

## **Cherwell District Council**

### **Budget Planning Committee**

Minutes of a meeting of the Budget Planning Committee held at 39 Castle Quay, Banbury, OX16 5FD, on 8 July 2025 at 6.30 pm

#### **Present:**

Councillor Edward Fraser Reeves (Chair)  
Councillor Dom Vaitkus (Vice-Chair)  
Councillor Tom Beckett  
Councillor Gordon Blakeway  
Councillor Mark Cherry  
Councillor Andrew Crichton  
Councillor Frank Ideh  
Councillor Rob Pattenden  
Councillor David Rogers  
Councillor Les Sibley  
Councillor Barry Wood

#### **Substitute Members:**

Councillor Gemma Coton (In place of Councillor Robert Parkinson)

#### **Apologies for absence:**

Councillor Robert Parkinson

#### **Also Present:**

Councillor Lesley McLean, Deputy Leader and Portfolio Holder for Finance, Property and Regeneration

#### **Officers:**

Michael Furness, Assistant Director Finance & S151 Officer  
Joanne Kaye, Head of Finance and Deputy Section 151 Officer  
Jacey Scott, Head of Revenues and Benefits  
Matt Swinford, Democratic and Elections Officer

#### **Officers Attending Virtually:**

Leanne Lock, Strategic Business Partner - Business Partnering & Controls

3      **Declarations of Interest**

There were no declarations of interest.

4      **Minutes**

The Minutes of the meetings of the Committee held on 4 March 2025 and 21 May 2025 were agreed as correct records and signed by the Chair.

5      **Chair's Announcements**

There were no Chair's announcements.

6      **Requests to Address the Meeting**

There were no requests to address the meeting.

7      **Urgent Business**

There were no items of urgent business.

8      **Finance Monitoring Report**

The Assistant Director of Finance (Section 151 Officer) submitted a report to advise of the Council's financial positions at the end of the financial year 2024-2025.

In introducing the report, the Portfolio Holder for Finance, Property and Regeneration advised the Committee that the Councils' capital outturn position for 2024/25 was a surplus of £162k after the proposed contributions made to reserves of £2.02million. The outturn position showed pressures of £730k which had been offset by an underspend of £2.733mil across policy contingency and executive matters.

Regarding reserves, the Portfolio Holder for Finance, Property and Regeneration explained that, subject to Executive approval, there was a closing balance of £41mil revenue and £5mil capital. Under the delegated authority outlined in the reserves policy, the Assistant Director of Finance (Section 151 Officer) had approved the contributions to and uses of capital reserves for 2024/25. This included the usage of £1.496m of capital receipts and £0.679m of capital grants unapplied which was used to support the overall funding of the capital programme. This usage reduced the Council's Capital Financing Requirement and therefore the associated ongoing Minimum Revenue Provision which was met from the revenue budget.

In response to a question by the Committee querying if the £2mil amount proposed to be moved to reserves was a one off or could become normal practice in future years, the Assistant Director of Finance advised that this was down to good treasury management by officers however the amount was not an amount expected in future years and in the long term.

**Resolved**

- (1) That the report be noted.

9 **Council Tax Reduction Scheme 2026/27**

The Assistant Director of Finance (S151 Officer) submitted a report for Members to consider the proposed banded scheme for Council Tax Reduction (CTR) for 2026/27.

In introducing the report, the Portfolio Holder for Finance, Property and Regeneration advised the Committee that the scheme was an update to the current scheme that was introduced in April. There were no proposed changes to the scheme and it was recommended that the current scheme, uprated for inflationary factors, continue.

The Portfolio Holder for Finance, Property and Regeneration explained that there was a proposed change to the administration of the process to include Universal Credit customers as Council Tax Reduction (CTR) applicants by accepting the DWP information through the data sharing agreement. There was an anticipated nominal increase of £72k in the cost of the scheme, however this would be offset by the streamlined administration of onboarding new CTR claims at the point of the customer claiming Universal Credit.

Members of the Committee commented that it was an excellent scheme and the proposed change to the administration would make the scheme even better for those eligible. Members commended officers for the 98.02% Council Tax collection rate in Cherwell, which was reported as the highest rate for all authorities within Oxfordshire.

**Resolved**

- (1) That the contents of the report and any financial implications for the Council be noted.
- (2) That, having given due consideration, Executive be recommended to agree that the current scheme is retained for 2026/27.

10 **Business Rates Reset Consultation**

The Assistant Director Finance (S151 Officer) submitted a report to update the Committee on the Business Rates Reset consultations; one of which took place in April and a follow up that was launched 20 June for responses in mid-

August. These consultations related directly to the Medium-Term Financial Strategy (MTFS) 2026/27 – 2030/31.

In introducing the report, the Portfolio Holder for Finance, Property and Regeneration advised the Committee that the Government had launched a consultation earlier in the year on the technical aspects that officers had responded to, however a second consultation was launched on 20 June with a closing date of 15 August. Officers would be drafting a response and comments from the Committee were invited.

At the Committee's request, the Assistant Director Finance explained, in layman's terms, the proposed business rates reset. The Assistant Director Finance advised that currently the Council was able to retain a proportion of business rates revenue collected with the remaining percentage going to central government. The central share was redistributed to local government through grants. Councils could keep the revenue generated from businesses in their area and the Cherwell district had good growth during the last 12 years. The Assistant Director Finance explained that the Government's proposed business rates reset was a full reset which would mean that the distribution of the rates would change and it was expected the impact of the changes would reduce the council's funding by 40%.

In answer to a question from a member of the Committee regarding the impact of the Business Rates Reset on the agreed Medium Term Financial Strategy (MTFS), the Assistant Director Finance advised that the approved MTFS made the broad assumption that there would be a full business rates reset and would be phased over three years which was the approach given by government in the consultation.

### **Resolved**

- (1) That the Council's response to the Business Rates Reset consultation which was open between 8 April and 2 June be noted.
- (2) That the Fair Funding 2.0 consultation that was launched on 20 June with a closing date of 15 August be noted.

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### **Review of Committee Work Plan**

The Committee considered its work plan. In response to a Committee member query if the Committee was able to propose and consider an assessment from officers on the budgetary impacts of the proposed incoming legislation that required the council to collect glass at the kerbside instead of glass bottle banks, the Chair requested officers provide a written response to the query.

### **Resolved**

- (1) That the work programme be noted.

The meeting ended at 7.17 pm

Chair:

Date: