may include allowing under-occupation of properties and where properties are advertised may include giving priority to certain categories of applicant such as applicants who are already under-occupying social housing who are moving to downsize. For example, a single applicant moving from a 3- bed to a 2- bed property. Applicants nominated to a property will need to pass an affordability assessment carried out by the RP, as normal, prior to receiving an offer of a tenancy.”</i></p>	<p>Larger homes are in short supply which means that waiting times to secure 3 and 4-bedroom homes are particularly long. The intention of this proposed revision is to help ensure that under-occupiers are encouraged and assisted to downsize to smaller accommodation so that their larger home can be re-allocated to an applicant who needs it. Where appropriate, a home could be allocated to an under-occupier of social housing that is outside of the bedroom standard. For example, a tenant who would usually be eligible to apply for only 1-bedroom homes could be assisted to secure a 2-bedroom home if this means that the applicant could then return a 3 or 4-bedroom home to be re-allocated.</p>

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**Cherwell District Council
Equality and Climate Impact Assessment**

Cherwell District Council Housing Allocations Scheme

Appendix 3

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Section 1: Summary details

Directorate and Service Area	Wellbeing and Housing – Housing Services
What is being assessed (e.g. name of policy, procedure, project, service or proposed service change).	Cherwell District Council Housing Allocation Scheme (2025)
Is this a new or existing function or policy?	Revised policy to cover existing service function
Summary of assessment Briefly summarise the policy or proposed service change. Summarise possible impacts. Does the proposal bias, discriminate or unfairly disadvantage individuals or groups within the community? (following completion of the assessment).	<p>The Housing Allocation Scheme sets out how Cherwell District Council will process and prioritise applications for social housing. It sets out the criteria for determining whether a household is eligible for social housing and what level of priority the household will be given based on housing need.</p> <p>The allocation of social rented housing is the responsibility of the District Council as the housing authority.</p> <p>Revisions are proposed to the Housing Allocation Scheme to take account of statutory guidance, best practice and evolving local housing needs in the District. It is best practice to keep the scheme under regular review and respond to local housing needs and pressures.</p> <p>The proposed revisions have both direct and indirect impacts on groups within the community but the proposals do not bias, discriminate or unfairly disadvantage these groups or individuals.</p> <p>The proposed revisions will have several positive impacts on those individuals or groups who are directly affected as set out in this impact assessment. However, due to the finite number of homes available to be allocated, each individual or group that may have an increased chance of securing housing through the housing register will have a knock-on effect for others.</p>

Completed By	Paul France
Authorised By	Richard Smith
Date of Assessment	May 2024

Section 2: Detail of proposal

<p>Context / Background</p> <p>Briefly summarise the background to the policy or proposed service change, including reasons for any changes from previous versions.</p>	<p>CDC’s Housing Allocation Scheme was last amended in December 2021 with the changes being approved by the Executive. It is important to review the Scheme regularly to help ensure that it aligns with current housing needs in the District and to respond to changing patterns of need.</p> <p>The Domestic Abuse Act 2021 contained provisions to ensure the appropriate prioritisation of applicants fleeing abuse and to ensure they have secure accommodation. As such, we have proposed revisions to our Housing Allocation Scheme to help make our response to domestic abuse clear, streamlined and promote better choice and outcomes for those who have experienced abuse or are at risk of harm.</p> <p>We have also reviewed and reaffirmed our commitment to assist members of the armed forces and propose to make clear how we will give additional preference for housing to this group as required by Housing Act 1996. A new section to outline our approach is proposed.</p> <p>In terms of responding to changing needs, the housing service has seen an increase in homeless presentations and households occupying temporary accommodation since the last review. The number of homes available to let through the housing register have not been as high in recent years and as such we propose increasing the level of priority given to those households who are homeless and in Priority Need to help ensure those households can secure settled housing as early as possible.</p> <p>The longest waiting times to secure housing since the scheme was last reviewed is for larger homes and the main reason for applicants applying to join our housing register is a need for larger accommodation. Those who are overcrowded in their current home make up the largest portion of applicants on the housing register. To help ensure</p>
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	<p>that those who are more severely overcrowded secure a suitable home more quickly, we propose to split the large number of overcrowded households; giving those who are lacking two bedrooms a greater level of priority over those who are lacking only one bedroom. We also propose to introduce measures to help encourage under-occupiers to downsize and free up larger homes for households who need them.</p>
<p>Proposals</p> <p>Explain the detail of the proposals, including why this has been decided as the best course of action.</p>	<p>A summary table outlining the proposed changes to the Housing Allocation Scheme and the rationale for those changes is contained in Appendix 1.</p>
<p>Evidence / Intelligence</p> <p>List and explain any data, consultation outcomes, research findings, feedback from service users and stakeholders etc, that supports your proposals and can help to inform the judgements you make about potential impact on different individuals, communities or groups and our ability to deliver our climate commitments.</p>	<p>A 4-week public consultation to gather feedback on the proposed revised Housing Allocation Scheme will be carried out. Housing organisations including registered providers of social housing will also be consulted on the proposals. Stakeholders will have the opportunity to contribute to this consultation.</p> <p>Consultation responses will be considered and further revisions to the Housing Allocation Scheme may be made in accordance with the response received.</p> <p>As at 1 April 2024 there were 1,944 household on the Cherwell District Council housing register and 1,127 of these had an identified housing need in accordance with the Housing Allocation Scheme. Just under half of all households in housing need were affected by some level of overcrowding.</p>

<p>Alternatives considered / rejected</p> <p>Summarise any other approaches that have been considered in developing the policy or proposed service change, and the reasons why these were not adopted. This could include reasons why doing nothing is not an option.</p>	<p>The following alternative options have been identified and rejected for the reasons as set out below.</p> <p>Option 1: Not bring forward a new Allocations Scheme. This is rejected as it is important that the Council has Policies that are up to date with legislation and can respond to current challenges.</p>
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Section 3: Impact Assessment - Protected Characteristics

Protected Characteristic	No Impact	Positive	Negative	Description of Impact	Any actions or mitigation to reduce negative impacts	Action owner* (*Job Title, Organisation)	Timescale and monitoring arrangements
Age	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	The proposal to allow under-occupiers of social housing to downsize to a property which would be larger than they would normally be eligible for (e.g. a single person household downsizing to a 2-bedroom home) is likely to impact older households. This is because under-occupiers of social housing are often older households.		Strategic Housing Team Leader	Annual monitoring
Disability	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	The scheme reflects an applicants vulnerabilities and disabilities in its banding system and prioritises according to their impact on housing need. Suitable accommodation offers according to their individual needs.		Strategic Housing Team Leader	Annual monitoring

Gender Reassignment	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
Marriage & Civil Partnership	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
Pregnancy & Maternity	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	The risk of domestic abuse is known to increase for those who are pregnant or have recently given birth. As such, this group will be positively affected by the changes proposed to improve outcomes for those who are at risk or who have experienced domestic abuse.	N/A	Strategic Housing Team Leader	Annual monitoring

<p>Race</p>	<p><input checked="" type="checkbox"/></p>	<p><input type="checkbox"/></p>	<p><input type="checkbox"/></p>	<p>The data on ethnicity of those on the housing register appears to show that the proportion of white applicants is lower than the proportion of the Cherwell and Oxfordshire population. The proportion of Black/African/Caribbean/Black British also appears to be higher. This is when compared to Census data.</p> <p>Any changes to the Housing Allocation Scheme may therefore affect those in ethnic minority groups, both positively and negatively, more so than a change affecting the whole of the population of Cherwell.</p>	<p>Annual monitoring and comparisons of housing register ethnicity data to monitor potential impacts.</p>	<p>Strategic Housing Team Leader</p>	<p>Annual monitoring</p>
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<p>Sex</p>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<p>As stated in the previous section, the proposed revisions to our Housing Allocation Scheme will help make our response to domestic abuse clear, streamlined and promote better choice and outcomes for those who have experienced abuse or are at risk of harm. Women are far more likely to experience domestic abuse than men and as such are more likely to be positively affected by these proposals.</p>	<p>N/A</p>	<p>Strategic Housing Team Leader</p>	<p>Annual monitoring</p>
<p>Sexual Orientation</p>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<p>Research by the Albert Kennedy Trust found that LGBT young people are more likely to find themselves homeless than their non-LGBT peers, comprising up to 24% of the youth homeless population. There should therefore be some positive impacts on the LGBT community by the increased priority given to homeless households.</p>		<p>Strategic Housing Team Leader</p>	<p>Annual monitoring</p>

Appendix 3

Religion or Belief	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
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Section 3: Impact Assessment - Additional Community Impacts

Additional community impacts	No Impact	Positive	Negative	Description of impact	Any actions or mitigation to reduce negative impacts	Action owner (*Job Title, Organisation)	Timescale and monitoring arrangements
Rural communities	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	The future housing development sites in Cherwell allocated to meet Oxford City's unmet housing needs are located in the more rural southern area of the Cherwell District. The proposed changes to the Housing Allocation Scheme allows CDC greater control over the allocation of housing on those sites to applicants who qualify to join the CDC housing register. This gives CDC greater control and influence over the future letting of these homes.	N/A	Strategic Housing Team Leader	N/A
Armed Forces	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	The proposal is to make clear how CDC gives additional preference for housing to those armed forces or ex-armed forces members who have urgent housing needs, as required by s.166A(3)	None	Strategic Housing Team Leader	Annual Monitoring

Additional community impacts	No Impact	Positive	Negative	Description of impact	Any actions or mitigation to reduce negative impacts	Action owner (*Job Title, Organisation)	Timescale and monitoring arrangements
				Housing Act 1996. As such, those Armed Forces members will be positively affected.			
Carers	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>		None	N/A	N/A
Areas of deprivation	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	The proposals include giving greater priority to those who are more severely overcrowded in their current home than others. This is likely to affect areas of deprivation more where overcrowding is more likely to occur. The proposals are also intended to better facilitate under-occupiers of social housing to downsize. Some of the larger social housing homes where under-occupation is likely to occur are within areas of deprivation such as the Brighter Futures area where there are some higher concentrations of social housing.	N/A	N/A	N/A

Section 3: Impact Assessment - Additional Wider Impacts

Additional Wider Impacts	No Impact	Positive	Negative	Description of Impact	Any actions or mitigation to reduce negative impacts	Action owner* (*Job Title, Organisation)	Timescale and monitoring arrangements
Other Council Services	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
Providers	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	The proposed wording changes will positively affect social housing providers as they are designed to help enable those tenants who are more severely overcrowded to move to a more suitable home more quickly. The provisions to facilitate under-occupiers to downsize will also positively affect social housing providers.	Annual monitoring	Strategic Housing Team Leader	N/A
Social Value ¹	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Overall the proposed changes to the housing allocation scheme will have a positive impact as the allocation scheme should be more easily understood by residents and	Annual monitoring of the housing allocation scheme and number successfully securing housing, or not, following an application. Housing Options and	CDC Housing Options and Allocations Team	Annual Monitoring

¹ If the Public Services (Social Value) Act 2012 applies to this proposal, please summarise here how you have considered how the contract might improve the economic, social, and environmental well-being of the relevant area

Additional Wider Impacts	No Impact	Positive	Negative	Description of Impact	Any actions or mitigation to reduce negative impacts	Action owner* (*Job Title, Organisation)	Timescale and monitoring arrangements
				<p>seeks to prioritise those applicants who need or warrant social housing most, such as homeless households. However, with each individual or group given additional priority or eligibility to join the housing register there will be another that is negatively affected as a result due to the finite number of homes available.</p>	<p>Allocations Teams will continue to promote alternative housing options such as private rented and low-cost home ownership and deliver initiative and incentives such as those currently delivered through the Cherwell Bond Scheme.</p>		

Section 3: Impact Assessment - Climate Change Impacts

OCC and CDC aim to be carbon neutral by 2030. How will your proposal affect our ability to reduce carbon emissions related to

Climate change impacts	No Impact	Positive	Negative	Description of impact	Any actions or mitigation to reduce negative impacts	Action owner (*Job Title, Organisation)	Timescale and monitoring arrangements
Energy use in our buildings or highways	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
Our fleet	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
Staff travel	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
Purchased services and products (including construction)	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
Maintained schools	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A

We are also committed to enable Cherwell to become carbon neutral by 2030 and Oxfordshire by 2050. How will your proposal affect our ability to:

Climate change impacts	No Impact	Positive	Negative	Description of impact	Any actions or mitigation to reduce negative impacts	Action owner (*Job Title, Organisation)	Timescale and monitoring arrangements
Enable carbon emissions reduction at district/county level?	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A

Section 4: Review

Where bias, negative impact or disadvantage is identified, the proposal and/or implementation can be adapted or changed; meaning there is a need for regular review. This review may also be needed to reflect additional data and evidence for a fuller assessment (proportionate to the decision in question). Please state the agreed review timescale for the identified impacts of the policy implementation or service change.

Review Date	Annual
Person Responsible for Review	Strategic Housing Team Leader
Authorised By	Head of Housing

This report is public	
Council Tax Discretionary Relief policy (Section 13a)	
Committee	Executive
Date of Committee	8 th July 2024
Portfolio Holder presenting the report	Portfolio Holder for Finance and Resources
Date Portfolio Holder agreed report	26 th June 2024
Report of	Assistant Director for Finance & Section 151 Officer, Michael Furness

Purpose of report

To inform Executive of the reviewed policy for Council Tax Section 13a (S13a) and proposed updates.

1. Recommendations

The Executive resolves:

- 1.1 To note the contents of the reviewed policy for Section 13a Council Tax.
- 1.2 To approve the policy for Council Tax Section 13a.

2. Executive Summary

- 2.1 The Section 13a policy has not been reviewed for several years. It is good practice to review policies to ensure they remain relevant and in line with supporting the delivery of the Council's policies.
- 2.2 Section 13a of the Local Government Finance Act 1992 (as amended by the Local Government Finance Act 2012) provides the Council with discretionary powers to reduce the amount of Council Tax payable.
- 2.3 The provision allows the discretion to help Council Taxpayers where either the existing legislation does not provide a discount, exemption, or reduction or in circumstances where The Council has decided that the level of discount, exemption or reduction is insufficient given the circumstances.
- 2.4 There is a financial implication to awarding reductions under Section 13a as the Council must fund all awards from our own funds.
- 2.5 The funds are there to assist vulnerable customers and those who are experiencing exceptional financial hardship with payments of their Council Tax.

2.6 The exceptional hardship awards are discretionary, and Council Taxpayers do not have a statutory right to an award.

Implications & Impact Assessments

Implications	Commentary			
Finance	<p>The financial implications are set out in the report. S13a is funded through Cherwell District Council's own funds. Checked by: Rachel Ainsworth (FBP for Resources) on 4/6/24. Rachel.Ainsworth@Cherwell-dc.gov.uk Comment: We expect the policy to operate within existing budget arrangements</p>			
Legal	<p>The policy meets the provisions of Section 13a Local Government Finance Act 1992 and there are no direct legal implications.</p> <p>Shahin Ismail, interim Head of Legal Services. 31 May 2024. Shahin.Ismail@Cherwell-dc.gov.uk</p>			
Risk Management	<p>There are no risk management issues arising directly from this report. Any arising risk will be managed through the service operational risk and escalated to the Leadership Risk Register as and when necessary. Celia Prado-Teeling, Performance Team Leader, 04 June 2024 Celia.Prado-Teeling@Cherwell-dc.gov.uk</p>			
Impact Assessments	Positive	Neutral	Negative	Commentary
Equality Impact	x			<p>This policy review has been completed in line with the guidelines and commitments established in our Equalities and Diversity Framework. The implementation of this policy will have a positive impact on people within the protected characteristics. Celia Prado-Teeling, Performance Team Leader, 04 June 2024</p>
A Are there any aspects of the proposed decision, including how it is delivered or accessed, that could impact on inequality?	x			
B Will the proposed decision have an impact upon the	X			

lives of people with protected characteristics, including employees and service users?				
Climate & Environmental Impact				N/A
ICT & Digital Impact				N/A
Data Impact				N/A
Procurement & subsidy				N/A
Council Priorities	Response to Cost of Living Crisis			
Human Resources	N/A			
Property	N/A			
Consultation & Engagement	N/A			

Supporting Information

3. Background

- 3.1 Section 13a of the Local Government Finance Act 1992 (as amended by the Local Government Finance Act 2012) provides the Council with discretionary powers to reduce the amount of Council Tax payable.
- 3.2 There are financial implications to awarding any discounts other than those currently available under the statutory legislation and the financial burden if Section 13a (1) (c) discounts must be met through an increase in the general level of council tax for other payers.

4. Details

- 4.1 S13a is an award that can be made to Council Tax payers who are experiencing extreme hardship. The award is made directly to the Council Tax account and is awarded as a one-off payment per application.
- 4.2 When determining an application, consideration will be made to the individual's personal circumstances and that the taxpayer has taken all reasonable steps to resolve this situation including applying for any discounts, exemptions, council tax reduction and for those in receipt of housing benefit/housing element of universal credit apply for discretionary housing payment.

- 4.3 The Council must be satisfied that any arrears are not due to wilful refusal or culpable neglect.
- 4.4 An award can only be made for the Council Tax element of any charge, any court or enforcement agency costs applied to the account cannot be considered.
- 4.5 A discount cannot be awarded where the council considers that there are unnecessary expenses and debts, and that the applicant has not taken reasonable steps to reduce these, all exclusions are contained within the policy in appendix A
- 4.6 The Council Tax payer has the right to appeal to the Valuation Tribunal if they disagree with the Council's decision.
- 4.7 There will be an application process and the person(s) liable for council tax, or their appointee or representative, will be required to complete and apply for discretionary discount to the Council using the form provided. The application form is available on the Council's website. The application form must be fully completed and submitted with any supporting information or evidence.
- 4.8 The discount will be calculated against the daily council tax liability after deducting any other reliefs, discounts or council tax reduction and will not exceed that figure. The discount to be awarded is entirely at the council's discretion and can be 0%-100%.

5. Alternative Options and Reasons for Rejection

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

To not approve the Section 13a policy. In accordance with S13a (2) Local Government Finance Act 1992 each billing authority in England must make a scheme specifying the reductions which are to apply to amounts of council tax payable, in respect of dwellings situated in its area, by—

- (a) persons whom the authority considers to be in financial need, or
- (b) persons in classes consisting of persons whom the authority considers to be, in general, in financial need.

Therefore, the local authority must have a system in place to allow a person to make the request.

6 Conclusion and Reasons for Recommendations

- 6.1 It is recommended that the policy is endorsed by Executive to conform with legislation.

Decision Information

Key Decision	No
Subject to Call in	Yes
If not, why not subject to call in	N/A
Ward(s) Affected	All

Document Information

Appendices	
Appendix 1	Appendix A
Background Papers	n/a
Reference Papers	n/a
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Cherwell
DISTRICT COUNCIL
NORTH OXFORDSHIRE

Discretionary Discount from Council Tax under Section 13A of the Local Government Finance Act 1992

Background

This policy outlines the Council's approach to granting discretionary reductions in liability for Council Tax under Section 13A (1) (c) of the Local Government Finance Act 1992 (LGFA), as amended. The Council has the ability to reduce the liability for Council Tax in relation to individual cases or classes that it may determine where national and other local discounts and/or exemptions cannot be applied.

In November 2019 the Council approved to award care leavers up to the age of 25 council tax discounts under Section 13A (1) (c) of the LGFA. This scheme is in partnership with the 4 Oxfordshire District and City Councils and supported financially by Oxfordshire County Council. This scheme falls outside of this policy.

There are financial implications to awarding any discounts other than those currently available under the statutory legislation and the financial burden of Section 13A (1) (c) discounts must be met through an increase in the general level of council tax for other payers.

Eligibility

When determining an application consideration will be made to:

- The applicant's personal circumstances
- The Council Taxpayer not having access to assets, any equity on owned property, excess income or savings that could be realised and used to pay Council Tax
- The taxpayer must satisfy the council that all reasonable steps have been taken to resolve their situation prior to the application including for those in receipt of Housing Benefits/Housing cost element of Universal Credit must apply for discretionary housing payment (DHP) first.
- Any other eligible discounts, relief or exemptions that could be awarded.
- The council tax account and if it is in arrears the Council must be satisfied that non-payment is not due to wilful refusal or culpable neglect.
- The Council's finances allow for a discount to be made.
- It is reasonable for the Council to award a discount having regard to the interests of other local Council Tax payers who must meet the cost of any discount awarded.
- An award can only be made for the Council Tax element of any charge, any court or enforcement agency costs applied to the account cannot be considered.

Exclusions

Discount under this policy will not be awarded in the following circumstances:

- Where the full council tax liability is being met in full by council tax reduction.
- For any other reason, other than to reduce the council tax liability.
- Where the council considers that there are unnecessary expenses and debts, and that the applicant has not taken reasonable steps to reduce these.
- To cover any increase in the council tax payable due to the failure by the applicant to notify changes in their circumstances in a timely manner or where the applicant has failed to act correctly or honestly.
- Where a council tax or council tax reduction penalty has been imposed at any time during the financial year where discount is being requested.

Application Process

The person(s) liable for council tax, their appointee or representative, will be required to complete and apply for discretionary discount to the Council using the form provided. The application form is available on the Council's website.

The application form must be fully completed and submitted with any supporting information or evidence.

The applicant must provide details of any special circumstances being experienced and provide evidence to support their application. Evidence required may include, but is not limited to:

- Full details of income and expenditure, including details of any savings or capital
- Bank statements
- Confirmation of outgoings, including debt repayments, outstanding loans, and credit card debt
- Utility and household bills
- Details of personal illness confirmed by a GP.

Failure to provide any supporting evidence and information that is requested will lead to the discretionary application being refused, unless there are mitigating circumstances which led to that failure. There may be some occasions where discounts can be considered based on information already available to officers in the Revenues and Benefits team.

Decision making process.

Individual applications will be determined by the Revenues Services Manager.

The application will be reviewed once all evidence submitted, and the Revenue Services Manager will determine initially if there are grounds for seeking approval from the Assistant Director of Finance and Section 151 Officer or whether the application should be refused.

If approval is sought, the application will be passed to the Assistant Director of Finance and Section 151 Officer. If a recommendation is made to grant a discretionary discount this should specify the amount in monetary terms and for what period, this award covers.

Amount of discount

The discount will be calculated against the daily council tax liability after deducting any other reliefs, discounts or council tax reduction and will not exceed that figure.

The discount to be awarded is entirely at the council's discretion and can be 0%-100%.

Period of the award

A section 13A discount award will not normally be used to provide long term support for individuals. They will be used to provide short term support to allow people the time to resolve their current financial difficulties and to move to a position which is financially sustainable for them in the longer term.

The length of time over which an award is made is at the discretion of the Council but will not normally exceed a six-month period and in all cases will not automatically continue to reduce a future year's liability.

The applicant will be notified of the amount and period of the award and any specific end date.

The discretionary discount will be granted for a specific period. Should the applicant wish for debts for previous financial years to be considered, the applicant must detail the reason for the delay in applying for the discount sooner.

Notification of decisions

The Council will aim to consider the application and notify the customer of the outcome within one calendar month from receipt of the claim and all supporting documentation.

If the application for a discount is successful, the award will be made directly by way of a discount applied to the Council Tax account. This will be confirmed in writing and the Council's decision letter will include the following:

- The reason for the award
- The amount of the award
- The period of the award
- The applicant's duty to report any changes in circumstances.
- Any conditions associated with the award.
- Details of the right of review

If the application is unsuccessful, this will be confirmed in writing and the Council's decision letter will include an explanation of how the decision has been reached and details of the right to request a review.

Duty to notify changes in circumstances

Where a discount is granted, applicants are required to notify the council of any relevant changes in their circumstances that could affect the award.

Examples of these changes include, but are not limited to:

- If the applicant changes address;
- If the applicant or a member of their household leaves or joins their home temporarily or permanently;
- If an applicant's or a member of their household's income or capital changes;
- If the number and/or circumstances of others in the household changes.

In addition, the applicant must inform the council tax and or benefits team:

- Of a change to any factor that caused or contributed towards their hardship;
- If their hardship ends;
- If the severity of their hardship changes;
- Of a change to any of the circumstances that were included in the application for the discount.

Impact of the payment

All payments made under the Council Tax Section 13a Discretionary Policy will be credited to the Council Tax account.

If the amount of Council Tax Reduction awarded increases, this will result in a corresponding adjustment being made to the Section 13a award. Section 13a awards will not be refunded to a customer.

Appeals

Section 13A awards are administered under the Local Government Finance Act 1992 and are subject to a statutory appeals process. However, in the first instance, the Council will accept a taxpayer's request for a reconsideration of a decision where the Council has not awarded a discretionary relief or where the taxpayer feels the award should be increased.

Requests for reconsideration should be:

- Made in writing to the Cherwell District Council's Council Tax department or via email to council.tax@cherwell-dc.gov.uk
- Received within 21 days of receipt of the initial decision for the discretionary relief.
- Signed (or digitally signed on an email) by the applicant or their authorised representative.
- Include full reasons for the reconsideration request.

Upon receipt of a request for reconsideration, the Council's Assistant Director for Finance will consider whether the customer has provided any additional information against the criteria to justify a change in decision.

The Council will notify a customer of its decision within 21 days of receiving a request for reconsideration. If after receiving a reconsideration decision, a customer still disputes the decision, they can appeal to the Valuation Tribunal. The Tribunal will consider these appeals on their merits and is not restricted to inquiring whether the billing authority has exercised its discretion lawfully and reasonably. The Tribunal may substitute its view for that of the authority.

Where possible the Council will try to resolve the matter by explaining the reasons for the decision to the applicant or their representative. If your argument is not accepted; you are not satisfied with the reply; or, after two months you have not had a reply, you can appeal to the Valuation Tribunal for England. Details of how to appeal to the Valuation Tribunal can be found here: - <https://www.valuationtribunal.gov.uk/>

Equalities

The Council is committed to equality and the fair application of the policy, ensuring that people receive fair outcomes in the standard of service they received from the Council and equality of access to Council services. This policy is fully inclusive and could support all members of the community, regardless of their age, disability, gender reassignment, marriage or civil partnership, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion or belief, sex and/or sexual orientation in line with the principles set out in the Equalities Act 2010.

Fraud

If it is subsequently identified that a discretionary discount has been awarded because of false or fraudulent information, the council reserves the right to withdraw the award and recover the resulting sum (which may include interest) due. The council also reserves the right to prosecute the applicant for false representation.

Examples of circumstances where the council will seek recovery of an overpaid discount include, but are not limited to:

- Misrepresentation or failure to disclose a material fact, whether fraudulently or otherwise
- Failure to notify any relevant change in circumstance whether fraudulently or otherwise
- An error made in the provision of information or evidence or the interpretation of that information or evidence which led to an incorrect award.

Overpayments will generally be recovered directly from the applicant's council tax account, increasing the amount of council tax payable.

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This report is public.	
Non-Domestic Rate Discretionary Relief Policy	
Committee	Executive
Date of Committee	8 July 2024
Portfolio Holder presenting the report	Portfolio Holder for Finance and Resources, Councillor Lesley McLean
Date Portfolio Holder agreed report	26 June 2024
Report of	Assistant Director for Finance & Section 151 Officer, Michael Furness

Purpose of report

To inform Executive of the reviewed policy for Non-Domestic Rate Discretionary Rate Relief policy and proposed updates and seek approval of the updated policy,

1. Recommendations

The Executive resolves:

- 1.1 To note the contents of the reviewed policy for Non-Domestic Rate Discretionary Rate Relief.
- 1.2 To approve the policy for Non-Domestic Rate Discretionary Rate Relief.

2. Executive Summary

- 2.1 The Non-Domestic Rate Discretionary Rate Relief policy has not been reviewed for several years. It is good practice to review policies to ensure they remain relevant and in line with supporting the delivery of the Council's policies.
- 2.2 Sections 43, 44a, 47 – 49 of The Local Government Finance Act 1988 deal with the Council's discretionary powers to reduce the amount of Non-Domestic Rates payable.
- 2.3 The provision allows the discretion to help Non-Domestic Ratepayers where either the existing legislation does not provide a relief or in circumstances where The Council has decided that the level of relief awarded is insufficient given the circumstances.
- 2.4 There is a financial implication to awarding reductions under Sections 43, 44a, and 47 – 49. The reliefs detailed in the policy are partly funded from our own funds.

- 2.5 The way the reliefs are funded are 50% by Central Government, 40% Cherwell District Council and 10% Oxfordshire County Council.
- 2.6 This policy covers the general criteria and exclusions along with the application process for the following reliefs: charitable rate relief top-up, Registered Community Amateur Sports Clubs, not for profit organisations, discretionary rural settlement relief, hardship relief, and Section 44a (partly occupied property) relief.
- 2.7 The reliefs detailed in this policy are discretionary, and Non-Domestic Rate payers do not have a statutory right to an award.

Implications & Impact Assessments

Implications	Commentary			
Finance	The financial implications are set out in the report. Discretionary rate relief is funded by Central Government 50%, Cherwell District Council 40%, and Oxfordshire County Council 10%. Lynsey Parkinson, Strategic Business Partner, 5 June 2024			
Legal	Finance have reviewed the policy having consideration for the following legislation: Section 43 Local Government Finance Act 1988 Section 44a Local Government Finance Act 1988 Sections 47 – 49 Local Government Finance Act 1998. Any discretionary award will need to be made in line with the provisions of the Local Government Finance Act 1988 and the councils own policy. Steps will need to be put in place to ensure a fair and consistent approach is taken to applications for relief. Alison Coles, Legal Services Operations Manager, 5 June 2024			
Risk Management	There are no risk management issues arising directly from this report. Any arising risk will be managed through the service operational risk and escalated to the Leadership Risk Register as and when necessary. Michael Furness, Assistant Director Finance & Section 151 Officer			
Impact Assessments	Positive	Neutral	Negative	Commentary
Equality Impact				This policy review has been completed in line with the guidelines and commitments established in our Equalities and Diversity Framework. The implementation of this policy will have a positive impact on people within the protected characteristics.
A Are there any aspects of the proposed decision, including how it is delivered or accessed, that could		X		

impact on inequality?				
B Will the proposed decision have an impact upon the lives of people with protected characteristics, including employees and service users?	X			
Climate & Environmental Impact				N/A
ICT & Digital Impact				N/A
Data Impact				N/A
Procurement & subsidy				N/A
Council Priorities	Support and facilitate a vibrant economy			
Human Resources	N/A			
Property	N/A			
Consultation & Engagement	N/A			

Supporting Information

3. Background

- 3.1 Sections 43, 44a and 47 - 49 of the Local Government Finance Act 1988 provide the Council with discretionary powers to reduce the amount of Non-Domestic Rates payable.
- 3.2 There are financial implications to awarding any relief other than those currently funded through Section 31 Local Government Finance Act 2003. Relief awarded under S43, S44a and S47 – 49 is funded by central government 50%, Cherwell District Council 40% and Oxfordshire County Council 10%.

4. Details

- 4.1 The policy to be approved covers the following reliefs:

- 4.2 Charities are awarded 80% mandatory relief if they meet certain criteria. Charities can apply for a further 20% discretionary rate relief thus nullifying their rates liability. In general, top-up will only be considered for scouts/guides/cadets and other organisations for young people, organisations providing support in the form of advice, employment training and counselling, community schemes for those over retirement age including community transport and volunteer organisations, armed forces veterans' association, locally based leisure, and cultural organisation.
- 4.3 In general, charities will be excluded if their primary office is situated outside of the district. National charities will also be excluded unless they can prove they are suffering financial hardship.
- 4.4 Schools, including academy, free schools, grant maintained, faith and trust schools, along with education establishments will be excluded if they received central or local government support unless a special case for hardship can be shown.
- 4.5 Top-up of 20% will not be awarded to Housing Associations.
- 4.6 Community Amateur Sports Club qualify for 80% mandatory relief and can be considered for 20% top up. However, it is unlikely they will qualify if their main income is from the sale of food or drink.
- 4.7 Rate relief for not-for-profit organisations can be awarded up to 100% of the liability. The main objectives for these organisations must be related to relief of poverty, philanthropy or religion, education, social welfare, science, literature, fine arts, recreations or otherwise beneficial to the community. Organisations must be able to demonstrate how they meet the local needs and how they benefit local people, are open to all sections of the community as well as providing a valuable service to the community. The organisation must not discriminate against any section of the community and is not conducted or established for the primary purpose of making a profit.
- 4.8 Discretionary rural settlement can be granted up to 100%. The property must fall in a rural settlement (less than 3,000 residents), has a rateable value that doesn't exceed £16,500, the property is occupied by a business that benefits the local community, it is reasonable to grant a relief considering the interests of the Council Tax payer, and that applicants are demonstrate that the business is important to the maintenance of village life.
- 4.9 Discretionary rate relief, if approved, will be granted until the end of the following financial year.
- 4.10 Hardship relief can be considered where a ratepayer is enduring temporary financial difficulties. Consideration will be giving to the residents of Cherwell to ensure it is reasonable for the Council to grant the relief.
- 4.11 Section 44a – partly occupied property relief can be considered where part of a property is unoccupied for a temporary period. A backdated period cannot be considered, and a ratepayer must supply scaled drawings to advise which parts of the property are unoccupied and the period the part occupied period relates too. The period of relief will not exceed either 3 or 6 months depending on the type of property a claim has been made in respect of however all awards will terminate at the end of the financial year.

- 4.12 An organisation will be required to complete an application form and provide two years of audited accounts. In certain circumstances, a backdate of discretionary rate relief could be considered where delays for a relief are outside of an organisation's control.
- 4.13 The outcome of all applications will be notified to ratepayers. Unsuccessful applicants will be able to request a reconsideration of the decision.
- 4.14 The reliefs detailed in this policy are funded by fifty percent to Central Government, forty percent by Cherwell District Council, and ten percent to Oxfordshire County Council.

5. Alternative Options and Reasons for Rejection

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

Option 1: To not approve the discretionary rate relief policy. Members could choose not to agree the proposed policy, but it would mean that we wouldn't be able to continue to support local businesses, charities and voluntary organisations and would also reduce our financial flexibility in the future.

The local authority must have a system in place to allow a person to make the request.

6 Conclusion and Reasons for Recommendations

- 6.1 It is recommended that the policy is endorsed by Executive to conform with legislation.

Decision Information

Key Decision	N/A
Subject to Call in	Yes
If not, why not subject to call in	N/A
Ward(s) Affected.	All

Document Information

Appendices	
Appendix 1	Appendix A
Background Papers	n/a

Reference Papers	n/a
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Appendix 1

Discretionary Rate Relief Policy

1. Introduction and scope

Cherwell District Council recognises the importance of supporting local businesses, charities, and voluntary organisations to promote the provision of local facilities, support economic growth and investment and improve prosperity.

Councils have the power to award relief from the payment of Non-Domestic Rates ('business rates') to organisations and businesses that meet certain criteria. Public funds are not, however, unlimited and a proportion of any relief granted is met by the council taxpayers of the district. We therefore need to be satisfied that money invested this way will be repaid in economic and/or community benefit.

This policy document outlines the areas of local discretion and Cherwell District Council's (The Council) approach to the various awards. This approach has regard to the impact:

- On the Council's wider financial position and how that affects Council tax payers
- On the organisations and businesses that currently receive or may apply for relief in the future
- On Cherwell's residents if relief is awarded and the regeneration benefits to the district.

The principal consideration when making an award is that any relief granted is in the best interests of the residents and taxpayers of Cherwell and produces a local benefit.

This policy is designed to provide guidance to Council Officers and ratepayers on the application of Discretionary Rate Relief. The policy covers the following types of discretionary relief:

- Charitable rate relief – 20% top-up
- Community Amateur Sports Clubs (CASCs)
- Rate relief for not-for-profit organisations.
- Discretionary rural settlement relief
- Hardship Relief
- Temporary relief for partly occupied properties

Details of all other relief not detailed in this policy can be found on our website.

2. The Discretionary Rate Relief Scheme

Discretionary Rate Relief is granted in accordance with:

- Section 43 of the Local Government Finance Act (LGFA) 1988; and
- Section 47- 49 of the Local Government Finance Act (LGFA) 1988 as amended by the Localism Act 2011

Clause 69 of the Localism Act amended section 47 of the Local Government Finance Act (LGFA) 1988 to allow local billing authorities to fund their own local discounts entirely as it sees fit within the limits of the primary legislation and European rules on state aid. These powers can be used to encourage new business and investment, regeneration projects, as well as to support local shops or community services.

The Non-Domestic Rates Bill 2023 removed the backdating of discretionary rate relief; however, it is unlikely that any backdate will be considered unless the delay was outside of the businesses control. An example would be the delay to a new assessment being rated.

This criteria covers:

- Charitable bodies already in receipt of Mandatory Relief at 80% – the Council has further discretion to ‘top up’ this Relief to 100% of the Rates due.
- Registered community amateur sports clubs (CASCs) already in receipt of Mandatory Relief at 80% – the Council has further discretion to ‘top up’ this Relief to 100% of the Rates due.
- Non-profit making organisations – the Council has discretion to grant Discretionary Rate Relief of between 0-100% of the Rates due.
- Discretionary Rural Rate relief - The Council may also grant up to 100% Discretionary Relief to any rural business with a rateable value that does not exceed £16,500

In making decisions about applications for Discretionary Rate Relief the Council may:

- Grant Relief up to a maximum of 100% of the Rates due
- Grant Relief for a sum less than 100% of the Rates due; or
- Refuse any application for Discretionary Rate Relief

3. Charitable bodies (charities)

A Mandatory Rate Relief of 80% is granted to charities in the following circumstances:

Where the:

- Ratepayer of a property is a charity or the trustees of a charity; and
- The property is wholly or mainly used for charitable purposes (including charity shops, where the goods sold are mainly donated and the proceeds are used for the purpose of the charity)

Registration under the Charities Act 1993 is conclusive evidence of charitable status. Bodies which, under the 1993 Act, are exempted from registration or are exempt charities are also eligible for Mandatory Relief. Providing the above criteria are met, 80% Mandatory Rate Relief is granted.

In cases where a charity is in receipt of Mandatory Rate Relief of 80% the Council has further discretion to ‘top up’ this Relief to 100% of the Rates due.

The Council will consider applications for Discretionary Relief from charities based on their own merits on a case-by-case basis. The principal consideration in awarding the relief is that it is in the best interests of the residents and council taxpayers of the Cherwell district to do so, and it produces a local benefit as the Council must contribute to the cost of each award.

Each case will be assessed on its own merits, but generally top-up Discretionary Relief will only be awarded to the following charities or excepted organisations:

- Scouts, guides, cadets and other clubs and organisations for young people.
- Organisations providing support in the form of advice, employment training and counselling.
- Community schemes including those providing support for those over retirement age, community transport and volunteer organisations.
- Charitable supporting clubs.
- Armed Forces veterans' associations.
- Locally based leisure and cultural organisations.

The following general exclusions will apply:

- 'Top-up' relief will only be granted to local charities (defined as those set up with the sole purpose of assisting residents of the Cherwell district and whose primary office is situated in the district).
- unless a special case for financial hardship can be proved, 'top-up' relief to national charities (including charity shops) will not be granted.
- Academy, free, grant maintained, faith and trust schools are classified as charities and therefore receive 80% mandatory relief. 'Top up' relief for schools and education establishments which receive central or local government support should not be granted unless a special case for hardship can be shown.
- 'Top up' relief for Housing Associations will not be granted.

4. Registered Community Amateur Sports Clubs (CASC)

A Mandatory Rate Relief of 80% is granted to registered CASCs. To qualify as a CASC, the club must fulfil all the following criteria. It must be:

- Open to the whole community
- Run as an amateur club
- A non-profit making organisation; and
- Aiming to provide facilities for, and encourage people to take part in, eligible sport

In cases where a CASC is in receipt of Mandatory Rate Relief of 80%, the Council has discretion to grant up to 20% additional Rate Relief as a Discretionary top up.

The Council will consider applications for a Discretionary Rate Relief top up from CASCs based on their own merits on a case-by-case basis. The principal consideration is that any Relief is granted in the best interests of the residents and council taxpayers of Cherwell and produces a local

benefit as the Council must bear a percentage of the cost of any Relief granted. However, in determining the application the following matters will be taken into consideration:

- How the CASC supports and links into the Council's corporate vision and priorities.
- A CASC should have an open access policy. If a club effectively discriminates by only accepting members who have reached a particular standard, rather than seeking to promote the attainment of excellence by enhancing access and the development of sporting aptitude, then it does not fulfil the requirements.
- Although clubs should be open to all without discrimination, single sex clubs may be permitted where such restrictions are not discriminatory in intent but a genuine result of physical restraints (such as changing room facilities) or the requirements of the sport. In such cases, the organisation will be required to provide proof of such limiting factors.
- Membership and fee structure

It should be noted that sports clubs and other organisations which run a bar are unlikely to be awarded Relief if their main income is from the sale of food or drink. However, if the sale of food or drink by the organisation aids the overall operation and development of the organisation in achieving its objectives, this would be permissible if the principal objectives of the organisation meet the eligibility criteria detailed above. If the bar makes a profit, this profit must be reinvested to support the organisation in achieving its principal objectives. Financial information will be required to evidence any profit and its use.

5. Rate Relief for Not-for-profit organisations.

The Council has the power to grant Discretionary Rate Relief of up to 100% to other non-profit making organisations. The main objectives of the organisation must be related to:

- Relief of poverty
- Philanthropy or religion
- Education
- Social Welfare
- Science
- Literature
- Fine arts
- Recreation

Or be otherwise beneficial to the community.

An organisation must be able to demonstrate how it:

- meets local needs and benefits local people; and
- provides a valuable service to the community; and
- is open to all sections of the community
- operates in such a way that it does not discriminate against any section of the community; and:
- is not conducted or established for the primary purpose of accruing profit.

The Council will consider applications for Discretionary Rate Relief from non-profit making organisations based on their own merits, on a case-by-case basis. However, the principal consideration is that the Relief is granted in the best interests of the residents and taxpayers of Cherwell and produces a local benefit as the Council must contribute to the cost of each award as shown at Appendix A.

Membership and entry fees

If the organisation applying for Discretionary Rate Relief requires membership or an entry fee, the Council will consider whether:

- Membership is open to everyone, regardless of race, ethnic origin, sex, marital or parental status, sexual orientation, creed, disability, age, religious affiliation, or political belief
- The subscription or fee is set at a level which is not prohibitively high and considered to be affordable by most sections of the community
- Fee reductions are offered for certain groups such as, for example, under eighteens or pensioners
- Membership is encouraged from groups who face social barriers, such as, for example, young people not in employment, education, or training; people above working age; or people with disabilities
- Facilities are made available to people other than members

6. Discretionary Rural Settlement Relief

The Council may also grant up to 100% Discretionary Relief to any rural business if all the following criteria are met:

- The property is in a qualifying Rural Settlement.
- The Rateable Value of the property does not exceed £16,500 (£14,000 prior to 1 April 2010) at the beginning of the rating year concerned.
- The property is occupied by a business that benefits the local community.
- It is reasonable for the Council to grant relief having regard to the interests of persons liable to pay the Council Tax set by it.
- Discretionary Relief is not limited to any particular type of business. Applicants will be expected to demonstrate that their business is important to the maintenance of village life.

7. Period of Relief Discretionary Rate Relief

Discretionary Rate Relief will usually be granted until the end of the following financial year. Successful applicants will be sent a letter confirming that their application for Discretionary Rate Relief has been granted. This letter will specify the date the relief will end.

The granting of Relief will be reviewed annually and those in receipt of Discretionary Rate Relief will be asked to supply or confirm relevant information for the purpose of the review.

If a Ratepayer in receipt of Discretionary Rate Relief ceases to meet the eligibility criteria outlined in this Policy, they will cease to receive Discretionary Rate Relief. The Council will give such Ratepayers a full financial year's written notice prior to the withdrawal of Discretionary Rate Relief.

The ratepayer may request reconsideration against this decision. Time limited reliefs will only be granted for a relevant period.

8. Applications Discretionary Rate Relief

Applications for Discretionary Rate Relief must be made on the Council's application form and supported by, and include:

- The main purposes and objectives of the Business, as set out in, for example, a written constitution, a memorandum and/or articles of association, or a set of membership rules
- A full set of audited accounts relating to the two years preceding the date of application. Where audited accounts are not available, projected figures should be provided certified as being a 'true and fair view' by the company secretary or company accountants may be used.
- Details of how the Business meets the criteria outlined in the guidelines below:

As a guide, to be eligible for Discretionary Rate Relief, a charity/organisation must not normally have enough financial resources available in unrestricted funds to continue to operate for more than 12 months, nor should it have sufficient financial resources in unrestricted reserves to continue to operate for more than 12 months, unless a business plan exists detailing how these additional reserves are to be used to benefit the local community.

In such cases, the applicant must be able to prove that it offers a service which the district's residents depend on, and which they would be unlikely to find elsewhere in the district.

Application forms will be available on our website at:

<https://www.cherwell.gov.uk/info/191/business-rates/363/business-rates-reductions-and-relief/5>

All completed application forms should be returned to the Revenue Services Team at Cherwell District Council. By email: business.rates@cherwell-dc.gov.uk

9. Applications for other Reliefs

Hardship Relief

The Council has the power to reduce or remit the Business Rates charged in certain circumstances where the Ratepayer is enduring temporary financial difficulties. This is known as Hardship Relief. The Council may grant Hardship Relief if it is satisfied that:

- The Ratepayer would sustain financial hardship if the Council did not do so: and
- It is reasonable for the Council to grant Relief, regarding the interests of its residents and Council Tax payers

Hardship Relief is a temporary measure which should not be used to artificially sustain a failing business. Hardship Relief may be awarded where the ratepayer is facing temporary financial difficulties and where the community would be significantly disadvantaged if the business were to close.

Successful applicants will be notified in writing of the outcome of their application for Hardship Relief and if approved, will be notified of the amount of relief awarded and the period in which the award relates.

Application forms for Hardship Relief must be accompanied by a full set of audited accounts relating to the two years preceding the date of application. Where audited accounts are not

available for the current financial year, projected figures certified as being a 'true and fair view' by the company secretary or company accountants may be used. It is recommended that applicants submit audited accounts dating back further than two years if such information is available.

Temporary Relief for Partly Occupied Properties - Section 44a Relief

The Council has discretion under section 44a of the Local Government Finance Act to award Rate Relief where part of a property is unoccupied for a temporary period. The definition of 'temporary period' is not prescribed with the law and therefore Cherwell District Council has the discretion to decide the period of Relief should be awarded. The amount of Rate Relief that is awarded is determined by statute and is calculated by reference to the Rateable Value attributed to the unoccupied area by the Valuation Office Agency, part of Her Majesty's Revenue and Customs (HMRC).

The situation must be happening at the present time, so retrospective claims cannot be considered.

Applications will only be considered in respect of unoccupied parts of a property that can be clearly defined and are reasonably segregated from the occupied part of the property.

No award shall be made where it appears to the Council that the reason that part of the property is unoccupied is wholly or mainly for the purposes of applying for Rate Relief.

Rate Relief under this section will not be awarded in respect of partly occupied property where the partial occupation of the property may arise due to the ordinary day to day nature of the business (for example the operation of a warehouse).

The period of Relief will not exceed either 3 or 6 months depending on the type of property the claim has been made for, in line with the current legislation for part occupied properties.

Prior to an award being made, a visit to the premises will be made by a Council Officer to establish the exact area of the property that is empty. The application must be supported by a plan of the property which clearly marks the boundary of the empty and occupied parts. This plan will be given to the Valuation Officer to apportion the rateable value.

Further visits may be made to the property throughout the duration of the relief to establish that the property is still partly empty.

Further applications for part empty relief may be considered where there is a change to the area of the property that is unoccupied.

Part occupied relief will end if one of the following applies:

- the financial year ends.
- the end of the award.
- where part or all the unoccupied parts become occupied.
- where the whole of the property becomes unoccupied.
- where the liability for the property changes.

A Ratepayer making an application under section 44a should do so in writing and should include:

- A plan of the property showing the dimensions of the occupied and unoccupied area of suitable quality to enable the Valuation Office Agency to apportion the Rateable value of the property between the occupied and unoccupied areas. Applications will not be considered until such time as the plan is provided.
- The period to which the application relates.

- Contact details to inspect the site where necessary.
- A plan of the property (rating assessment) which clearly shows the occupied and unoccupied areas and the size of those areas.
- A statement clarifying the likely timescales to fully occupy or vacate the property and the reason part of it is unoccupied.
- A signed declaration setting out any amount of State Aid received within the preceding three years.

10. Approval

The initial assessment to award or refuse Relief will be made by a Revenues Services Manager.

Any award of a discretionary rate relief detailed in this policy in which the Revenues Services Manager is seeking approval, a report will be passed to Assistant Director for Finance for recommendation.

Applicants will be notified in writing of any decision within 28 days. A revised Business Rates bill will be sent where appropriate.

Unsuccessful applicants will be notified that they can request a reconsideration of the decision.

These reconsiderations will be reviewed by the Revenues Manager and signed off by the Assistant Director for Finance.

11. Policy Review

The Council reserves the right to review and revise this Policy at any time.

12. Funding of Reliefs

With the introduction of the Business Rates Retention Scheme from 1st April 2013, local authorities now share in the gains and losses associated with changes in Business Rates income. The Government hopes that localising Business Rates in this way will incentivise Local Authorities to adopt strategies to promote businesses and generate additional Business Rates income. The introduction of Business Rates Retention has a major impact on the funding arrangements for all Reliefs available which are now financed as follows:

Fifty percent by Central Government

Forty percent by Cherwell District Council

Ten percent by Oxfordshire County Council

This excludes certain reliefs that Local Authorities may be required to award which may be funded separately by Central Government.

This report is public	
Cherwell District Council Productivity Plan	
Committee	Executive
Date of Committee	8 July 2024
Portfolio Holder presenting the report	Portfolio Holder for Finance and Resources, Cllr Lesley McLean
Date Portfolio Holder agreed report	14 June 2024
Report of	Assistant Director of Finance (S151 Officer)

Purpose of report

On 16 April 2024 the Minister for Local Government, Simon Hoare, wrote to all councils explaining that they were required to prepare a Productivity Plan to submit to Government by 19 July 2024. This report presents a draft Productivity Plan for the Executive to consider for submission to the Government.

1. Recommendations

The Executive resolves:

- 1.1 To approve the Productivity Plan for submission to the Government.

2. Executive Summary

- 2.1 Local Government Minister Simon Hoare wrote to all councils to notify them that they were required to submit a productivity plan by 19 July 2024. This productivity plan should include member oversight and endorsement prior to submission.
- 2.2 The Government did not provide a specific template for submissions to be made on. However, a number of themes and questions were provided by the Minister. The proposed approach to providing the Government with the efficiency plan is to provide specific responses to the questions raised.
- 2.3 The main way in which the delivery of the productivity plan will be monitored is through the council's monthly Budget Management Reports to Executive which will show the:
 - overall forecast spend compared to budget for the year,
 - forecast delivery of savings proposals for the year within that,
 - any mitigations that the council may feel are required
 On a quarterly basis these reports will also include performance monitoring for the council which will help to ensure that delivery of the council's priorities is on track.

Implications & Impact Assessments

Implications	Commentary			
Finance	There are no financial implications associated with this report. Rachel Ainsworth FBP 6/6/24			
Legal	There are no legal implications associated with this report. Alison Coles, Legal Services Operations Manager, 11 June 2024			
Risk Management	There are no risk implications arising directly from this report. Celia Prado-Teeling, Performance Team Leader, 13 June 2024			
Impact Assessments	Positive	Neutral	Negative	Commentary
Equality Impact		X		
A Are there any aspects of the proposed decision, including how it is delivered or accessed, that could impact on inequality?		X		
B Will the proposed decision have an impact upon the lives of people with protected characteristics, including employees and service users?		X		
Climate & Environmental Impact				Not Applicable
ICT & Digital Impact				Not Applicable
Data Impact				Not Applicable
Procurement & subsidy				Not Applicable
Council Priorities	Not Applicable			
Human Resources	Not Applicable			
Property	Not Applicable			
Consultation & Engagement	None required			

Supporting Information

3. Alternative Options and Reasons for Rejection

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

Option1: The alternative option is to not submit a productivity plan to the Government. This is not recommended as submission of a productivity plan is a requirement of the Government.

4 Conclusion and Reasons for Recommendations

4.1 The council is required to submit a productivity plan to Government which has been endorsed by Members. This productivity plan answers the questions raised by

Decision Information

Key Decision	No
Subject to Call in	Yes
If not, why not subject to call in	Not Applicable
Ward(s) Affected	All

Document Information

Appendices	
Appendix 1	Secretary of State Letter requesting Productivity Plan
Appendix 2	CDC Productivity Plan 2024
Background Papers	None
Reference Papers	None
Report Author	Michael Furness, Assistant Director of Finance (S151 Officer)
Report Author contact details	Michael.furness@cherwell-dc.gov.uk 01295 221845

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Department for Levelling Up,
Housing & Communities

Simon Hoare MP
Minister for Local Government
2 Marsham Street
London
SW1P 4DF

16 April 2024

Dear Chief Executive

Productivity in Local Government

As you know, the Government is reviewing productivity across all public services and local government is, of course, part of that exercise. The recent [Local Government Finance Settlement](#) announced that councils would be asked to produce productivity plans. This letter formally begins that process.

May I first thank you for your very helpful engagement with my officials. Your views and thoughts have been valuable in shaping this approach to make it as useful as possible for all of us.

Local government has already done a huge amount in recent years to improve productivity and efficiency. However, lockdown and post-lockdown has proved challenging, and you are looking for new ways to go further. These new plans will help us understand what is already working well across the whole country, what the common themes are, whether there are any gaps and what more we need to do to unlock future opportunities. We will share these important lessons across the sector.

Productivity is not one-dimensional, and I would encourage you to consider the various facets that encompass the drive for greater productivity. When developing your plans, please think broadly and include reference to not only how you run your organisation, but also how you run the public services you provide and how you provide place leadership. It is with this wide view that we can ensure we are providing value for money for residents.

I am not looking to impose excessive burdens. I am not issuing you with a formal template or a detailed list of criteria to meet. I expect your plans to be three to four pages in length, and to set out what you have done in recent years, alongside your current plans, to transform your organisation and services. I do not want to specify a list of metrics you must report, but I do want to understand how you will monitor and assess your plans to assure yourselves and your residents that they will be delivered.

The plans should consider the below themes and where appropriate, should reference the work your council undertakes alongside other public services, such as the NHS and police.

1. How you have transformed the way you design and deliver services to make better use of resources.

Questions to consider:

- how has the organisation changed in recent years to become more productive? You may wish to consider what you have done around staffing, structures, operating models etc;
- how do you measure productivity in your organisation?
- what changes have you made to improve services, and what effects have those had?
- what are your current plans for transformation over the next two years and how will you measure the effects of those changes?

- looking ahead, which service has greatest potential for savings if further productivity gains can be found? What do you estimate these savings to be?
- what role could capital spending play in transforming existing services or unlocking new opportunities? If you have already used capital spending to boost growth or improve services, we would be interested in learning more;
- what preventative approaches you have undertaken and can the value of these be quantified?
- are there wider locally-led reforms that could help deliver high quality public services and improve the sustainability and resilience of your authority?

2. How you plan to take advantage of technology and make better use of data to improve decision making, service design and use of resources.

Questions to consider:

- what are your existing plans to improve the quality of the data you collect; how do you use it and how do you make it available to residents?
- are there particular barriers from legacy systems?
- how often do you share data with other organisations, and do you find this useful?
- Are there opportunities to use new technology to improve workflows and systems, such as predictive analytics and AI?

3. Your plans to reduce wasteful spend within your organisation and systems.

I know we will share the aim to reduce waste wherever we can and, while you have all made huge strides in recent years, no organisation is ever 100% efficient. You should set out your plans to reduce wasteful or “gold-plated” spend.

Questions to consider:

- how do you approach identifying and reducing waste in the organisation? How do you monitor progress?
- where have you followed invest to save and what was the result?
- how much time and money do you spend on staff EDI training (internal and external), networks, and other programmes? How many EDI Champions do you have as an organisation? How do you log and report the time and money spent on EDI related activity? How do you assess the effectiveness of that training?
- what percentage of total staff budget is spent on a) agency and b) consultants? How do you assess value for money on agency & consultancy spend and what are your plans to reduce use / costs? How many of those consultants or agency staff have been in place for over a year?
- what governance structures do you use to ensure accountability of spend?
- do you share office functions with other councils and if so, how useful do you find this?
- if you share external training costs with neighbouring councils, how do you factor out duplications of service between your council and your upper-tier council (if you have one)?

- if you have one, what is your assessment and experience of working with an elected mayor, combined authority, or devolution deal?
- what proportion of your paybill is spent on trade union facility time?

4. The barriers preventing progress that the Government can help to reduce or remove.

There will be barriers preventing you from going as far or as fast as you would like to. I would like your plans to set those out, so that we can understand how government, or the market, can help you overcome these barriers to go even further.

Questions to consider:

- what are the barriers preventing you from improving productivity further within your organisation?
- what are the barriers preventing you from improving services further?
- are these barriers consistent across multiple services?
- what would you need to remove those barriers? What do you need from government, the market or elsewhere?

Your plans must be returned by 19 July 2024, by email to productivityplans@levellingup.gov.uk.

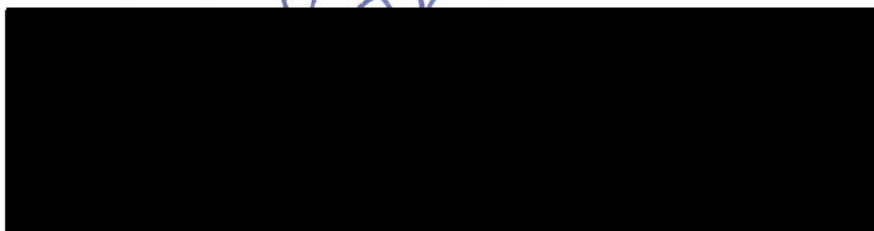
You must ensure that there is member oversight and endorsement of the plan before it is submitted, and the plan must also be uploaded to your website so that residents can see it. You should consider how you will update the plans and report on progress on a regular basis. The plans should also contain relevant metrics and key performance indicators to allow you and your residents to monitor progress.

Once received, we will review the plans to identify common themes and issues across the sector. We are keen to highlight best practice that others can learn from.

Individual plans will not be rated or scored, and we will not produce any kind of league tables. We are interested in understanding what is happening across the sector.

We are setting up a panel to consider the themes and evidence that comes from the plans. I will chair the panel and bring together experts from the sector and beyond, including Oflog and the LGA. They will consider the issues emerging from the plans, the implications for future national policy design, the role of government in supporting further change and the role of the sector in going further. The panel will advise national government and local government, and I believe this collaborative approach will ensure the most effective outcomes.

I look forward to updates on your publication and progress.



SIMON HOARE MP
Minister for Local Government

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Cherwell District Council Productivity Plan – July 2024

Simon Hoare, the Minister for Local Government wrote to Cherwell District Council on 16 April requesting that our Productivity Plan was returned by 19 July 2024. Minister Hoare outlined a number of themes and questions that he has asked the Council to consider when preparing this Productivity Plan.

In response to all of the questions asked by the Government, the council defines savings as both net reductions in expenditure and net increases in income levels achieved.

How have you transformed the way you design and deliver services to make better use of resources?

1. How has the organisation changed in recent years to become more productive? You may wish to consider what you have done around staffing, structures, operating models etc.
 - 2022 New senior management structure agreed including an Assistant Director to lead on organisational transformation
 - 2023 Transformation strategy agreed, resources in place including Transformation Programme Manager/team and budget of £2m
 - 2024 First services to go through transformation programme

Savings plans for the last 3 years can be found here:

- [2022/23](#)
- [2023/24](#)
- [2024/25](#)

2. How do you measure productivity in your organisation?

As with all councils we are subject to a value for money assessment as part of our annual external audit. The latest external assessment (for 2021/22) with the conclusion that the council had proper arrangements in place. The council does not anticipate any change in this assessment for the 2022/23 assessment or later years.

The council operates an annual budget process. As part of this, all services are required to consider what savings proposals can be put forward. The process for 2024/25 identified both efficiency and savings that were included in the budget. For the 2025/26 process the council intends to enhance and develop this process to ensure that identifying detailed efficiencies and new ways of working is entrenched into the culture of the organisation.

By operating in this way and asking all services to identify additional efficiencies each year, the council is able to ensure that its levels of productivity increase each year.

3. What changes have you made to improve services, and what effects have those had?

The council has made numerous changes to improve services. One such case study focuses on the Revenues and Benefits Service.

Area	Action	Outcome	Benefit	frequency
Rent increases (yearly)	Format rent file for uploading into Benefits System and assess via mass calculation	1000's of assessment done automatically in 1 action	100's of staff hours (cost)	yearly
System reports	Overlaid the information from 7 different reports linked via case reference. Officer works on overlaid report and pick up multiple changes through working on the overlaid report at the same time.	Reduced items to review from 1000's to an average of 100 per week. Endorsing "the right decision at the right time and right award of benefit"	100's of staff hours (cost). Reduction/Elimination of Admin delay/Local Authority admin errors	Weekly
Universal Credit Data Share /Automatic Transfer Local Authority System automation	Through DWP data sharing automation of change events done via one mass calculation	1000's of change events done in 1 action. Improved speed of processing times. Customer satisfaction. Massively reduced complaints. Fewer appeals.	100's of staff hours (cost) Reduction/Elimination of Admin delay/Local Authority admin errors	Daily
End-2-End working (officer sheets)	Officer deals with a case from beginning to end, pulling all outstanding processes to themselves ensuring the right decision at the right time and the right award of benefit	Improved speed of processing times. Greater knowledge, accountability and accuracy of processing cases	Reduction in avoidable contacts resulting in additional staff hours to review claims	Daily
Enterprise routing	Documents are automatically routed to the officer that last looked at a claim within the calendar month.	Improved speed of processing times. Customer satisfaction. Massively reduced complaints. Fewer appeals. Minimises hands on. Reduces the unnecessary	Reduced administrative tasks as no longer a need to allocate work items to the team	Daily

Area	Action	Outcome	Benefit	frequency
	Work types assigned level of priority based on importance and officers will receive the highest priority work item first through automatic work allocation	movement of documents. Ensures the right officer deals with the item		
Online Housing Benefit Accuracy Assurance forms	Customers complete an online form and upload evidence which is then routed to a dedicated inbox	559 forms received without the need for each to be individually scanned and indexed by the post team	Reduced staff hours spent on scanning and indexing. No postal expenditure for the authority/customer. No printing costs	Monthly
Training	Knowledge bar. One stop shop of all training slides, reference material and 'how to guides'	Upskilled staff with all training knowledge available to them instantly	Reduction in outsourced training sessions	Ad hoc
Online claim forms and Risk Based Verification	Customers can complete an online form and upload evidence which is then routed to a dedicated case manager. The customer receives an acknowledgement email response and will request the required evidences needed to progress the claim specific to them.	Improved speed of processing times. Eliminates lost forms in the post. Information required is requested at source. Requires no manual intervention on initial request	Postal costs Staff hours	Daily
Online billing mailshot	Ahead of annual billing for 2024 - 25 a targeted email campaign was issued to customers email addresses to promote online billing	Reduction in costs for postage , customer has instant access to real time information via customer portal.	Postage costs reductions	Ongoing

Area	Action	Outcome	Benefit	frequency
	and customer portal where a paper bill was still being issued. Outer artwork on envelopes changed to promote portal take up for landlords, businesses , and council tax payers.			

4. What are your current plans for transformation over the next two years and how will you measure the effects of those changes?

- Root and branch review of all services in line with agreed strategy and guiding principles, to define target operating models and pathways to achieving them
- Review of cross cutting activities to identify inefficiencies
- Establish a rolling programme of transformation to ensure services remain fit for purpose, agile and lean

5. Looking ahead, which service has greatest potential for savings if further productivity gains can be found? What do you estimate these savings to be?

Savings can generally occur when significant levels of change occur. As there are major plans for change within Environmental Services as a result of the introduction of the Government's new Extended Producer Responsibility scheme, this would suggest that there could be opportunities for savings – in particular additional income streams due to the council. Furthermore, the council will have to consider the way its services are figured in light of the final structure of the scheme. Environmental Services also has the largest net budget for the council which also implies the greatest potential for the level of productivity gains available. Initial assessments suggest savings of £1.5m - £3m could be achieved.

6. What role could capital spending play in transforming existing services or unlocking new opportunities? If you have already used capital spending to boost growth or improve services, we would be interested in learning more.

The Council has budgeted £700k across two years for its [Digital Futures Programme and Strategy](#). This will look to introduce:

Robotic Process Automation

We are harnessing the power of Robotic Process Automation (RPA) by introducing a software platform consisting of digital workers (robots that replicate human activities). These robots perform repetitive tasks with greater speed, accuracy, and consistency, thereby freeing our workforce from repetitive and monotonous duties. By automating resource-intensive processes, we aim to save both time and money, directly benefiting the Council's efficiency.

Data Lakehouse

In our pursuit to capitalise on data opportunities, we have implemented a data lakehouse to elevate our data analytics capabilities. This initiative integrates both internal and external data sources to enhance service delivery, minimize information redundancy, and enable proactive service provision. With a strong emphasis on data reliability and accuracy, our data governance policies and

procedures are rigorously enforced. We have appointed a data steward to oversee governance and ensure that all data is meticulously cleansed before being loaded into the data lakehouse.

Unified Platform

To unlock the full potential of our data, enrich the customer and user experience, and streamline system integration, we are committed to implementing a unified platform solution. This platform will serve as the foundation for developing future systems and integrating any legacy back-office systems, thereby simplifying our IT infrastructure and modernising our service offerings. This holistic approach will not only enhance operational efficiency but also pave the way for innovative solutions that meet the evolving needs of our community.

Migrate Azure file storage to Microsoft Teams and Sharepoint

We have moved our Azure service area file storage to Microsoft Teams and SharePoint, with the goal of equipping our workforce with modern collaboration tools. This migration will facilitate seamless communication, document sharing, and collaborative work, empowering our staff to operate more efficiently, fostering a more connected and agile workforce better equipped to meet the demands of our dynamic operational landscape.

7. What preventative approaches have you undertaken and can the value of these be quantified?

Cherwell has a track record of thinking laterally and making best use of our resources.

Good examples of this are activities such as the purchase and refurbishment of Town Centre House – a leased block of 40 flats in Banbury Town Centre we had used to provide as move on accommodation for residents who were leaving supported accommodation or had had previous difficulties in their tenancies. Having discovered RAAC in the roof we moved residents out into new accommodation over a period of some months with the intention of replacing the roof and then reletting. The advent of LAHF allowed us to buy the freehold of the building, create two large 4 bed flats and several two bed flats as well as some 1 bed accommodation too. The first tenancy must be to Afghan and Ukrainian families, but we can also use the remaining flats to relieve homelessness. This reduces our reliance on nightly charged budget hotel accommodation and provides self-contained good quality accommodation to residents we have a duty to house. This has led us to look at our stock of accommodation generally and adopt a strategy of using that accommodation for temporary rather than general needs. By using LAHF in this way, we have increased our asset base, increased our stock of temporary housing as well as being able to offer refugees high quality Town centre accommodation at social rents and ensure that the call on the council's revenue budget, beyond the homelessness prevention grant, is under less pressure.

Cherwell has 4 leisure centres, using Public Sector Decarbonisation Scheme funds we have been able to reduce the energy consumption of the sites through a mixture of measures, like air source heat pumps, an array of solar therm tubes, photovoltaic car ports and solar panels, and new intelligent LED systems. Not only is this helping to move us towards carbon neutrality, preventing spikes in energy costs and enabling better control of the building lifecycle and maintenance costs but it has allowed us to preserve 4 operational swimming pools and associated sports halls. These are active contributors to improving health outcomes for residents and preventing their ill health and sickness. Our programmes of activity for people with long term health conditions and for families eligible for free school meals have been funded by public health in partnership with the ICB because of the positive impact they have on preventing worsening health outcomes.

The provision of community centres on new developments has meant that Cherwell holds 13 centres and offers them to community associations, at a peppercorn rent, to run them. One piece of work this year for consideration is the creation of a Trust to hold these assets for the good of the residents and consider how a new stewardship approach could be adopted that would enable the trust to apply to trusts and foundations to support that work. These avenues for funding are not currently open to local authorities and given the limitations on our resources we are exploring how we can protect the asset, improve their long-term sustainability and reduce the financial burden on the council.

How you plan to take advantage of technology and make better use of data to improve decision making, service design and use of resources?

8. What are your existing plans to improve the quality of the data you collect; how do you use it and how do you make it available to residents?

We have a new data lakehouse and when setting up data imports in the new platform we address data quality issue in several ways as part of our wider data import evaluation process. We first review the data we import against our documented standard set of data quality principles. This will highlight any issues and let us look at ways to address these. We will also work with the service area to try and improve their processes & systems to address issues we find.

At a technical level we can apply:

- **Validation routines:** where we check the individual fields to ensure the contents are valid using a set of rules & masks (for example, we can check account numbers are valid, that dates of birth are in the past, telephone number & email addresses are in the correct format, etc.).
- **Referential integrity checks:** where we check the links between various datasets that make up the data import to ensure all the links are valid (for example, where we check that there is a customer record for every customer listed in a list of cases).

- **Data cleansing processes:** we can clean the data up into a standard form and, where possible, add in missing data from other datasets where links can be established (for example, matching an address to the LLPG to pull in property type, ward, co-ordinates, etc.).

These processes run every time data is imported and the data platform logs any issues, so we review the root causes and adapt the above processes accordingly to continuously improve the import process.

Data is typically used to aid reporting, effective governance, strategic planning, service delivery, resource allocation, budgeting and continuous improvement .

We make data available to residents primarily through our website with comprehensive information on Council services, specific areas such as planning applications, public consultations, financial reporting including specific datasets, contract registers, performance data and reports for public meetings. Residents can request specific data not readily available on the website via a Freedom of Information request.

9. Are there particular barriers from legacy systems?

The fundamental barrier from legacy systems is the lack of integration, more standardisation of API's sitting between systems is needed. The second barrier can be the lack of golden record(s) to effectively link the data between one system and another.

10. How often do you share data with other organisations, and do you find this useful?

Where we need Data Sharing Agreements (DSAs) with other organisations these relate to the sharing of personal data about individuals. We have a lot of separate DSAs across a number of public sector and commercial partners.

The council operates its own approved DSA template where the council initiates a DSA, but where the impetus for sharing comes from another other party a lot of work can be required to check that their DSA is suitable for the council to sign up to.

Current legislation does not allow a general DSA across the public sector. It would be useful though to have agreed, standardised DSA templates for use across the public sector.

DSAs with the private sector can be more complex. In order to sign up to a contract the council needs in order to run its services, the council can be required to agree to a standardised DSA that the company uses for all of its contracts. It could be helpful if there were agreed templates that companies on procurement platforms had to use when tendering for local government business.

11. Are there opportunities to use new technology to improve workflows and systems, such as predictive analytics and AI?

Yes, there are many opportunities to firstly review our processes and then use new technology for digital transformation using Robotic Process Automation (RPA) and also Artificial Intelligence (AI).

RPA involves the use of software “bots” to automate repetitive, rule-based tasks, helping reduce manual intervention, minimise errors, and save time.

RPA can be applied to various processes, such as data entry, invoice processing, and customer service.

AI has a wide potential of uses from speeding up finding data for FOI requests to streamlining customer interactions with chatbots.

Your plans to reduce wasteful spend within your organisation and systems. You should set out plans to reduce wasteful or “gold-plated” spend.

12. How do you approach identifying and reducing waste in the organisation? How do you monitor progress?

The Council operates a continuous improvement approach. As part of this, the annual budget process requires all services to consider how they can “absorb” pressures identified with the service each year. In addition, all services are required to identify savings and efficiency proposals to be considered by the Council for agreement.

Savings plans for the last 3 years can be found here:

- [2022/23](#)
- [2023/24](#)
- [2024/25](#)

For the 2025/26 budget process, the Council is looking to enhance this process by looking at how services can continue to look for efficiencies, consider what costs would look like at differing levels of service provision and identify cross cutting efficiencies through services adopting new ways of working between each other.

13. Where have you followed invest to save and what was the result?

The council has introduced a gateway process to ensure that all revenue implications are considered for capital projects introduced by the council. This allows the council to fully understand the capital investment costs, the ongoing interest costs and money set aside for debt repayment (MRP) as well as the ongoing service revenue implications. Following implementation, the council’s gateway process requires that a benefits realisation process takes place, which includes whether the financial impacts were realised.

The council has identified a number of photovoltaic invest to save projects. However, they are not complete as yet and so the benefits realisation cannot be confirmed.

14. How much time and money do you spend on staff EDI training (internal and external), networks and other programmes? How many EDI Champions do you have as an organisation? How do you log and report the time and money spent on EDI related activity? How do you assess the effectiveness of training?

- No dedicated EDI resource or EDI champions.
- EDI activity forms part of BAU processes such as service planning, policy development etc.

15. What percentage of total staff budget is spent on

- a. Agency?
- b. Consultants?

How do you assess value for money on agency and consultancy spend and what are your plans to reduce use/costs? How many of these consultants or agency staff have been in place for over a year?

Total agency costs were 13.0% of the 2023/24 staffing budget.

Total consultant costs were 4.1% of the 2023/24 staffing budget.

Agency engagement is currently the responsibility of managers within the Council but we are currently undertaking a process to review usage and explore framework options and preferred arrangements in a bid to achieve best value where usage cannot be avoided.

Of the 43 agency/consultants we had recorded on 31 March 2024 – 15 had been in place for over a year (13 agency and 2 consultants).

16. What governance structures do you use to ensure accountability of spend?

The council adopts both public and private methods of governance to ensure accountability of spend across the organisation.

Public

The council has a number of public meetings in which financial reporting is considered – both revenue and capital. Revenue and Capital Budget Management reports are considered by the Executive for 10 months of the year, including the outturn position. This is a joint performance report so that the Executive is able to consider both performance management and financial management within the same report. The council's Budget Planning Committee considers the council's budget management reports on a quarterly basis. This is the committee that provides the scrutiny function of the council.

Internal

Internally there are significant controls in place with regards to authorising expenditure via the council's financial systems. At the start of the year Assistant Directors must sign off their budgets for the year. Service managers are supported by the finance team to ensure budget forecasts take into consideration all material information and to identify mitigations if the budget forecast is going off track. As part of setting the budget, the S151 Officer, within their [S25 Statement](#) on the robustness of the budget, make it clear how services should manage any overspends forecast in year.

17. Do you share office functions with other councils and if so, how useful do you find this?

The council had previously shared back-office functions with South Northamptonshire District Council and then with Oxfordshire County Council. The council now operates on a stand-alone basis. Business cases were prepared for the council to enter into its partnerships. However, on reflection, a number of the council's functions did not get the full attention required and so the council is now operating more effectively as a "stand-alone" council.

18. If you share external training costs with neighbouring councils, how do you factor out duplications of service between your council and your upper-tier council (if you have one)?

We do not share external training costs with neighbouring councils.

19. If you have one, what is your assessment and experience of working with an elected mayor, combined authority, or devolution deal?

Not applicable.

20. What proportion of your paybill is spent on Trade Union facility time?

Facility time fluctuates based on need but can be up to 20% for on one Union rep and up to 10% for a further 2. Overall cost based on the maximum time is £12,879 excluding on-costs. This is 0.04% of the 2023/24 staffing budget.

The barriers preventing progress that the Government can help to reduce or remove

21. What are the barriers preventing you from improving productivity further within your organisation?

Lack of certainty, clarity and consistency from Government around future approaches and timing of implementation – e.g. weekly food waste collection and Simpler Recycling. This all leads to a paralysis in the service looking to implement changes as it does not know:

- what it will be required to do in the future,
- when it will need to do it and

- if it has made the change in anticipation of future requirements whether funding will be made available to it that will be made available to those that haven't made the change.

Weekly Food Waste

Government has announced that it will **only** provide capital grants for authorities to the extent that have not yet introduced weekly food waste collections. But this means that for those authorities that have previously borrowed to introduce weekly food waste collections, the local council tax payers in these areas are having to repay the borrowing costs rather than them be funded by grant. Government could ensure that all local authorities and council tax payers are treated equally by being provided with capital grants for the implementation costs of nationally required capital schemes.

Simpler Recycling

There is a lack of clarity and certainty around what will be required for Simpler Recycling and when it is going to be introduced. It is not clear how the schemes will work and interact with businesses. This makes it incredibly difficult to plan for how the service will need to look in the future.

22. What are the barriers preventing you from improving services further?

23. Are these barriers consistent across multiple services?

Examples of barriers preventing the council from improving services include:

- Lack of financial certainty
- Lack of overall financial resources relative to the tasks required of local government
- Reduction in local democratic accountability
- Upfront capital costs and associated increases in borrowing costs
- Legislation e.g. requirement of in-person committee meetings rather than virtual.

24. What would you need to remove those barriers? What do you need from Government, the market or elsewhere?

Examples of information that it would be helpful for the Government to provide include:

- **Clarity of requirements of local government and appropriate funding for those levels of service to be provided well.**
- **Multi-Year Settlements** to enable local authorities to plan for the longer term.
- **Stability of financial reforms** – e.g. a “rolling” business rates reset to ensure no significant drops in retained business rates income.
- **Removal of council tax referendum limits** to allow the local electorate determine the level of service they require and if they are unhappy with the level of council tax make a decision at the ballot box.
- Compel DWP to **share their data** to enable more automated processing in areas such as benefit claimants etc.

- Allowing greater **freedom to spend ringfenced grants** to allow more local decision making.
- Stop the '**begging bowl**' culture of bidding for funding.
- Information as soon as possible on the potential income, and obligations, for LAs from **Extended Producer Responsibility (Packaging)** reforms
- **Updated legislation** that allows local authorities to **make the best use of 21st century technology** and hence require less space for its buildings.

This report is public	
Internal Audit and Counter Fraud Provision	
Committee	Executive
Date of Committee	8 July 2024
Portfolio Holder presenting the report	Portfolio Holder for Finance and Resources, Cllr Lesley McLean
Date Portfolio Holder agreed report	14 June 2024
Report of	Assistant Director of Finance & Section 151 Officer, Michael Furness

Purpose of report

The council's Service Level Agreement with Oxfordshire County Council to provide internal audit and counter fraud Services came to an end on 30 April 2024. The council has entered into a temporary contract with Veritau Limited from 1 May 2024 to provide internal audit and counter fraud services for a period of 6 months. This report proposes an approach for the long-term provision of internal audit and counter fraud services by entering into a teckal company arrangement with Veritau Public Sector Limited.

1. Recommendations

The Executive resolves:

- 1.1 To agree for the council to pay a £20k fee to join Veritau Public Sector Limited and become a member in the company and delegate authority to the Assistant Director of Finance (S151 Officer) to sign the members' agreement and service contract with Veritau Public Sector Limited and any subsequent paperwork required to become a member.
- 1.2 To appoint the Assistant Director of Finance (S151 Officer) to the board of Veritau Public Sector Limited as a director of the company.

2. Executive Summary

- 2.1 The council has a legal duty to have an internal audit function and it is best practice to have a counter fraud function in place to be able to identify and investigate potential frauds as well as act as a deterrent for fraud. The council's previous internal audit and counter fraud provider, Oxfordshire County Council, ended its arrangement to provide the functions from 30 April 2024. An interim arrangement has been put in place with Veritau Limited via a 6 month contract. This report looks to receive the authorisation for the council to put in place permanent and sustainable arrangements for the provision of internal audit and counter fraud by becoming a member of Veritau Public Sector Limited.

Implications & Impact Assessments

Implications	Commentary			
Finance	<p>The current costs of the contract in place with Veritau Limited offer the best Value For Money arrangements to the council in the short term. Based on intelligence gathered, the lower costs available to the council from becoming a member of Veritau Public Sector Limited, but providing the same levels of service, offer the opportunity for a more enhanced level of VFM. The costs that are expected to be charged for the number of audits and counter fraud work required are within budget.</p> <p>The one off cost of £20k to join the Teckal company can be funded through policy contingency or reserves and should pay for itself within 12 months.</p> <p>Rachel Ainsworth, Finance Business Partner, 6 June 2024</p>			
Legal	<p>The resilience and control as a member of the company make this an attractive arrangement for the Council.</p> <p>Shahin Ismail, Interim Head of Legal Services, 12 June 2024</p>			
Risk Management	<p>In order for the council to reduce risk levels it is important to operate an effective internal audit and counter fraud service. Adopting this approach will ensure the council achieves this level of risk mitigation and control.</p> <p>Celia Prado-Teeling, Performance Team Leader, 05 June 2024</p>			
Impact Assessments	Positive	Neutral	Negative	Commentary
Equality Impact		X		N/A
A Are there any aspects of the proposed decision, including how it is delivered or accessed, that could impact on inequality?		X		
B Will the proposed decision have an impact upon the lives of people with protected characteristics, including employees and service users?		X		
Climate & Environmental Impact		X		

ICT & Digital Impact		X		
Data Impact		X		
Procurement & subsidy	X			By joining a Teckal Company the council will not have to seek tenders for services from the company in the future.
Council Priorities	N/A			
Human Resources	N/A			
Property	N/A			
Consultation & Engagement	Leaders and Deputies of Political Groups have been made aware of this proposal. No other consultation required.			

Supporting Information

3. Background

3.1 Oxfordshire County Council (OCC) submitted its 6-month notice period to end the SLA for providing Internal Audit (IA) and Counter Fraud (CF) services from 30 April 2024. CDC is required to ensure there is an IA and CF function. The council has entered into a short term contract with Veritau Limited from 1 May 2024 to provide IA and CF services. This report sets out the options that have been considered for a long-term solution and recommends the council make a £20k contribution to permanently join Veritau Public Sector Limited.

4. Details

- 4.1 There is limited capacity in the market of local government IA and CF provision (as reflected by OCC's withdrawal). There are very few local government related offers that would be able to set up in time for CDC and provide the level of resilience required to provide assurance that CDC would not find itself in a similar situation to its current circumstances. The private sector may be able to step in but would likely cost significantly more.
- 4.2 An alternative approach is to join a partnership of local authorities to have a shared IA and CF service which is large enough to have capacity to cope when staff members leave.
- 4.3 There are a number of options that have been considered in how the councils IA/CF functions could be provided in the future:
- In house
 - Other Local Authority (LA) provider via S113 agreement
 - Tender – via framework or open tender
 - Local Government wholly owned company consortium

- Via tender
- Through purchase of shares or joining as a member

4.4 The preferred option is to join a Local Government wholly owned company consortium (LGWOC) as a member council. This will ensure value for money, a high standard of service and significant levels of resilience compared to other options.

4.5 A LGWOC has the benefit of understanding local government as it has been formed by internal audit services within local government but then expanded to develop resilience. The council looked to get in touch with LGWOCs to see what could be offered. Of three contacted, one did not respond, the second did not have capacity to take the council on and the third, Veritau Limited, was very keen to enter into a partnership with the council.

4.6 The benefits of Veritau originally being created are set out below and are entirely applicable in relation to the council becoming a member of this group.

- greater resilience and capacity. The combined team would be better placed to manage resource pressures, including staff vacancies and/or unexpected service demands than a small in house team
- greater flexibility to respond to changing priorities, initiatives and/or new working methods
- the delivery of increased efficiencies through sharing best practice, integrating processes and reducing duplication of effort
- the ability to demonstrate a positive response to the government's efficiency and service transformation agenda
- the achievement of economies of scale by sharing overheads and reducing unproductive time whilst maintaining or improving current levels of performance
- an enhanced focus on service delivery and quality through the development of a dedicated professional services function
- greater staff satisfaction and retention as a result of enhanced career opportunities and the ability of staff to specialise and/or gain broader experience
- greater opportunity to develop audit specialisms and reduce the reliance on bought-in services
- the provision of a robust shared service model which offers greater opportunity for future collaboration with other Councils
- improved succession planning arrangements and a reduced reliance on key members of staff for service continuity
- the ability to adopt common approaches to new and developing initiatives

4.6 Veritau Limited is wholly owned by North Yorkshire Council and City of York Council. As well as providing services to its member councils, Veritau Limited also provide IA and CF services for a number of districts, London Boroughs and Counties. Veritau Limited is very resilient and have c90 staff across IA, CF and Information Governance (IG). North Yorkshire Council, City of York Council and Redcar & Cleveland Borough Council have recently set up Veritau Public Sector Limited (VPS) as a 'Teckal' company.. VPS is a company limited by guarantee and other councils will be able to join it as members. A Teckal Company is one which effectively operates as an inhouse service with more than 80% of its work going to

the public authority members of the company. This arrangement takes it out of the public procurement regime. There are currently 6 directors on Veritau Limited's Board, and it is proposed that the s151 officer is appointed to the board of Veritau Public Sector Limited when the council joins as a member. The board would exercise strategic leadership of the company in accordance with the requirements of the members. There will also be a member committee to oversee the company and to provide an additional level of control. Arrangements would be established for appointing board members to represent the interests of all VPS members and ensure an appropriate mix of skills and knowledge on the board. Directors appointed by each member council would not receive any remuneration. The company is not-for-profit. Any surplus will therefore be reinvested in the business or be returned to the member councils in the form of a rebate. The council therefore does not anticipate receiving any dividend payments from this arrangement.

- 4.7 Veritau operate at competitive rates for contracted services, but a member rate attracts a further reduction in costs making the price more attractive. The member rate applies to authorities that join Veritau Public Sector Limited, a Teckal company. There is a one-off cost to this of £20k. This represents a subscription to the company and is intended to cover set-up costs and provide a contingency. The cost of the £20k contribution would be offset in less than 12 months based on the anticipated reduction in fees and offers the lowest cost option to the council. This would then put in place a long-term stable arrangement for the provision of IA and CF services (and access to IG if required).
- 4.8 Veritau has recently had an external assessment of its internal audit functions and received an overall rating of "**generally conforms**". The full assessment can be seen at Appendix 2.

5. Alternative Options and Reasons for Rejection

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

Option 1: In house

- 5.2 Following discussions with the current Chief Internal Auditor (CIA) from Oxfordshire County Council the minimum staffing requirement for an internal team would be:

Post	£K
Chief Internal Auditor	70
Head of Counter Fraud	55
Senior Auditor (*2)	80
Total Salaries	205
Oncosts at 30%	62
Gross Staffing Total	267
IT Specialist Audits (2 annually)	33
Overheads (assumed at 8%)	24
Total	324
Budget	130
Net Pressure/(Saving)	194

NB salaries based on average levels of regional benchmarking

- 5.3 The costs of this approach are significantly more than the current arrangement. This is primarily due to CDC requiring 200 internal audit days and a similar amount of counter fraud time, along with attendance at committees and report writing etc. An internal function is assumed to require 2 staff for internal audit and 2 for counter fraud to ensure there is some resilience in the team. This option includes significant risk around recruitment and retention.
- 5.4 The in house option is not recommended for the following reasons:
- Significant additional cost compared to budget
 - Significant difficulties in recruiting and retaining staff
 - Overall lack of resilience in the service

Option 2: Other Local Authority Provider

- 5.5 The current arrangement with OCC is via an SLA and this could be replicated with another local authority via a section 113 arrangement. This would avoid the need for going through a lengthy procurement process, but would require finding a Local Authority (LA) that the council was confident would provide a good level of service, but also have the capacity to provide the service to the council for the duration of the agreement.
- 5.6 A number of LAs were approached and the majority indicated they would not be able to provide a service to the council. Two were prepared to have initial conversations to explore the possibility of providing a service.

Authority A

- 5.7 Following an initial meeting with Authority A it is clear that they provide IA services (not CF) for another district council and 2 police authorities. Therefore, whilst Authority A could provide a counter fraud service, they would need to develop a function tailored to a district council as they do not have experience of the revenues and benefits aspects and interactions with the National Fraud Initiative/Department for Work and Pensions.
- 5.8 Authority A would need to recruit to have capacity to support the council. This may mean that a number of audits may not take place in the early part of the year whilst the team is expanding (and Authority A would likely have similar recruitment issues that OCC has meaning it would be very uncertain when a full IA and CF service could be up and running).
- 5.9 Authority A had an external assessment in April 2023 and received an overall rating of “**generally conforms**” and generally conformed with each section assessed.

Authority B

- 5.10 Following a meeting with Authority B they currently provide the IA function to themselves and a range of other district councils. Authority B is expecting to part company with a district council they currently support in the near future and so would have capacity to provide internal audit immediately.
- 5.11 However, Authority B is in the process of improving its counter fraud service and would not be willing to offer this service currently. Therefore, if CDC chose this route then it would need to identify a separate Counter Fraud offer initially.
- 5.12 Authority B operate on 3-yearly SLAs and, for the first year at least, include a break clause after 1 year to ensure that all parties are happy with the arrangement.

- 5.13 Authority B had an external assessment in May 2022 and received an overall rating of “**fully conforms**”. Authority B also fully conformed with each section assessed.
- 5.14 Neither Authority A or Authority B would be able to provide a full IA/CF service to the council immediately. Additionally, Authority B indicated that the charge for the service would be approximately double that of the current budget.
- 5.15 On this basis this option is not recommended.

Open Market Procurement

- 5.15 An approach could be made to the open market. Indications from OCC are that audits they commission from the private sector, when they require additional capacity, cost twice as much as the charge that is made from OCC to the council. So going to the open market is likely to cost significantly more than the current budget with no corresponding increase in service levels so is not anticipated to provide value for money and is also likely to cost significantly more than the proposed option.

6 Conclusion and Reasons for Recommendations

- 6.1 In conclusion there are very limited options available to a district council to provide a low-cost internal audit and counter fraud function. The option to join a LGWOC in the form of Veritau Public Sector Limited appears to be both the most cost effective, value for money approach whilst also providing significant levels of stability through having a significant level of skills and capacity across its workforce.

Decision Information

Key Decision	Yes
Subject to Call in	Yes
If not, why not subject to call in	N/A
Ward(s) Affected	All

Document Information

Appendices	
Appendix 1	“Pros and Cons” Summary
Appendix 2	Veritau External Assessment
Background Papers	None
Reference Papers	None

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Appendix 1 – Pros and Cons

Option	Pro	Con
In House	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Internal team focussed only on CDC • Could expand and deliver service to other councils 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Very expensive • Difficulty to recruit and retain staff • Lack of resilience if individuals leave/on sick • Recruiting and developing a team in a short space of time that is set up and ready to go by 30 April
Other LA – Authority A	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Established team • Slightly greater resilience than an in more house team • Likely to cost similar to current budget • Understand local government • Positive External Assessment (Generally conform) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Recruitment required to develop capacity to provide service • Recruitment and retention • CDC would be the secondary priority if retention became an issue again • Do not currently carry out counter fraud for Districts/Police
Other LA – Authority B	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Established team • Greater resilience • Understand local government • Actively look to supply externally • Have capacity for Internal Audit • Positive External Assessment (Fully conform) • Break clause after 1 year 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Expensive day rate for LAs approached - £475 • Cannot provide Counter Fraud for at least 12 months while the service improves • Grant Sign Offs charged separately • Mileage would be chargeable for site visits • Break clause after 1 year
Tender	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Established team • Fully test the market for service provided 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Expect day rate to be significantly more than current budget • Could focus on delivering audit plan and issue red reports if responses not provided in line with their timescales

Option	Pro	Con
LG WOC - Veritau	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Established team • Significant resilience • Understand local government • Actively look to supply to external clients • Have capacity for Internal Audit and Counter Fraud • Positive External Assessment • Day rate in line with budget (+ one off £20k contribution) • Can provide Info Governance support if required • Long term arrangement so certainty of future provision 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Slightly more administrative arrangements through shareholder reporting.



Chartered Institute of
Internal Auditors

REPORT



External Quality Assessment (EQA)

A report for Veritau



Prepared by John Chesshire, approved reviewer for
The Chartered Institute of Internal Auditors

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08 September 2023
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Executive summary



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1.1 Background and Scope

The Veritau Group (Veritau) comprises 78 inhouse team members and is wholly owned by four local authorities, following the recent local government reorganisation in North Yorkshire. 34 of these team members are currently involved in delivering Internal Audit services. This focus is supplemented by specialist teams covering Counter Fraud and Information Governance.

Veritau provides Internal Audit and other assurance services to local authorities and other public sector bodies including national park authorities, a children's trust, academy and multi-academy trusts. Client arrangements are established for each contract. Clients appoint a chief officer to manage internal audit contracts with Veritau. Reporting arrangements are established at each client via an Internal Audit Charter.

Veritau previously had an external quality assessment (EQA) in 2018, undertaken by SWAP. We are delighted that Veritau have commissioned us to undertake this EQA.

Our review included a full validation of Veritau's own self assessment against the Public Sector Internal Audit Standards (PSIAS) and International Professional Practices Framework (IPPF), interviews with key stakeholders from across the primary client base, and short discussions with members of the Internal Audit function .

We conducted this EQA in a remote format - over June-August 2023.

1.2 Key Achievements

Veritau are a well-established Internal Audit service, valued by the key stakeholders we spoke to during this EQA review.

The governance framework over Veritau is mature, with well-established board oversight. The board primarily comprises directors appointed by member councils. Operationally, Veritau report to client Audit Committees (or equivalent) with effective relationships marked by appropriate support, challenge, oversight, engagement, reporting, and performance monitoring.

The Chief Executive - with an extensive local government background - leads Veritau, supported by a deputy, and seven Assistant Directors, four of which manage Audit Assurance teams. Stakeholders view the Chief Executive as a trusted and respected leader. A clearly written and effective Internal Audit Strategy highlights key priorities and areas of focus for the service.

Veritau undertake a range of diverse assurance engagements. These include coverage of traditional and emerging areas of governance, risk, and control relevant to the public sector.

We received positive responses to our questions about the wider function and its services from those we interviewed. Key stakeholders felt confident in the way Veritau had established effective working relations, their approach to planning, and the way in which the function engages flexibly with its clients throughout the internal audit process, at both strategic and operational levels.

Veritau develop and deliver an annual risk-based audit plan for their clients. Key stakeholders felt clearly engaged and appropriately involved in the design of this. The CAE and their senior colleagues actively monitor the function's performance and

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have implemented appropriate engagement-level quality assurance checks. We believe that the function's supporting operational, engagement-level procedures, documentation and associated templates are primarily fit for purpose.

1.3 EQA Assessment Conclusion

We are pleased to report that Veritau conforms with nearly all the Standards, as well as the Definition, Core Principles, and the Code of Ethics, which form the mandatory elements of the PSIAS and the Institute of Internal Auditors' IPPF, the globally recognised standard of quality in Internal Auditing.

To summarise, we are pleased to report that Veritau are good in their:

- Reflection of the Standards
- Focus on performance, risk and adding value
- Operating with efficiency

We believe that Veritau are satisfactory in their:

- Quality Assurance and Improvement Programme

Finally, like many Internal Audit functions at the present time, we consider that Veritau needs improvement in their:

- Coordinating and maximising assurance

The need to consider how best to rely on and coordinate with other assurance providers remains an emerging area of internal audit, and assurance practice, as does assurance mapping. It depends as much on the nature and effectiveness of the other assurance providers, and the willingness and awareness of the value in this from senior management and audit committees, as it does on internal audit.

In addition to the conformance recommendations, there is scope for improvement in a small number of other areas as summarised in Section 3.2 below. It will be appropriate for the function to say in reports and other literature, once it has addressed the issues raised, that it "conforms to the IIA's Professional Standards".

Our overall opinion is that the Internal Audit function "generally conforms" to the PSIAS and the IIA Standards (See [Appendix A1](#) for our Grading definitions) (See [Section 2](#) for more detail).

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1.4 SWOT Analysis

Strengths What works well	Weaknesses What could be done better
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Internal Audit management are experienced, work well together and key stakeholders respect - and have confidence - in their competence, public sector expertise, and capabilities• The function draw upon work with different clients to add value when conducting similar reviews across their client base• An effective, well-presented Internal Audit Strategy guides the service, with the next iteration due later this year• Risk-based annual plans cover relevant, topical areas and are developed through effective stakeholder engagement and remain flexible, agile in nature and can be modified• Stakeholders value the function's professionalism, communications, and engagement reporting.• The work and skills of the wider Counter Fraud and Information Governance teams support internal audit delivery• The function maintains an up-to-date view of skills and competencies that is regularly revisited and refreshed.• The Learning and Development policy and Audit Trainee Development Programme show commitment to personnel	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Formal assurance mapping, coordination, and reliance - where appropriate - should be progressed with some key clients• Response rates to post-audit and wider customer satisfaction surveys are low and the function may miss out on operational stakeholder insights
Opportunities What could deliver further value	Threats What could stand in your way
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Further development of the function's data analytics and AI capabilities would add additional value and insights• An updated strategy covering data analytics and IT auditing, integrated with the results of the QAIP and the function's development needs, could usefully drive improvement priorities• The Internal Audit Manual could include specific reference to relevant standards to reinforce why certain activities are needed• A Balanced Scorecard, with revised KPIs, could usefully focus internal audit effort more on outputs, outcomes, insight and added value• Further agile, efficient planning and delivery could prove more beneficial	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Failure to retain experienced internal audit staff could threaten service resilience and delivery. Succession could become a challenge• Emerging risks and increasing complexity in the external environment could threaten the function's ability to deliver insight and add value in specialist service areas• Client budget cuts could impact service delivery and threaten the CAE's ability to deliver an effective service and annual opinion• Over-expansion could be seen negatively by some existing clients who may worry that they will see a loss of quality in service provision• Automatic public release of internal audit reports by some clients can cause delays in engagement finalisation and communication of results• Excessive remote working could impact client engagement and relationships, particularly for new team members or when clients change

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1.5 Conformance Opinion

The mandatory elements of the IPPF include the Definition of Internal Auditing, Code of Ethics, Core Principles and International Standards.

There are 64 fundamental principles to achieve with 118 points of recommended practice. We assess against the principles.

It is our view that Veritau conforms to 59 of the 64 relevant principles, with partial conformance on one principle. The four remaining principles were not applicable to Veritau as they relate to situations that have not occurred to date.

This is summarised in the table below.

Summary of conformance	Standards	Generally conforms	Partially conforms	Does not conform	Not relevant	Total
Definition of IA and Code of Ethics	Rules of conduct	12				12
Purpose	1000 - 1130	8				8
Proficiency and Due Professional Care (People)	1200 - 1230	4				4
Quality Assurance and Improvement Programme	1300 - 1322	6			1	7
Managing the Internal Audit Activity	2000 - 2130	11	1			12
Performance and Delivery	2200 - 2600	18			3	21
Total		59	1		4¹	64

¹ We have marked four principles as 'not applicable' as they relate to situations that have not occurred to date (Attribute Standard 1322, Performance Standards 2421, 2430 and 2431).

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1.6 Further Improvement Opportunities

In addition to our one recommendation to improve conformance, there is scope for improvement in areas as summarised below:

Proficiency

- We support the CAE's intention to further develop the function's data analytics and AI capabilities to add additional value and insights.

Enhancing Internal Audit due professional care and policies and procedures

- The CAE could consider direct referencing of the Standards in relevant sections of the Veritau Internal Audit Manual to clearly demonstrate why particular activities, actions and steps are required. This will be more beneficial for new entrants who join the function in the future.

Quality Assurance and Improvement Programme

- The CAE could document a formal improvement plan that captures and integrates the various teams, methodology, data and other service enhancement actions and initiatives to underpin key priorities and objectives in the Internal Audit Strategy refresh.
- Response rates to post-audit and wider customer satisfaction surveys are low and the function may miss out on operational stakeholder insights. The CAE could revisit the approach and process for soliciting customer feedback to help ensure it maximises added value.
- We support the CAE's intention to develop a balanced scorecard for the internal audit service and revisit the function's KPIs.

Planning

- The CAE should continue the move away from traditional annual planning to further enhance agility.

1.6 Acknowledgement

We would like to thank Max Thomas and his team, for their time, assistance and support during this review, and all of those who took part in the review, for their cooperation, together with their open and honest views.

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Supporting continuous improvement the Standards



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2.1 Area for Improvement [Standards 2050] Standard 2050, Coordination and Reliance

The chief audit executive should share information, coordinate activities and consider formal reliance upon the work of other internal and external assurance and consulting service providers to ensure proper coverage and minimise duplication of efforts.

While some reliance is placed on the work of some internal and external assurance providers, and the CAE is exploring opportunities to place reliance and better coordinate activity with other second-line assurance providers, this could usefully be formalised and supplemented with assurance mapping across all key clients to add further value.

The function have approached this to varying degrees, with some clients, while others have been less interested. Further engagement with Audit Committees and senior management may help raise awareness of the value of this activity.

	Recommendation	Response and action date
1	The CAE should continue to develop a proportionate, formal approach to assurance mapping, coordination and – where appropriate – reliance, to enhance the function’s risk-based planning, delivery and the effectiveness of assurance provided to key stakeholders.	Agreed – we will develop our approach to assurance mapping and working with other internal and external assurance provision. The approach will be flexible to reflect the different sectors and clients we provide internal audit services to. Target implementation date – 31 March 2024.

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Supporting continuous improvement



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The Chartered Institute regards conformance to the IPPF as the foundation for effective Internal Audit practice. However, our EQA reviews also seek feedback from key stakeholders and we benchmark each function against the diversity of professional practice seen on our EQA reviews and other interviews with Chief Audit Executives/Heads of Internal Audit, summarised in an Internal Audit maturity matrix.

We then interpret our findings into suggestions for further development based upon the wide range of guidance published by the Chartered IIA UK and Ireland.

It is our aim to offer advice and a degree of challenge to help Internal Audit functions continue their journey towards best practice and excellence.

In the following pages we present this advice in two formats:

- A matrix describing the key criteria of effective Internal Audit, highlighting the level of maturity the Internal Audit function has achieved and the potential for further development, recognising that effective Internal Audit goes further than purely conformance with the IIA Standards. [\(See 3.1\)](#)
- A series of improvement opportunities and suggestions which the Internal Audit function could use as a basis for an action plan. [\(See 3.2\)](#)

3

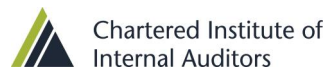
Supporting continuous improvement



External Quality Assessment (EQA)

A report for: Veritau

08 September 2023
www.iaa.org.uk/eqa



3.1 Internal Audit matrix

		IIA Standards	Focus on performance, risk and adding value.	Coordination and maximising assurance	Operating with efficiency	Quality Assurance and Improvement Programme
Assessment levels	Excellent	Outstanding reflection of the IIA standards, in terms of logic, flow and spirit. Generally Conforms in all areas.	IA alignment to the organisation's objectives risks and change. IA has a high profile, is listened to, and is respected for its assessment, advice, and insight.	IA is fully independent and is recognised by all as a 3 rd line. The work of assurance providers is coordinated with IA reviewing reliability of.	Assignments are project managed to time and budget using tools/techniques for delivery. IA reports are clear, concise, and produced promptly.	Ongoing efforts by IA team to enhance quality through continuous improvement. QA&IP plan is shared with and approved by AC.
	Good	The IIA Standards are fully integrated into the methodology – mainly Generally Conforms.	Clear links between IA engagement objectives to risks and critical success factors with some acknowledgement of the value-added dimension.	Coordination is planned at a high level around key risks. IA has established formal relationships with regular review of reliability.	Audit engagements are controlled and reviewed while in progress. Reporting is refined regularly linking opinions to key risks.	Quality is regarded highly, includes lessons learnt, scorecard measures and customer feedback with results shared with AC.
	Satisfactory	Most of the IIA Standards are found in the methodology with scope to increase conformance from Partially to Generally Conform in some areas.	Methodology requires the purpose of IA engagements to be linked to objectives and risks. IA provides advice and is involved in change, but criteria and role require clarity.	The 3 lines model is regarded as important. Planning of coordination is active, and IA has developed better working relationships with some review of reliability.	Methodology recognises the need to manage engagement efficiency and timeliness, but further consistency is needed. Reports are informative and valued.	Clear evidence of timely QA in assignments with learning points and coaching. Customer feedback is evident. Wider QA&IP may need formalising.
	Needs improvement	Gaps in the methodology with a combination of Non-conformances and Partial Conformances to the IIA Standards.	Some connections to the organisation's objectives and risks but IA engagements are mainly cyclical and prone to change at management request.	The need to coordinate assurance is recognised but progress is slow. Some informal coordination occurs but reviewing reliability may be resisted.	Multiple guides that are slightly out of date and form a consistent and coherent whole. Engagement go beyond deadline and a number are10eferred.	QC not consistently embedded across the function. QA is limited / late or does not address root causes.
	Poor	No reference to the IIA Standards with significant levels of non-conformance.	No relationship between IA engagements and the organisation's objectives, risks, and performance. Many audits are ad hoc.	IA performs its role in an isolated way. There is a feeling of audit overload with confusion about what various auditors do.	Lack of a defined methodology with inconsistent results. Reports are usually late with little perceived value.	No evidence of ownership of quality by the IA team.

Note: The maturity level of the function will depend on several factors, including the maturity and the risk appetite of the organisation. Consequently, not all audit functions will aspire to being "Excellent" across the board.

3

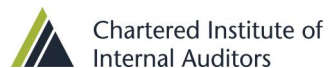
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3.2 Further improvement opportunities

This section of the report details additional feedback and observations which, if addressed, could further strengthen the impact of Veritau. These observations are not conformance points but support Veritau's ongoing development.

These suggestions do not require a response; they will not form part of any subsequent follow up if undertaken.

Opportunity A: Standard 1210 Proficiency

Improvement opportunity	
1	We support the CAE's intention to further develop the function's data analytics and AI capabilities to add additional value and insights.

Opportunity B: Standard 1220 Due Professional Care and 2040 Policies and Procedures

Improvement opportunity	
2	The CAE could consider direct referencing of relevant Standards in specific sections of the Veritau Internal Audit Manual to clearly demonstrate why particular activities, actions and steps are required. This will be more beneficial for new entrants who join the function in the future, but is also useful as a reminder of what internal audit does, and why, to existing team members.

Opportunity C: Standard 1300 Quality Assurance and Improvement Programme

Improvement opportunity	
3	The CAE could document a formal improvement plan that captures and integrates the various methodology, data and other service enhancement actions and initiatives to underpin key priorities and objectives in the Internal Audit Strategy refresh.

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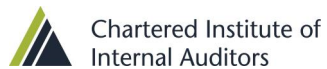
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Opportunity D: Standard 1300 Quality Assurance and Improvement Programme and 1311 Internal Assessments

Improvement opportunity

4	The CAE could revisit the approach and process for soliciting customer feedback to help ensure it maximises added value.
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Opportunity E: Standard 1300 Quality Assurance and Improvement Programme and 1311 Internal Assessments

Improvement opportunity

5	We support the CAE's intention to develop a Balanced Scorecard for the Internal Audit function and revisit the associated KPIs.
---	---

Opportunity F: Standard 2010 Planning

Improvement opportunity

6	The CAE should consider whether a move away from traditional annual planning - at least with some clients - may further enhance agility.
---	--

4

Appendix



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A1 Global Grading Definitions

We have used the following rating scale in this report:

Generally Conforms (GC)	The reviewer has concluded that the relevant structures, policies, and procedures of the activity, as well as the processes by which they are applied, comply with the requirements of the individual Standard or element of the Code of Ethics in all material respects. For the sections and major categories, this means that there is general conformance to a majority of the individual Standards or elements of the Code of Ethics, and at least partial conformance to the others, within the section/category. There may be significant opportunities for improvement, but these must not represent situations where the activity has not implemented the Standards or the Code of Ethics, has not applied them effectively, or has not achieved their stated objectives. As indicated above, general conformance does not require complete/perfect conformance, the ideal situation, successful practice, etc.
Partially Conforms (PC)	The reviewer has concluded that the activity is making good-faith efforts to comply with the requirements of the individual Standard or element of the Code of Ethics, section, or major category, but falls short of achieving some major objectives. These will usually represent significant opportunities for improvement in effectively applying the Standards or Code of Ethics and/or achieving their objectives. Some deficiencies may be beyond the control of the activity and may result in recommendations to senior management or the board of the organisation.
Does Not Conform (DNC)	The reviewer has concluded that the activity is not aware of, is not making good-faith efforts to comply with, or is failing to achieve many/all of the objectives of the individual Standard or element of the Code of Ethics, section, or major category. These deficiencies will usually have a significant negative impact on the activity's effectiveness and its potential to add value to the organisation. They may also represent significant opportunities for improvement, including actions by senior management or the board.

Often, the most difficult evaluation is the distinction between general and partial. It is a judgement call keeping in mind the definition of general conformance above. The reviewer must determine if basic conformance exists. The existence of opportunities for improvement, better alternatives, or other successful practices does not reduce a “generally conforms” rating.

4

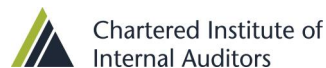
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A2 Stakeholder Interviews and feedback

We interviewed the following individuals as part of the review.

Stakeholders	Title /Position
Tracy Davies	Assurance Manager, Sunderland City Council
Rob Davisworth	Chief Accountant, Redcar and Cleveland Council
Gary Fielding	Section 151 Officer, North Yorkshire Council
Richard Flinton	Chief Executive, North Yorkshire Council
Anton Hodge	Assistant Director - Resources, North Yorkshire Council
Barry Khan	Assistant Chief Executive Legal and Democratic Services, North Yorkshire Council
Cllr Nigel Knapton	Former chair of Hambleton DC audit committee
Cllr Cliff Lunn	Chair of the North Yorkshire Council Audit Committee
Debbie Mitchell	Section 151 Officer, City of York Council
Cllr Carole Morgan	Chair of Governance Committee, Redcar and Cleveland Borough Council
David Portlock	Independent member of North Yorkshire Council Audit Committee and chair of Pension Fund Committee
Bryn Roberts	Monitoring Officer, City of York Council
Lee Yale-Helms	Director of Finance & Resources, Birmingham Children's Trust
Internal Audit Function	Title /Position
Stuart Cutts	Assistant Director - Audit Assurance
Connor Munro	Assistant Director - Audit Assurance
Richard Smith	Deputy Chief Executive
Max Thomas	Chief Executive

Feedback from stakeholder interviews

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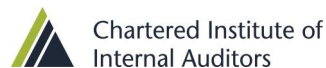
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Working with the business

“The Internal Audit service have delivered some real added value and have helped save a lot of time as we have involved them actively in our recent period of change. They have been great in responding flexibly and delivering helpful advice.”

“The Internal Audit service is well-regarded on the whole.”

“Veritau and their plan is flexible, and topics can be moved around to better meet operational needs.”

“Remote working has gone well, but it would be good to see them more in-person.”

“We have good, effective relations, with a fortnightly catch up, a monthly review of progress against plan and other meetings as, and when required.”

“The wider perspective they bring from working with other organisations is very useful for us.”

“I see just the right amount of balance between support, advice and challenge.”

“They are very professional and have handled the occasional disagreements effectively and well.”

“They are respected by Audit Committee members and listened to.”

“In the pandemic they were very patient with operational areas, and this was highly valued.”

Communication

“Audit Committee reporting is good - Max is a seasoned professional and his team support him well.”

“They could be a little more robust from time to time with the business. I sometimes feel that they been a bit soft.”

“Veritau are very fair and very open – they certainly bring to our attention what they think we will need.”

“Their reports are good, well-structured and clear.”

“How they phrase recommendations can be a bit pessimistic and their reports can be a bit negative in tone sometimes. There can sometimes be a lengthy delay between draft and final, but some of that may be down to us.”

“Veritau are not afraid to say when things are wrong and to highlight the need for improvement.”

“Reports for the Audit Committee are always very detailed and give us good value.”

“Their reporting is just about right, and I have got used to their reports over the years.”

Internal Audit plans and coverage

4

Appendix



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“Internal Audit’s plans are absolutely focussed on the key objectives and risks of the Authority.”

“I feel that we are suitably involved in the annual planning process, with one-to-one meetings, conversations with service leads and discussion at Audit Committee. As a result, the plans tend to look at the right things.”

“They involve the Committee in developing the forward plan and definitely seek our input.”

“I do get the assurance that I need from them. They can’t look at everything, so their work is targeted well.”

“I think that I am getting the assurance I need. They do give us good value, respond to requests well, and are looking at the right things.”

“Their work on cyber security and business continuity has added real value.”

“Key stakeholders here have the opportunity to feed into the Internal Audit plan and Veritau are certainly open to suggestions of subjects to audit.”

“They have done some good work with us on assurance mapping, but I am unclear what happens next and how it will integrate into future internal audit planning here.”

Value

“My impression of Max and the team is that they are excellent and strive to add real value.”

“Given their size, they have access to specialists and expertise that is really helpful for us. This is also beneficial as Veritau can bring a richness of experience and wider perspectives from what they have seen with other clients.”

“As a whole, the service is high quality and I’m a very happy stakeholder when it comes to Internal Audit.”

“The service has been excellent, and the clients have all been happy here. They have delivered quality and benefit to us.”

“I have been incredibly impressed with the quality of their anti-fraud work.”

“The demonstrate a real willingness not just to audit us, but to understand the organisation.”

“I am generally very happy with the Internal Audit service, with their leadership and I have absolute trust in them.”

“They support us hugely, are incredibly versatile, and very flexible in focussing on the right things at the right time.”

“The have added value in everything they have looked at so far and have really helped change things away from the traditional internal audit we had before. Their experience of other clients – and their own risk-based approach – are all most welcome.”

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Disclaimer: John Chesshire undertook this review in Quarters Two and Three 2023 on behalf of the Chartered Institute of Internal Auditors. This report provides management, Veritau Group and client Audit Committees with information about Veritau of that date. Future changes in environmental factors and actions taken to address recommendations may have an impact upon the operation of Internal Audit in a manner that this report cannot anticipate.

Considerable professional judgment is involved in evaluating. Accordingly, it should be recognised that others could draw different conclusions. We have not re-performed the work of Internal Audit or aimed to verify their conclusions. This report is provided on the basis that it is for your information only and that it will not be quoted or referred to, in whole or part, without the prior written consent of the Chartered Institute of Internal Auditors.

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This report is public	
Appendix 6 to the report is exempt from publication by virtue of paragraphs 1, 2 and 3 of Schedule 12A of Local Government Act 1972	
Finance Monitoring Report May 2024	
Committee	Executive
Date of Committee	8 July 2024
Portfolio Holder presenting the report	Portfolio Holder for Finance and Resources, Councillor Lesley McLean,
Date Portfolio Holder agreed report	26 June 2024
Report of	Assistant Director Finance and Section 151 Officer, Michael Furness

Purpose of report

To update Executive on financial positions at the end of the May 2024.

1. Recommendations

The Executive resolves:

- 1.1 To consider and note the contents of the council's financial management report as at May 2024.
- 1.2 To approve the use of reserve requests set out in Appendix 5.
- 1.3 To approve the write offs totalling £398,796.89 set out in exempt Appendix 6.
- 1.4 To approve the reprofile of the following capital project beyond the 2024/25 financial year, this has already been assumed in Appendix 1:
40296 – S106 Ambrosden Outdoor Sports - £0.130m
- 1.5 To approve the consolidation of the three projects relating to North Oxfordshire Academy (40309 – S106 NOA Improvements - £0.678m, 40010 – North Oxfordshire Academy Astro turf - £0.134m and 40323 – NOA 3G Pitch Development - £1.600m), note the total project cost is now expected to be £1.600m, and approve the reprofile of the project beyond the 2024/25 financial year. This has already been assumed in Appendix 1.

2. Executive Summary

- 2.2 The Finance section presents the forecast outturn position for the 2024/2025 financial year.

Implications	Commentary			
Finance	Financial and Resource implications are detailed within sections 4.1 and 4.2 of this report. The reserves policy requires Executive to agree transfers to and from earmarked reserves and general balances during the financial year. Joanne Kaye, Head of Finance, 21 June 2024			
Legal	There are no legal implications arising directly from this report. Shahin Ismail, Interim Head of Legal Services, 19 June 2024			
Risk Management	There are no risk implications as a direct consequence of this report. Celia Prado-Teeling, Performance Team Leader, 19 June 2024			
Impact Assessments	Positive	Neutral	Negative	Commentary
Equality Impact		X		There are no direct equalities and inclusion implications as a consequence of this report. The report includes a summary on our performance against the Equalities, Diversity and Inclusion Action plans 2023/24 Celia Prado-Teeling, Performance Team Leader, 08 May 2024
A Are there any aspects of the proposed decision, including how it is delivered or accessed, that could impact on inequality?		X		
B Will the proposed decision have an impact upon the lives of people with protected characteristics, including employees and service users?		X		
Climate & Environmental Impact		x		N/A
ICT & Digital Impact		x		N/A
Data Impact		x		N/A
Procurement & subsidy		x		N/A

Council Priorities	This report links to all council's priorities, as it summarises our progress against them during 2024/25
Human Resources	N/A
Property	N/A
Consultation & Engagement	N/A

Supporting Information

3. Background

- 3.1 The council actively and regularly monitors its financial positions to ensure it can deliver its corporate priorities and respond effectively to emerging issues.
- 3.2 This monitoring takes place monthly for the finance, so the council can identify potential issues at the earliest opportunity and put measures in place to mitigate them.
- 3.3 These updates are consolidated on a quarterly basis where performance and Finance updates are given due to the implications and interdependencies between them, and this is the summary financial forecast for the end of the financial year 2024/25.

4. Details

4.1 Finance Update

The council's forecast outturn position for 2024/2025 is an overspend of £0.073m. The forecast overspend is due to some minor variations across services of which details can be found in Appendix 2.

Table 1: Year End Position

Forecast Outturn - May 2024	Original Budget	Current Budget	May Forecast Outturn	May Variance (Under) / Over	% Variance to current budget
	£m	£m	£m	£m	%
Chief Executive	5.337	5.337	5.362	0.025	0.5%
Resources	4.382	4.382	4.430	0.048	1.1%

Communities	8.996	8.996	8.996	0.000	0.0%
Subtotal Directorates	18.715	18.715	18.788	0.073	1.6%
Executive Matters	4.293	4.293	4.293	0.000	0.0%
Policy Contingency	3.979	3.979	3.979	0.000	0.0%
Total	26.987	26.987	27.060	0.073	0.3%

FUNDING	(26.987)	(26.987)	(26.987)	0.000	0.0%
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(Surplus)/Deficit	0.000	0.000	0.073	0.073	
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Note: A positive variance is an overspend or a reduction in forecast income and a (negative) is an underspend or extra income received. Green represents an underspend and red represents a overspend for the outturn position.

Table 2: Analysis of Variance – May 2024

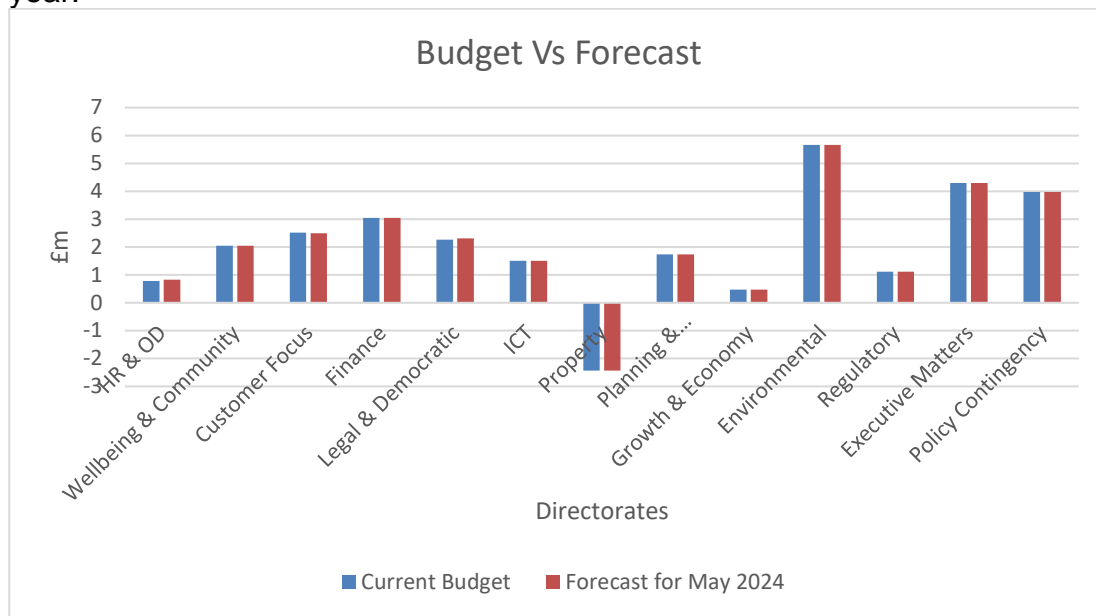
Breakdown of current month forecast	May 2024 Forecast	Base Budget Over/ (Under)	Savings Non-Delivery
	£m	£m	£m
Chief Executive	0.025	(0.075)	0.100
Resources	0.048	0.048	0.000
Communities	0.000	0.000	0.000
Subtotal Directorates	0.073	(0.027)	0.100
Executive Matters	0.000	0.000	0.000
Policy Contingency	0.000	0.000	0.000
Total	0.073	(0.027)	0.100

FUNDING	0.000	0.000	0.000
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(Surplus)/Deficit	0.073	(0.027)	0.100
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Table 3: Budget compared with Forecast

The graph below shows the Budget compared with the forecast to the end of the financial year.



Top Major Variances:

Minor variances within the services currently and details of these can be found in Appendix 2.

Aged Debt Write Off:

The financial regulations make provision for writing off debts that are bad, uneconomical to collect or irrecoverable. The Council maintains a number of bad debt provisions in the anticipation that debts will become bad and these once agreed are charged to the relevant provision or cost centre.

There is a provision within the council for sundry bad debt totally £1.547m that is sufficient and by writing off the amount of debt mentioned in this report will not cause the provision to be exceeded. This provision is reviewed on a regular basis to ensure that we have sufficient within it.

Table 4: Summary of Write Offs

The table below summarises the write offs proposed for this month.

	£m
Sundry Debt	0.300
Housing Benefit	0.010
Council Tax	0.032
Non-Domestic Rates	0.057
Total	0.399

Further details can be found in appendix 3 and 6.

Reserves

Allocations to and from reserves are made according to the Reserves Policy. Table 5 below summarises the movements which have been requested at 31 March 2024, further detail is provided in Appendix 5.

Table 5: Earmarked Reserves:

Reserves	Balance 1 April 2024	Original Budgeted use/ (contribution)	Changes agreed since budget setting	Changes proposed May 2025	Balance 31 March 2025
	£m	£m	£m	£m	£m
General Balance	(6.150)	0.000	0.000	0.000	(6.150)
Earmarked	(28.324)	0.000	0.000	0.186	(28.138)
Ringfenced Grant	(2.552)	0.000	0.000	0.000	(2.552)
Subtotal Revenue	(37.026)	0.000	0.000	0.186	(36.840)
Capital	(4.849)	0.000	0.000	0.000	(4.849)
Total	(41.875)	0.000	0.000	0.186	(41.689)

*According to the Reserves Policy Executive are only required to approve uses of Capital Reserves, not contributions.

Please see appendix 5 for reserve requests.

4.2 Capital

There is an in-year underspend of (£3.244m), of which £1.749m is to be reprofiled into future years.

Directorate	Budget £m	Forecast Spend 24/25 £m	Re-profiled beyond 2024/25 £m	Variance to Budget £m
Chief Executives	9.499	6.519	1.730	(1.250)
Resources	9.854	9.609	0.000	(0.245)
Communities	7.882	7.863	0.019	0.000
Total	27.235	23.991	1.749	(1.495)

For further detail please view Appendix 1.

Table 6: How the Capital Programme is financed

Financing	24/25 Budget £m	Future Years £m	Total
Borrowing	16.231	7.812	24.043
Capital Grants	0.425	5.250	5.675
Capital Receipts	6.143	4.956	11.099
S106 Receipts	4.436	1.304	5.740
	27.235	19.322	46.557

Table 7: Total Capital Project Outturn

Directorate	Budget £m	Total Forecast 2024/25 £m	Variance to Budget £m
Chief Executives	16.348	15.098	(1.250)
Resources	14.331	14.086	(0.245)
Communities	15.878	15.878	0.000
Total	46.557	45.062	(1.495)

Table 8: Top in-year variances: -

Code	Top In-Year Variances	Budget Total £'000	Reprofile beyond 24/25 £'000	% of in year Budget Variance
40323	NOA 3G Pitch Development	1.600	1.600	100.00%
40296	S106 - Ambrosden Outdoor Sports	0.130	0.130	100.00%
40010	North Oxfordshire Academy Astroturf	0.134	0.084	62.69%
		1.864	1.814	

40323 – NOA 3G Pitch Development -

Due to proposed alternative location of 3G Pitch, the progression to delivery will be dependent on a number of factors. Whilst unlikely there will be any spend in 2024/25 there may be some set up costs should delivery stage be achieved before year end.

40296 – S106 Ambrosden Outdoor Sports –

Site to be confirmed before project can move forward therefore reprofiled beyond 2024/25.

40010 – North Oxfordshire Academy Astroturf –

Due to costs constraints relating to the proposed location of the new 3G pitch, alternative options are being considered on the same site. Procurement of Project Consultant required for a turnkey solution.

5 Alternative Options and Reasons for Rejection

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

Option 1: This report summarises the council's forecast financial position up to the end of March 2025, therefore there are no alternative options to consider.

6 Conclusion and Reasons for Recommendations

6.1 This report provides an update on the council's financial positions as at May 2024 and seeks Executive agreement where required in accordance with the Constitution.

Decision Information

Key Decision	No
Subject to Call in	Yes
If not, why not subject to call in	N/A
Ward(s) Affected	All

Document Information

Appendices	
Appendix 1	Capital May 2024
Appendix 2	Detailed Revenue Narrative on Forecast May 2024
Appendix 3	Virements and Aged Debt May 2024
Appendix 4	Funding May 2024
Appendix 5	Use of reserves and grant funding May 2024
Appendix 6	EXEMPT Debt Write offs – May 2024
Background Papers	N/A
Reference Papers	N/A
Report Author	Leanne Lock, Strategic Business Partner – Business Partnering & Controls

Report Author contact details	Leanne.lock@cherwell-dc.gov.uk , 01295 227098

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Appendix 1 - CHERWELL CAPITAL EXPENDITURE

Cost Centre	DESCRIPTION	BUDGET 2024/25	YTD ACTUAL	PO COMMITMENTS	Forecast	RE- PROFILED BEYOND 2024/25	Current month Variances £000	Forecast Narrative
40010	North Oxfordshire Academy Astroturf	134	0	0	0	0	(134)	Recommendation to consolidate with project with Cost Centre 40309 and 40323.
40083	Disabled Facilities Grants	1,384	110	0	1,384		0	Full spend anticipated
40084	Discretionary Grants Domestic Properties	150	15	0	150		0	Full spend anticipated
40160	Housing Services - capital	160	0	0	160		0	Forecasting in line with budget
40251	Longford Park Art	45	0	0	45		0	Artist will complete their commissions once the parkland has been handed over. This is dependent on the development reaching the required standard.
40262	Town Centre House Purchase and Repair	2,880	274	1,693	2,880		0	Project on track and due to complete in 2024/25
40294	S106 - Ambrosden Community Facility Project	20	0	0	20		0	Parish Council has a variety of projects they are looking to bring forward in 2024/25 to increase capacity at the village hall.
40295	S106 - Ambrosden Indoor Sport Project	65	0	0	65		0	Awaiting new project details.
40296	S106 - Ambrosden Outdoor Sports	130	0	0	0	130	0	Site to be confirmed before project can move forward therefore reprofiled beyond 2024/25
40297	S106 - Ardley & Fewcott Play Area Project	15	0	0	15		0	Awaiting direction from the parish council regarding further play area investment.
40298	S106 - Ardley & Fewcott Village Hall Project	3	0	0	3		0	Awaiting project details for the remaining S106 spend.
40301	S106 - Graven Hill Outdoor Sport Project	52	0	0	52		0	Expected to commence works on the Graven Hill Project during 2024/25. Intention to secure services of project consultants to support on initial phases of the programme through to delivery
40302	S106 - Grimsbury Community Centre Projects	20	0	0	20		0	This S106 forms part of the Playzone Projects
40303	S106 - Hanwell Fields Community Centre Projects	180	0	0	180		0	S106 funding is allocated to Hanwell Fields Community Centre to enhance the existing facility with the intention of increasing opportunities for residents to take part in activities. This project is centred around the options for putting in a mezzanine floor in the current main hall area to give a split level facility. Currently working with Property Team around whether this is feasible and affordable with some cost estimates
40305	S106 - Horley Cricket Club Pavilion Project	110	0	0	110		0	The project is for improvements and enhancements to the Horley Cricket Club Pavilion. There have been contractors on site to price up the works, however nothing will happen until post September because of cricket season. There is an expectation that there will be spend in 2024/25
40308	S106 - Milton Road Community Facility and Sports Pitch Project	471	0	0	471		0	CDC hold the £471k of s106 for the Parish Council who are seeking additional grant funding from other sources to increase what they are aiming to deliver on

40309	S106 - NOA Improvements	678	0	0	0	0	(678)	Recommendation to consolidate with project with Cost Centre 40010 and 40323.
40310	S106 - Spiceball Leisure Centre Improvements	14	0	0	14		0	Options are being considered, project to be delivered 2024/25
40312	S106 - Whitelands Farm Sports Ground (Pedestrian crossing and various works)	82	16	82	82		0	Awaiting confirmation of how the pedestrian crossing is to be delivered. Project to be delivered upon in 2024/25
40313	S106 - Woodgreen Leisure Centre Improvements	47	0	0	47		0	Improvements planned to the Swimming Pool Changing Rooms. Expected to complete on works during Feb/March 2025
40314	S106 - Deddington Parish Council Projects	8	0	0	8		0	Awaiting project details for the remaining S106 spend.
40315	S106 - Longford Park Sport Pitches	10	0	0	10		0	Maintenance cost for the pitches and pavilion
40318	S106 - Steeple Aston Parish Council Village Hall Sports and Recreation Centre	0	(9)	0	0		0	Parish Council led projects towards improvements at the village hall, sports & recreation centre and playing fields.
40319	Local Authority Housing Fund R2	335	0	0	335		0	Grant agreements have been concluded with two registered providers of social housing, Sanctuary Housing and South Oxfordshire Housing Association (SOHA) to bring homes forward for clients within resettlement scheme. Grants to be paid in this financial year
40323	NOA 3G Pitch Development	1,600	0	0	0	1,600	0	Due to proposed alternative location of 3G Pitch, the progression to delivery will be dependent on a number of factors. Whilst unlikely there will be any spend in 2024/25 there may be some set up costs should delivery stage be achieved before year end
40324	Development of Activity Play Zones	600	0	0	162		(438)	Application process for Football Foundation Funding has been completed and working with Football Foundation and Town Council on project delivery.
40325	Graven Hill Community and Infrastructure Projects	80	0	0	80		0	Expected to commence works on the Graven Hill Project during 2024/25. Intention to secure services of project consultants to support on initial phases of the programme through to delivery
40328	S106 – Windmill Community and Sports Centre Tennis Courts	51	0	42	51		0	Mini tennis court project underway and full spend anticipated in 2024/25
40329	Spiceball Leisure Centre Structural Beams	100	0	0	100		0	Works expected to commence and complete end of December 24
40330	Replacement of the Sports Hall Roof at Bicester Leisure Centre	45	0	0	45		0	Options currently being considered
	Wellbeing & Housing	9,469	406	1,817	6,489	1,730	(1,250)	
40292	iTrent HR System Upgrades	30	0	0	30		0	There are plans for future enhancements of the system
	HR & OD	30	0	0	30	0	0	
	Chief Executive	9,499	406	1,817	6,519	1,730	(1,250)	

40139	Banbury Health Centre - Refurbishment of Ventilation, Heating & Cooling Systems	129	0	0	129		0	Work is scheduled for delivery in Q2 24/25.
40144	Castle Quay	547	14	288	302		(245)	As part of the Castle Quay Development and the regeneration of Banbury, the Council is working closely and in partnership with a number of public and private organisations to repurpose parts of Castle Quay Shopping Centre to deliver a number of complimentary uses enabling the regeneration of Banbury. The underspend results from a cash flow and technical accounting adjustment per the requirements of the CIPFA code on Local Authority Accounting. These costs will instead be recognised as Revenue costs, spread over the life of the project
40162	Housing & IT Asset System joint CDC/OCC	26	0	0	26		0	Part of wider transformation work currently being carried out
40167	Horsefair, Banbury	20	(8)	0	20		0	Works complete.
40191	Bodicote House Fire Compliance Works	60	0	0	56		(4)	Assessment completed, with works being developed and scoped from the assessment.
40219	Community Centre - Works	49	(4)	1	49		0	Design works complete and contractor appointed.
40224	Fairway Flats Refurbishment	200	0	3	200		0	We have a current planning application submitted, so hopefully project will progress at pace once this is approved. This is another green energy project to decarbonise the flats
40232	Kidlington Leisure Centre - Decarbonisation Works	0	0	4	4		4	Small overspend for retention payment (offset elsewhere)
40239	Bicester East Community Centre	685	217	584	685		0	Now on site for a 35 week project. Works due to complete on 26th July 2024
40241	Thorpe Place Roof Works	29	0	0	29		0	Carrying out drone survey of roof to identify condition ready for scoping and design.
40242	H&S Works to Banbury Shopping Arcade	122	(5)	17	122		0	Works currently in design
40249	Retained Land	50	0	0	50		0	The surveys of all areas of retained land are complete and the retained lands will need to be constantly reviewed and repairs undertaken whenever they are identified
40252	Expiring Energy Performance Certificates plus Associated works	96	0	0	96		0	Working on the recommendations for improvement works to maintain a compliant EPC
40253	Energy Performance Certificates Gov't Implementation of target B - Strategic Plan	60	0	0	60		0	EPC property surveys have been completed - needs reviewing in order to consider phasing and delivery programme.

40254	Thorpe Lane Depot - Renewal of Electrical Incoming Main	169	0	0	169		0	Works are currently designed pending tender of the Electrical supply infrastructure. Works to be coordinated with the District Network Operator to install the new sub station, who are engaged. Waiting for dates from the District Network Operator.
40255	Installation of Photovoltaic at CDC Property	79	7	0	79		0	Preparing scope so that feasibilities can be carried out to maximise potential PV to the site. Planned delivery quarter one of the financial year 2024/25.
40263	Kidlington Leisure New Electrical Main	20	0	0	20		0	Works are currently designed pending tender of the Electrical supply infrastructure. Works to be coordinated with the District Network Operator (DNO) to install the new sub station, who are engaged. Waiting for dates from the DNO. Planned delivery expected to be Q2 2024/25. There are 3 leases and sub leases to be amended before this can proceed.
40264	Sunshine Centre	182	0	4	182		0	New Heating Boilers and LED lighting are required at the property. Works due to commence in June for 6 weeks
40279	Spiceball Sports Centre - Solar PV Car Ports	173	0	0	173		0	Preparing scope so that feasibilities can be carried out to maximise potential PV to the site. Planned delivery Q2/Q3 of the financial year 2024/25
40280	Kidlington Sports Centre - Solar PV Car Ports	137	0	0	137		0	Preparing scope so that feasibilities can be carried out to maximise potential PV to the site. Work cannot start until electrical mains installed (dependant on DNO). Planned delivery Q2 2024/25
40281	North Oxfordshire Academy - Solar Panels	18	0	0	18		0	Preparing scope so that feasibilities can be carried out to maximise potential PV to the site.
40282	Community Centre Solar Panels	108	0	0	108		0	Preparing scope so that feasibilities can be carried out to maximise potential PV to the site. Planned delivery in Q3/Q4 of 24/25. Part of EPC work, community centres will need to agree.
40283	Thorpe Lane - Solar Panels	34	0	0	34		0	Preparing scope so that feasibilities can be carried out to maximise potential PV to the site. Carrying out feasibility work - this will be in Q1
40284	Thorpe Lane - Heater Replacement (Gas to Electric)	24	0	0	24		0	Preparing scope so that feasibilities can be carried out to maximise potential PV to the site. Planned delivery is Q2 2024/25.
40015	Car Park Refurbishments	46	0	0	46		0	This to continue the projects of pay on exit sites across the district and upgrading of pay machines from 3G to 4G. Requirement to carry this work out in 24/25 because 3G will become obsolete.
40217	Car Parking Action Plan Delivery	18	0	0	18		0	Project is part of ongoing review of Car Park Action Plan
40278	Development of New Land Bicester Depot	2,022	0	10	2,022		0	Need to agree client service space and facility requirements in the new depot-procurement of design team and associated works to follow
40317	Cope Road, Banbury	29	0	31	29		0	Design work completed pending tendering. Contractor now appointed and starts in 4 weeks on site.
40316	CDC Office Relocation to Castle Quay	4,500	99	0	4,500		0	CQ fit out and refurbishment

40327	Thorpe Place Roofing Works	80	0	0	80		0	Carrying out drone survey of roof to identify condition ready for scoping and design.
Property		9,712	320	942	9,467	0	(245)	
40256	Processing Card Payments & Direct Debits	20	5	0	20		0	Project will be completed this year
Finance		20	5	0	20	0	0	
40237	Council Website & Digital Service	122	(19)	1	122		0	Work underway to select a product to form basis of Unified Customer Relationship Management Platform.
ICT		122	(19)	1	122	0	0	
Resources		9,854	307	944	9,609	0	(245)	
40062	East West Railways	49	0	30	30	19	0	The capital fund has been set up to enable the Council's costs to be recharged when responding to enquiries and regulatory applications, involving for example environmental and land drainage matters, made in connection with the EWR project. This is in partnership with England's Economic Heartland. The Digital Enhancement Project is a small element of CDC's commitment, involving the transfer of funds in four stages to reflect Network Rail's delivery of the digital infrastructure. The fourth invoice of £26,500 is expected to be received by the end of Q1 2024/25, dependent upon practical progress.
40286	Transforming Market Square Bicester	4,235	(3)	0	4,235		0	Design Consultants appointed and project programme forecast to be completed by Q4. PM and comms internal costs also to be added to this
40287	UK Shared Prosperity Fund (UK SPF) Year Three Investment Plan Programme	162	0	0	162		0	UKSPF capital grant will be fully spent in 2024/25 on the following; £90k Improvements to town centres & high streets £70k Community & neighbourhood infrastructure £2K improvements to local green spaces £50K contribution to floodlights at Whitelands Sport ground which is shown in cost centre Whiteland Farm Sports ground.
40288	UKSPF Rural Fund	408	(116)	115	408		(0)	UKSPF Rural Fund (REPF capital grant) will be fully spent in 2024/25: £20k - creation and improvements to local rural green spaces £67k - active travel enhancements to the local rural area £321k - capital grants for micro and small enterprises in rural areas.
Growth & Economy		4,854	(119)	146	4,835	19	0	
40028	Vehicle Replacement Programme	2,662	(3)	850	2,662		0	Anticipating full spend in 2024/25.
40187	On Street Recycling Bins	18	0	0	18		0	Anticipating full spend in 2024/25.
40216	Street Scene Furniture and Fencing project	15	0	0	15		0	Anticipating full spend in 2024/25.
40218	Depot Fuel System Renewal	35	0	0	35		0	Anticipating full spend in 2024/25.
40222	Burnehyll- Bicester Country Park	124	6	10	124		0	Anticipating full spend in 2024/25.
40257	Additional Commercial Waste Containers	4	0	0	4		0	Anticipating full spend in quarter 4 of 2024/25.
40258	Kidlington Public Convenience Refurbishment	90	0	0	90		0	Anticipating full spend in 2024/25.
40259	Market Equipment Replacement	15	0	5	15		0	Anticipating full spend in quarter 2 of 2024/25.
40291	New Commercial Waste IT System	25	25	0	25		0	Anticipating full spend in 2024/25.

40331	Investing in Additional Commercial Waste Containers	25	0	0	25		0	Anticipating full spend in 2024/25.
Environmental Services		3,013	29	865	3,013	0	0	
40245	Enable Agile Working	15	0	0	15		0	This funding is still intended to be used to purchase the IT hardware required to enable the teams in Regulatory Services to use the case management system whilst 'on-site' carrying out inspection work, etc. The release of the app that will support mobile working continues to be delayed but is progressing. we expect the app to be released live in summer 2024.
Regulatory Services		15	0	0	15	0	0	
40293	Planning - S106 Projects	0	0	0			0	
Planning and Development		0	0	0	0	0	0	
Communities		7,882	(91)	1,011	7,863	19	0	
Capital		27,235	622	3,772	23,991	1,749	(1,495)	

CHERWELL TOTAL CAPITAL PROJECT EXPENDITURE

CODE	DESCRIPTION	Total 24/25 Project Budget	Forecast	RE-PROFILED BEYOND 2024/25	24/25 Variance	Future Years Budget	Project Total Budget	Project Total forecast	Project Total Variance	Narrative
40010	North Oxfordshire Academy Astroturf	134	0	0	(134)	0	134	0	(134)	Recommendation to consolidate with project with Cost Centre 40309 and 40323.
40019	Bicester Leisure Centre Extension	0	0	0	0	79	79	79	0	The current budget is for preparatory works to identify the business case for operation ahead of S106 monies coming in from developments. Budget requires reprofiling as scheme is outlined for build in 2027-28
40083	Disabled Facilities Grants	1,384	1,384	0	0	4,956	6,340	6,340	0	Full spend anticipated
40084	Discretionary Grants Domestic Properties	150	150	0	0	450	600	600	0	Full spend anticipated
40160	Housing Services - capital	160	160	0	0	0	160	160	0	Forecasting in line with budget
40251	Longford Park Art	45	45	0	0	0	45	45	0	Artist will complete their commissions once the parkland has been handed over. This is dependent on the development reaching the required standard.
40262	Town Centre House Purchase and Repair	2,880	2,880	0	0	0	2,880	2,880	0	Project on track and due to complete in 2024/25
40294	S106 - Ambrosden Community Facility Project	20	20	0	0	0	20	20	0	Parish Council has a variety of projects they are looking to bring forward in 2024/25 to increase capacity at the village hall.
40295	S106 - Ambrosden Indoor Sport Project	65	65	0	0	0	65	65	0	Awaiting new project details.
40296	S106 - Ambrosden Outdoor Sports	130	0	130	0	0	130	130	0	Site to be confirmed before project can move forward therefore reprofiled beyond 2024/25
40297	S106 - Ardley & Fewcott Play Area Project	15	15	0	0	0	15	15	0	Awaiting direction from the parish council regarding further play area investment.
40298	S106 - Ardley & Fewcott Village Hall Project	3	3	0	0	0	3	3	0	Awaiting project details for the remaining S106 spend.
40300	S106 - Bicester Leisure Centre Extension	0	0	0	0	1,154	1,154	1,154	0	Initial stages of feasibility have been completed with high level costings received to deliver the project. Further stages required including detailed business case. Re-profiled beyond 2024-25 to when S106 funding is received and fully available.
40301	S106 - Graven Hill Outdoor Sport Project	52	52	0	0	0	52	52	0	Expected to commence works on the Graven Hill Project during 2024/25. Intention to secure services of project consultants to support on initial phases of the programme through to delivery
40302	S106 - Grimsbury Community Centre Projects	20	20	0	0	0	20	20	0	This S106 forms part of the Playzone Projects
40303	S106 - Hanwell Fields Community Centre Projects	180	180	0	0	0	180	180	0	S106 funding is allocated to Hanwell Fields Community Centre to enhance the existing facility with the intention of increasing opportunities for residents to take part in activities. This project is centred around the options for putting in a mezzanine floor in the current main hall area to give a split level facility. Currently working with Property Team around whether this is feasible and affordable with some cost estimates
40304	S106 - Hook Norton Sport And Social Club Project	0	0	0	0	80	80	80	0	The scale and scope of the project is yet to be confirmed and therefore reprofiled to 2025/26
40305	S106 - Horley Cricket Club Pavilion Project	110	110	0	0	0	110	110	0	The project is for improvements and enhancements to the Horley Cricket Club Pavilion. There have been contractors on site to price up the works, however nothing will happen until post September because of cricket season. There is an expectation that there will be spend in 2024/25
40307	S106 - Kidlington & Gosford Leisure Centre	0	0	0	0	20	20	20	0	No detailed projects as yet therefore S106 funding to be reprofiled beyond 2024-25
40308	S106 - Milton Road Community Facility and Sports Pitch Project	471	471	0	0	0	471	471	0	CDC hold the £471k of s106 for the Parish Council who are seeking additional grant funding from other sources to increase what they are aiming to deliver on
40309	S106 - NOA Improvements	678	0	0	(678)	0	678	0	(678)	Recommendation to consolidate with project with Cost Centre 40010 and 40323.

40310	S106 - Spiceball Leisure Centre Improvements	14	14	0	0	0	14	14	0	Options are being considered, project to be delivered 2024/25
40311	S106 - The Hill Improvements Project	0	0	0	0	50	50	50	0	Awaiting details of projects funded by S106 funding already received, therefore budget request to reprofile beyond 2024-25
40312	S106 - Whitelands Farm Sports Ground (Pedestrian crossing and various works)	82	82	0	0	0	82	82	0	Awaiting confirmation of how the pedestrian crossing is to be delivered. Project to be delivered upon in 2024/25
40313	S106 - Woodgreen Leisure Centre Improvements	47	47	0	0	0	47	47	0	Improvements planned to the Swimming Pool Changing Rooms. Expected to complete on works during Feb/March 2025
40314	S106 - Deddington Parish Council Projects	8	8	0	0	0	8	8	0	Awaiting project details for the remaining S106 spend.
40315	S106 - Longford Park Sport Pitches	10	10	0	0	0	10	10	0	Maintenance cost for the pitches and pavilion
40319	Local Authority Housing Fund R2	335	335	0	0	0	335	335	0	Grant agreements have been concluded with two registered providers of social housing, Sanctuary Housing and South Oxfordshire Housing Association (SOHA) to bring homes forward for clients within resettlement scheme. Grants to be paid in this financial year
40323	NOA 3G Pitch Development	1,600	0	1,600	0	0	1,600	1,600	0	Due to proposed alternative location of 3G Pitch, the progression to delivery will be dependent on a number of factors. Whilst unlikely there will be any spend in 2024/25 there may be some set up costs should delivery stage be achieved before year end
40324	Development of Activity Play Zones	600	162	0	(438)	0	600	162	(438)	Application process for Football Foundation Funding has been completed and working with Football Foundation and Town Council on project delivery.
40325	Graven Hill Community and Infrastructure Projects	80	80	0	0	0	80	80	0	Expected to commence works on the Graven Hill Project during 2024/25. Intention to secure services of project consultants to support on initial phases of the programme through to delivery
40328	S106 – Windmill Community and Sports Centre Tennis Courts	51	51	0	0	0	51	51	0	Mini tennis court project underway and full spend anticipated in 2024/25
40329	Spiceball Leisure Centre Structural Beams	100	100	0	0	0	100	100	0	Works expected to commence and complete end of December 24
40330	Replacement of the Sports Hall Roof at Bicester Leisure Centre	45	45	0	0	0	45	45	0	Options currently being considered
Wellbeing & Housing		9,469	6,489	1,730	(1,250)	6,789	16,258	15,008	(1,250)	
40292	iTrent HR System Upgrades	30	30	0	0	60	90	90	0	There are plans for future enhancements of the system
HR & OD		30	30	0	0	60	90	90	0	
Chief Executives		9,499	6,519	1,730	(1,250)	6,849	16,348	15,098	(1,250)	
40139	Banbury Health Centre - Refurbishment of Ventilation, Heating & Cooling Systems	129	129	0	0	0	129	129	0	Work is scheduled for delivery in Q2 24/25.
40144	Castle Quay	547	302	0	(245)	2,186	2,733	2,488	(245)	As part of the Castle Quay Development and the regeneration of Banbury, the Council is working closely and in partnership with a number of public and private organisations to repurpose parts of Castle Quay Shopping Centre to deliver a number of complimentary uses enabling the regeneration of Banbury. The underspend results from a cash flow and technical accounting adjustment per the requirements of the CIPFA code on Local Authority Accounting. These costs will instead be recognised as Revenue costs, spread over the life of the project
40162	Housing & IT Asset System joint CDC/OCC	26	26	0	0	0	26	26	0	Part of wider transformation work currently being carried out
40167	Horsefair, Banbury	20	20	0	0	0	20	20	0	Works complete.
40191	Bodicote House Fire Compliance Works	60	56	0	(4)	0	60	56	(4)	Assessment completed, with works being developed and scoped from the assessment.
40219	Community Centre - Works	49	49	0	0	0	49	49	0	Design works complete and contractor appointed.
40224	Fairway Flats Refurbishment	200	200	0	0	138	338	338	0	We have a current planning application submitted, so hopefully project will progress at pace once this is approved. This is another green energy project to decarbonise the flats.
40232	Kidlington Leisure Centre - Decarbonisation Works	0	4	0	4	0	0	4	4	Small overspend for retention payment (offset elsewhere)
40239	Bicester East Community Centre	685	685	0	0	0	685	685	0	Now on site for a 35 week project. Works due to complete on 26th July 2024

40241	Thorpe Place Roof Works	29	29	0	0	0	29	29	0	Carrying out drone survey of roof to identify condition ready for scoping and design.
40242	H&S Works to Banbury Shopping Arcade	122	122	0	0	0	122	122	0	Works currently in design
40249	Retained Land	50	50	0	0	206	256	256	0	The surveys of all areas of retained land are complete and the retained lands will need to be constantly reviewed and repairs undertaken whenever they are identified
40252	Expiring Energy Performance Certificates plus Associated works	96	96	0	0	0	96	96	0	Working on the recommendations for improvement works to maintain a compliant EPC
40253	Energy Performance Certificates Gov't Implementation of target B - Strategic Plan	60	60	0	0	0	60	60	0	EPC property surveys have been completed - needs reviewing in order to consider phasing and delivery programme.
40254	Thorpe Lane Depot - Renewal of Electrical Incoming Main	169	169	0	0	0	169	169	0	Works are currently designed pending tender of the Electrical supply infrastructure. Works to be coordinated with the District Network Operator to install the new sub station, who are engaged. Waiting for dates from the District Network Operator.
40255	Installation of Photovoltaic at CDC Property	79	79	0	0	0	79	79	0	Preparing scope so that feasibilities can be carried out to maximise potential PV to the site. Planned delivery quarter one of the financial year 2024/25.
40263	Kidlington Leisure New Electrical Main	20	20	0	0	0	20	20	0	Works are currently designed pending tender of the Electrical supply infrastructure. Works to be coordinated with the District Network Operator (DNO) to install the new sub station, who are engaged. Waiting for dates from the DNO. Planned delivery expected to be Q2 2024/25. There are 3 leases and sub leases to be amended before this can proceed.
40264	Sunshine Centre	182	182	0	0	0	182	182	0	New Heating Boilers and LED lighting are required at the property. Works due to commence in June for 6 weeks
40279	Spiceball Sports Centre - Solar PV Car Ports	173	173	0	0	0	173	173	0	Preparing scope so that feasibilities can be carried out to maximise potential PV to the site. Planned delivery Q2/Q3 of the financial year 2024/25
40280	Kidlington Sports Centre - Solar PV Car Ports	137	137	0	0	0	137	137	0	Preparing scope so that feasibilities can be carried out to maximise potential PV to the site. Work cannot start until electrical mains installed (dependant on DNO). Planned delivery Q2 2024/25
40281	North Oxfordshire Academy - Solar Panels	18	18	0	0	0	18	18	0	Preparing scope so that feasibilities can be carried out to maximise potential PV to the site.
40282	Community Centre Solar Panels	108	108	0	0	0	108	108	0	Preparing scope so that feasibilities can be carried out to maximise potential PV to the site. Planned delivery in Q3/Q4 of 24/25. Part of EPC work, community centres will need to agree.
40283	Thorpe Lane - Solar Panels	34	34	0	0	0	34	34	0	Preparing scope so that feasibilities can be carried out to maximise potential PV to the site. Carrying out feasibility work - this will be in Q1
40284	Thorpe Lane - Heater Replacement (Gas to Electric)	24	24	0	0	0	24	24	0	Preparing scope so that feasibilities can be carried out to maximise potential PV to the site. Planned delivery is Q2 2024/25.
40015	Car Park Refurbishments	46	46	0	0	0	46	46	0	This to continue the projects of pay on exit sites across the district and upgrading of pay machines from 3G to 4G. Requirement to carry this work out in 24/25 because 3G will become obsolete.
40217	Car Parking Action Plan Delivery	18	18	0	0	0	18	18	0	Project is part of ongoing review of Car Park Action Plan
40278	Development of New Land Bicester Depot	2,022	2,022	0	0	1,937	3,959	3,959	0	Need to agree client service space and facility requirements in the new depot- procurement of design team and associated works to follow
40316	CDC Office Relocation to Castle Quay	4,500	4,500	0	0	0	4,500	4,500	0	CQ fit out and refurbishment
40317	Cope Road, Banbury	29	29	0	0	0	29	29	0	Design work completed pending tendering. Contractor now appointed and starts in 4 weeks on site.
40327	Thorpe Place Roofing Works	80	80	0	0	0	80	80	0	Carrying out drone survey of roof to identify condition ready for scoping and design.
Property		9,712	9,467	0	(245)	4,477	14,189	13,944	(245)	
40256	Processing Card Payments & Direct Debits	20	20	0	0	0	20	20	0	Project will be completed this year
Finance Total		20	20	0	0	0	20	20	0	
40237	Council Website & Digital Service	122	122	0	0	0	122	122	0	Work underway to select a product to form basis of Unified CRM Platform.
ICT		122	122	0	0	0	122	122	0	
Resources		9,854	9,609	0	(245)	4,477	14,331	14,086	(245)	
40062	East West Railways	49	30	19	0	4,229	4,278	4,278	0	The capital fund has been set up to enable the Council's costs to be recharged when responding to enquiries and regulatory applications, involving for example environmental and land drainage matters, made in connection with the EWR project. This is in partnership with England's Economic Heartland. The Digital Enhancement Project is a small element of CDC's commitment, involving the transfer of funds in four stages to reflect Network Rail's delivery of the digital infrastructure. The fourth invoice of £26,500 is expected to be received by the end of Q1 2024/25, dependent upon practical progress.

40286	Transforming Market Square Bicester	4,235	4,235	0	0	0	4,235	4,235	0	Design Consultants appointed and project programme forecast to completed by Q4. PM and comms internal costs also to be added to this
40287	UK Shared Prosperity Fund (UK SPF) Year Two Investment Plan Programme	162	162	0	0	0	162	162	0	UKSPF capital grant will be fully spent in 2024/25 on the following; £90k Improvements to town centres & high streets £70k Community & neighbourhood infrastructure £2k improvements to local green spaces £50K contribution to floodlights at Whitelands Sport ground which is shown in cost centre Whiteland Farm Sports ground.
40288	UKSPF Rural Fund	408	408	0	(0)	0	408	408	(0)	UKSPF Rural Fund (REPF capital grant) will be fully spent in 2024/25: £20k - creation and improvements to local rural green spaces £67k – active travel enhancements to the local rural area £321k – capital grants for micro and small enterprises in rural areas.
Growth & Economy		4,854	4,835	19	0	4,229	9,083	9,083	0	
40028	Vehicle Replacement Programme	2,662	2,662	0	0	3,742	6,404	6,404	0	Anticipating full spend in 2024/25.
40187	On Street Recycling Bins	18	18	0	0	0	18	18	0	Anticipating full spend in 2024/25.
40216	Street Scene Furniture and Fencing project	15	15	0	0	0	15	15	0	Anticipating full spend in 2024/25.
40218	Depot Fuel System Renewal	35	35	0	0	0	35	35	0	Anticipating full spend in 2024/25.
40222	Burnehyll- Bicester Country Park	124	124	0	0	0	124	124	0	Anticipating full spend in 2024/25.
40257	Additional Commercial Waste Containers	4	4	0	0	0	4	4	0	Anticipating full spend in quarter 4 of 2024/25.
40258	Kidlington Public Convenience Refurbishment	90	90	0	0	0	90	90	0	Anticipating full spend in 2024/25.
40259	Market Equipment Replacement	15	15	0	0	0	15	15	0	Anticipating full spend in quarter 2 of 2024/25.
40291	New Commercial Waste IT System	25	25	0	0	0	25	25	0	Anticipating full spend in 2024/25.
40331	Investing in Additional Commercial Waste Containers	25	25	0	0	25	50	50	0	Anticipating full spend in 2024/25.
Environmental		3,013	3,013	0	0	3,767	6,780	6,780	0	
40245	Enable Agile Working	15	15	0	0	0	15	15	0	This funding is still intended to be used to purchase the IT hardware required to enable the teams in Regulatory Services to use the case management system whilst 'on-site' carrying out inspection work, etc. The release of the app that will support mobile working continues to be delayed but is progressing. we expect the app to be released live in summer 2024.
Regulatory Services		15	15	0	0	0	15	15	0	
Planning and Development		0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	
Communities		7,882	7,863	19	0	7,996	15,878	15,878	0	
Capital Total		27,235	23,991	1,749	(1,495)	19,322	46,557	45,062	(1,495)	

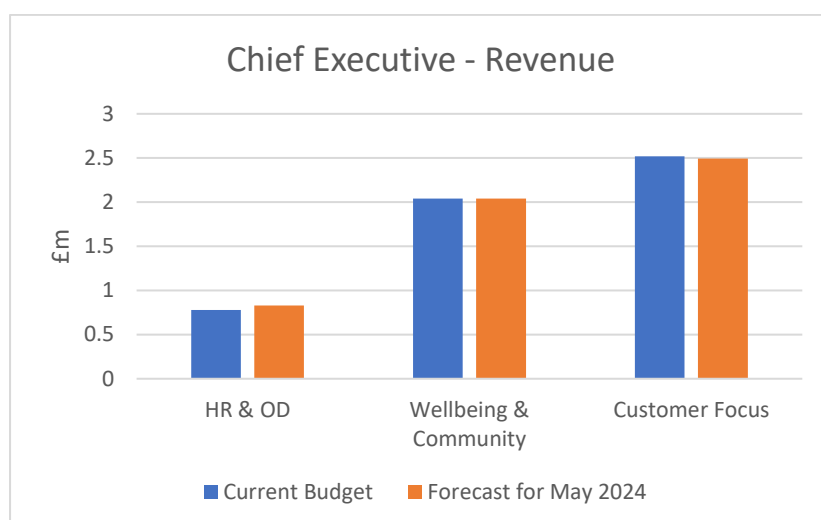
Appendix 2 - Report Details – Additional Revenue narrative

Chief Executive

Revenue:

Chief Executives are forecasting an overspend of £0.025m against a budget of £5.337m (0.5%).

The directorate continues to provide critical, high-quality services to support both our residents and staff. We continue to seek ways to deliver services efficiently and within budget.



HR & OD

<p>Variations Overspend</p>	<p>£0.050m</p>	<p>Implementation of the managed payroll system has proven more economical and offered more resilience than the in-house service, however there is an anticipated overspend of £50,000 as a result of the implementation which the Council is looking to mitigate within this financial year and appropriately budget for in 2025/26.</p>
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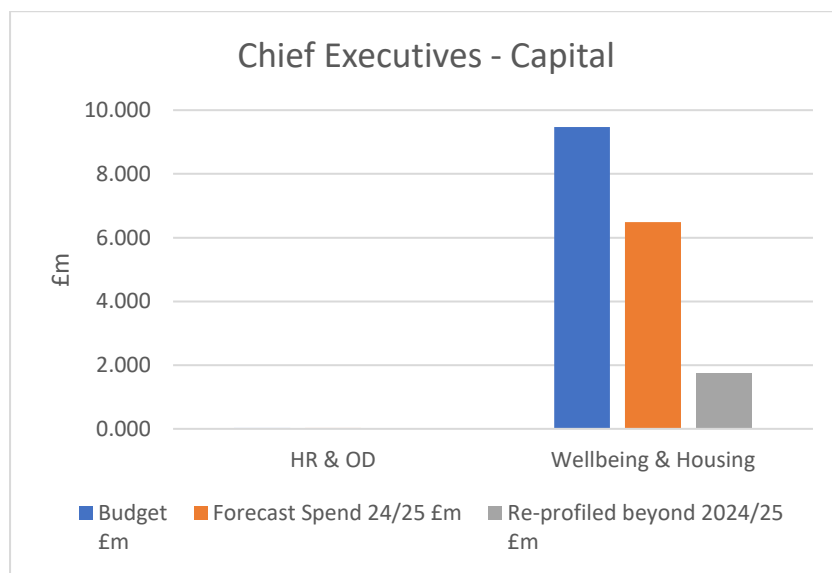
Wellbeing & Housing

<p>Variation £0.000m</p>	<p>Forecasting no variations at this point in the year but anticipating that there will be movement over the course of the year reflective of significant operational budgets.</p>
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Customer Focus

<p>Variation (£0.025m) underspend</p>	<p>Savings resulting from staffing vacancy efficiencies.</p>
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Capital:



Service	Budget £m	Forecast Spend 24/25 £m	Re-profiled beyond 2024/25 £m	Variance to Budget £m
HR & OD	0.030	0.030	0.000	0.000
Wellbeing & Housing	9.469	6.489	1.730	(1.250)
Total	9.499	6.519	1.730	(1.250)

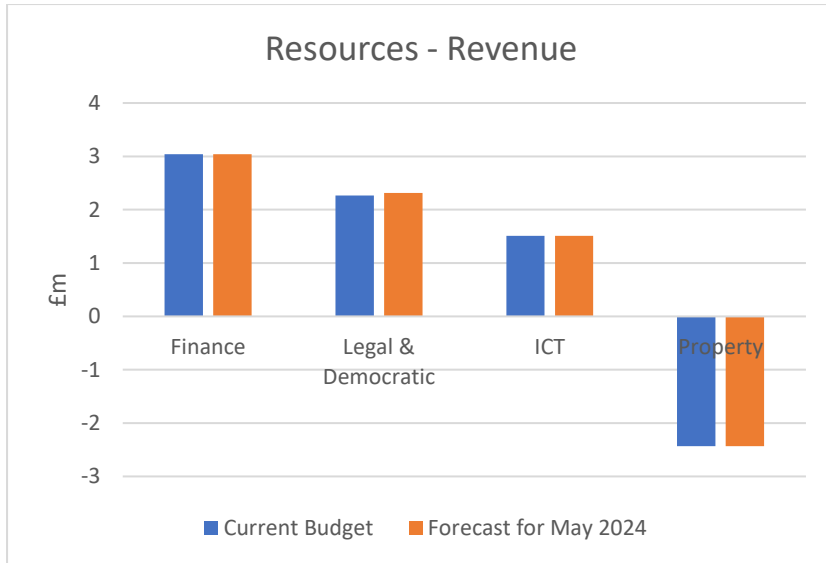
For detailed explanation and variances please see appendix 1.

Resources

Revenue:

Resources are forecasting £0.048m overspend against a budget of £4.382m (1.1%).

There are tight managerial controls within the resources directorate that have enabled a small forecast overspend. An understanding on the election costs is underway, and the team will work towards mitigating this further.



Finance

Variation
£0.000m

Finance is forecasting in line with budget.

Legal, Democratic, Elections & Procurement

Variation
£0.048m
Overspend

Overspend is due to an unavoidable reliance on agency staff whilst we continue with recruitment for permanent staff – agency spend is required due to work demand.

A permanent recruitment campaign has been implemented and legal fees are being increased in line with the law society suggested rates.

ICT

Variation
£0.000m overspend

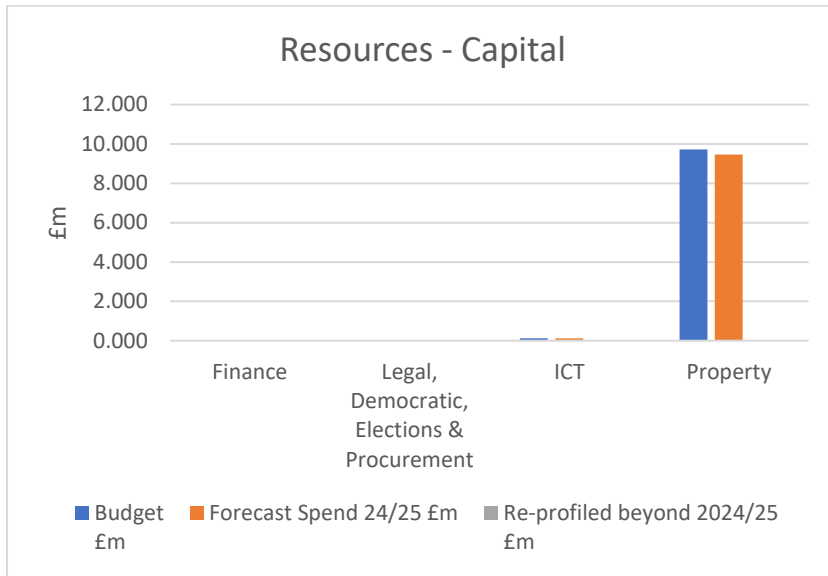
IT are forecasting to be within budget with small overspends in supplies and services being offset by an underspend in salaries to be adjusted when budgets are realigned for Digital and Innovation.

Property

Variation
£0.000m

Property are forecasting to be on target at the moment, with small overspends within security and utilities being offset by an underspend in repair and maintenance.

Capital:



Service	Budget £m	Forecast Spend 24/25 £m	Re-profiled beyond 2024/25 £m	Variance to Budget £m
Finance	0.020	0.020	0.000	0.000
Legal, Democratic, Elections & Procurement	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000
ICT	0.122	0.122	0.000	0.000
Property	9.712	9.467	0.000	(0.245)
Total	9.854	9.609	0.000	(0.245)

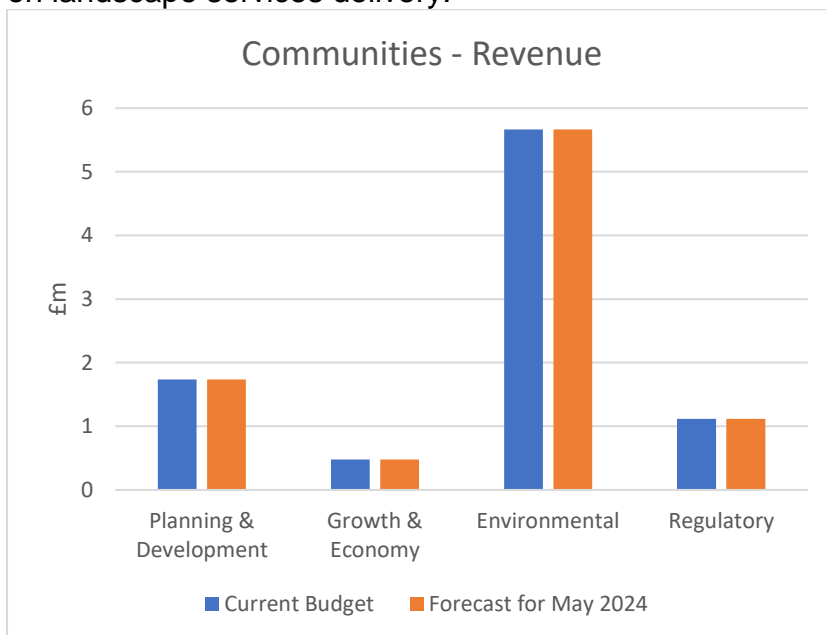
For detailed explanation and variances please see appendix 1.

Communities

Revenue:

Communities are forecasting on target against a budget of £8.996m, (0.00%).

As this stage early in the year, the directorate is reporting a balanced outturn and focus is on the delivery of the committed savings in the MTFS. The year to date has not seen volatility in market prices for gate fees or fuel prices which are external influences, however the directorate is monitoring closely the impact that the weather has presented challenges in terms of the growing season and impact on landscape services delivery.



Planning
Development

&

Variation
£0.000m

Planning and Development are forecasting on budget.

Growth & Economy

Variation
£0.000m

Growth and Economy are predicting a balanced year end forecast as it continues to deliver upon the Shared Prosperity Funding commitments, alongside the Bicester Garden Town programme and Banbury Vision project. Additional resource has been secured for the development of an infrastructure programme for Kidlington and to provide project management capacity for the service.

Environmental

Variation
£0.000m

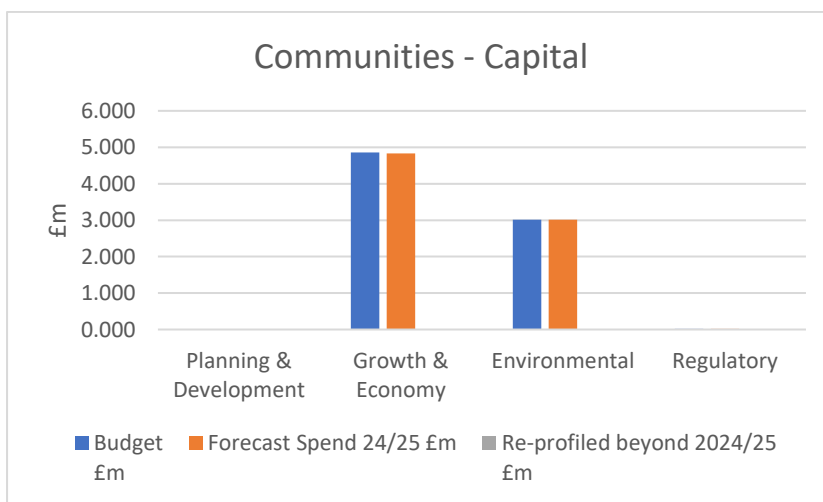
Environmental Services are currently forecasting on budget.

Regulatory

Variation
£0.000m

Regulatory Services and Community Safety are forecasting a balanced outturn.

Capital:



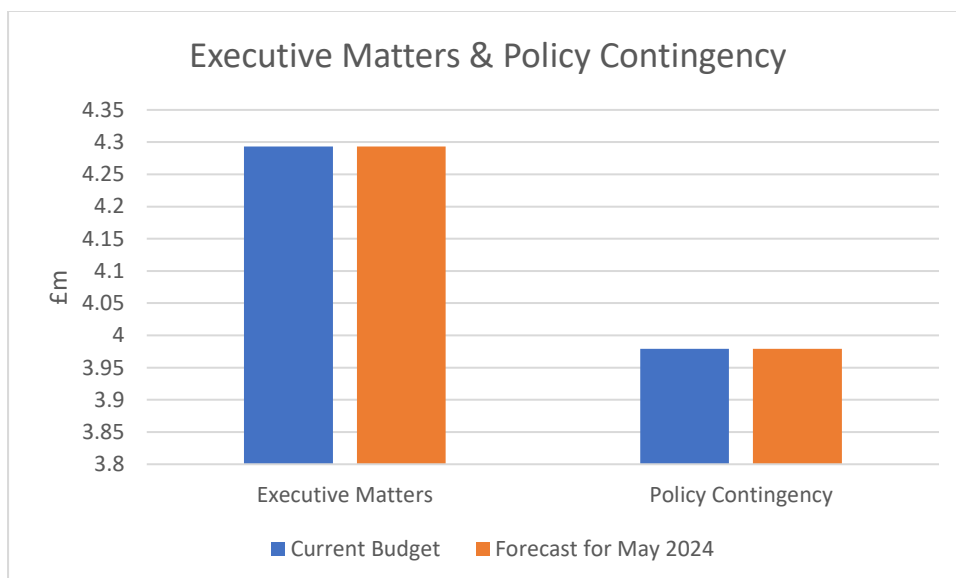
Service	Budget £m	Forecast Spend 24/25 £m	Re- profiled beyond 2024/25 £m	Variance to Budget £m
Planning & Development	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000
Growth & Economy	4.854	4.835	0.019	0.000
Environmental	3.013	3.013	0.000	0.000
Regulatory	0.015	0.015	0.000	0.000
Total	7.882	7.863	0.019	0.000

For detailed explanation and variances please see appendix 1.

Executive Matters

Revenue:

Executive Matters is reporting on target against the budget of £4.293m (0.00%).



Executive Matters

Variation
£0.000

Executive Matters are currently forecasting on budget.

Policy Contingency

Policy Contingency is forecasting on target with a budget of £3.979m, (0.00%)

Policy Contingency

Variation
(£0.000m)

Policy Contingency are currently forecasting on budget.

Appendix 3 - Virement Summary

Virement Movement

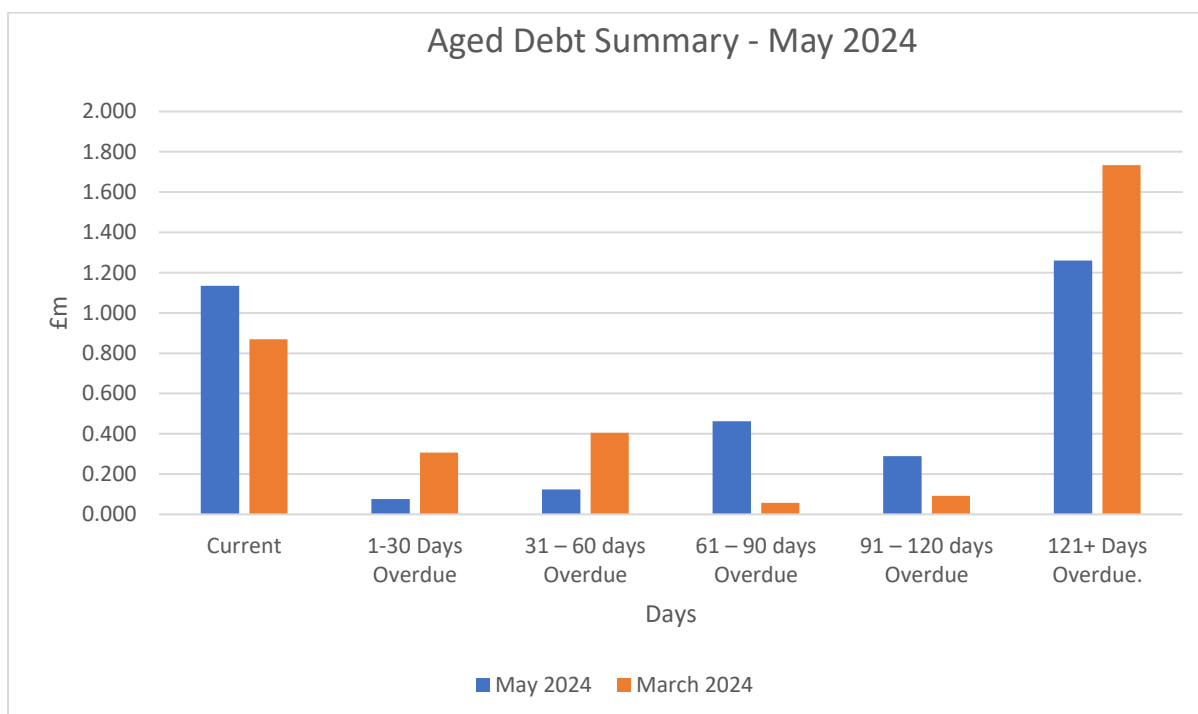
This table shows the movement in Net Budget from April 2024 to May 2024.

Virements - Movement in Net Budget	£m
Directorate Net Budget - April 2024	18.715
Directorate Net Budget - May 2024	18.715
Movement	0.000

Breakdown of Movements	£m
Policy Contingency:	
Total	0.000

Aged Debt Summary

The below graph shows the movement in sundry aged debt as at the end of May 2024 excluding the write off for approval in Appendix 6.



The financial regulations make provision for writing off debts that are bad, uneconomical to collect or irrecoverable. The Council maintains a number of bad debt provisions in the anticipation that debts will become bad and these once agreed are charged to the relevant provision or cost centre.

There is a provision within the council for sundry bad debt totally £1.547m that is sufficient and by writing off the amount of debt mentioned in this report will not cause

the provision to be exceeded. This provision is reviewed on a regular basis to ensure that we have sufficient within it.

Aged Debt Write Off Summary:

	£m
Sundry Debts previously written off	0.000
Sundry Debts written off in May under S151 delegation	0.000
Sundry Debts over £0.005m to be written off via committee details in Appendix 6	0.300
Total write offs in financial year 2024/25	0.300

Housing Benefit Write off Summary:

	£m
Housing Benefit previously written off	0.000
Housing Benefit Overpayments written off in May 2024 under S151 Delegation	0.000
Housing Benefit Overpayments to be written off via committee approval, details in Appendix 6	0.010
Total write offs in financial year 2024/2025	0.010

Council Tax Write off Summary:

	£m
Council Tax previously written off	0.000
Council Tax written off in May 2024 under S151 Delegation	0.000
Council Tax to be written off via Committee Approval details in Appendix 6	0.032
Total write offs in financial year 2024/2025	0.032

Non-Domestic Rates Write off Summary:

	£m
Non-Domestic Rates previously written off	0.000
Non-Domestic Rates written off in May 2024 under S151 Delegation	0.000
Non-Domestic Rates written off via Committee Approval, details in Appendix 6	0.057
Total write offs in financial year 2024/2025	0.057

Appendix 4 - Funding for 2024/25

Specific Funding received since budget was set:

Dept.	Grant Name	Funding
		£
DLUHC	UK Shared Prosperity Fund	(£0.658)
DLUHC	Homelessness Prevention Grant	(£0.763)
DLUHC	Electoral Integrity Programme New Burdens Funding	(£0.028)
DLUHC	Rough Sleeping Initiative	(£0.011)
DLUHC	Domestic Abuse Grant	(£0.037)
DLUHC	Redmond Review Implementation	(£0.024)
Home Office	Syrian Resettlement Scheme	(£0.005)
Home Office	Afghan Relocations and Assistance Policy	(£0.346)
		(£1.872)

Grants included as part of Budget setting:

Grant Name	£m
Homeless Prevention Grant	(0.517)
Afghan Resettlement Scheme	(0.244)
Syrian Refugee Initiative	(0.183)
Ukrainian Refugees Resettling in the UK	(0.417)
Asylum Seeker Dispersal Grant	(0.029)
Chief Executive Total	(1.391)
UK Shared Prosperity Fund	(0.829)
Communities Total	(0.829)
NNDR Cost of Collection Allowance	(0.231)
Rent Allowances	(25.004)
Resources Total	(25.235)
	(27.455)
Funding Guarantee Grant	(2.839)
Services Grant	(0.154)
Corporate Total	(2.993)
	(30.448)
Business Rates Retained Scheme	(9.647)
New Homes Bonus	(1.375)
Revenue Support Grant	(0.328)
Funding Total	(11.350)
Government Grants Grand Total	(41.798)

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Appendix 5 - Reserves and Grant Funding

Uses of/ (Contributions to) Reserves

Specific requests

Directorate	Type	Description	Reason	Amount £m
Communities	Earmarked	Banbury Regeneration	Grant funding not received or confirmed by Homes England, £125K to come from reserves to fund Banbury Regeneration. Will continue to press Homes England for grant funding.	0.125
Communities	Earmarked	Ecologist Post	£26K return to reserves as Ecologist is being offset by BNG Grant from the Development Management Casework Reserve	(0.026)
Communities	Earmarked	NEAP Maintenance 2024/25	S106 – National Environmental Action Plan Maintenance for Hanwell Park	0.009
Resources	Earmarked	Service Charge	To refund tenants for unspent service charge from the Banbury Health Sinking Fund reserve.	0.073
Total Earmarked Reserves				0.186
Ringfenced Grants				(0.000)

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

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