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## **Cherwell District Council**

### **Overview and Scrutiny Committee**

Minutes of a meeting of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee held at 39 Castle Quay, Banbury, OX16 5FD, on 17 June 2025 at 6.30 pm

Present:

Councillor Phil Chapman (Vice-Chair, in the Chair)

Councillor John Broad  
Councillor Dr Isabel Creed  
Councillor Frank Ideh  
Councillor Harry Knight  
Councillor Simon Lytton  
Councillor Zoe McLernon  
Councillor Barry Wood

Substitute Members:

Councillor Dorothy Walker (In place of Councillor Gemma Coton)  
Councillor Amanda Watkins (In place of Councillor Lynne Parsons)  
Councillor Besmira Brasha (In place of Councillor Dr Chukwudi Okeke)

Apologies for absence:

Councillor Lynne Parsons  
Councillor Gordon Blakeway  
Councillor Gemma Coton  
Councillor Dr Chukwudi Okeke

Officers:

Shiraz Sheikh, Assistant Director Law & Governance and Monitoring Officer  
Ian Boll, Corporate Director Communities  
Nicola Riley, Assistant Director Housing and Wellbeing  
Shona Ware, Assistant Director Customer Focus  
Emma Faulkner, Principal Officer - Scrutiny and Democratic Lead  
Martyn Surfleet, Democratic and Elections Officer

Officers Attending Virtually:

Ed Potter, Assistant Director Environmental Services

### **Declarations of Interest**

There were no declarations of interest.

10 **Minutes**

The Minutes of the meeting of the Committee held on 3 June 2025 were agreed as a correct record and signed by the Chair.

11 **Chair's Announcements**

There were no Chair's announcements.

12 **Urgent Business**

There were no items of urgent business.

13 **Finance and Performance Monitoring Report End of Year 2024-2025**

The Committee considered a report from the Assistant Director – Customer Focus that detailed the council's performance position at the end of the financial year 2024-2025.

In introducing the report, the Assistant Director – Customer Focus advised that the council had performed well against its objectives, which consisted of 36 Business Plan Measures, 15 Annual Delivery Plan actions, and 25 Equalities Diversity and Inclusion Action Plan activities. Of the 19 business plan measures 11 achieved their year-end target or were within the agreed tolerance, with the remaining eight measures missing their target and ending the year reporting red.

In response to a question relating to indicator BP 1.2.01, number of households living in temporary accommodation, and the possible reasons for the increase in demand, the Assistant Director – Housing & Wellbeing advised that many factors contributed to the increase. These included some landlords leaving the market due to the impending Renters Rights Bill, leading to a reduction in available properties; a static local housing allowance rate that wasn't keeping pace with rental amounts; ongoing cost of living implications since the pandemic; and more complex cases with health needs being presented.

In response to a question regarding the £0.663m overspend in Environmental Service which was primarily due to an increased usage of agency staff within the waste collection team, the Assistant Director of Environmental Services explained that due to the urgent nature of the service agency staff had to be used to supplement any shortages to enable the service to continue. The service had experienced an increase in sickness absence, including some long term absences, and this had resulted in additional agency staff being required.

The Corporate Director – Communities added that the way the budget was profiled across the financial year meant that the year-end report always

showed the department as having an overspend, due to the fluctuations in agency staff use across the year.

In response to a follow-up question on support available for staff with regular or long-term sickness absence, the Corporate Director – Communities explained that the team worked alongside HR to signpost services and support available via the Employee Support Programme, as well as occupational health where required.

It was recommended and agreed by Committee that as the use of agency staff within Waste Service was necessary for the service to operate 'business as usual', Executive be recommended to consider how agency staff costs are included in departmental budgets.

### **Resolved**

- (1) That the Council's End of year performance report for 2024/25 be noted.

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### **Work Programme Planning for 2025-2026**

The Committee considered a list of suggested subjects to form the basis of the work programme for the 2025-26 municipal year.

The Chair summarised each suggested subject, taking questions, comments and views from the Committee as to whether they should be included on the indicative work programme.

Regarding Local Government Reform and whether there was a role for the Committee in the proposals, the Chair explained that officers had advised the subject would be considered by full Council, and therefore open to scrutiny by all Members. An overview on workstreams to date could be provided to the Committee if it were felt necessary.

The Committee agreed that as the subject was to be considered by full Council, it was not necessary to add it to the work programme.

Regarding a question relating to CDC employment policies, the Chair advised that the Personnel Committee and the Assistant Director of Human Resources would be better placed to address the queries in the first instance. The Committee agreed that it was not necessary to add the subject to the work programme.

In response to a question relating to the frequency of updates regarding the transformation programme, the Assistant Director – Customer Focus suggested quarterly reports may be most suitable initially but added that timing could be reviewed once work was underway.

In response to the Chair's request for any further subjects for consideration, a request was made for an item relating to housing developers' implementation

of section 106 obligations. There were many new housing developments across the district, and in some cases, developers were building the housing elements but not any of the additional facilities such as parks or other amenity infrastructure. The Corporate Director of Communities suggested that the performance of Section 106 delivery within the district.

The Chair referred to the three working groups that had been established in 2023-2024 and continued during the last municipal year: Climate Action; Food Insecurity; and Equalities, Diversity and Inclusion (joint with Personnel Committee) and asked for Members' views on whether the working groups should continue.

The Committee agreed that following the publication of the end of year reports, which made recommendations to the Executive, the Food Insecurity and Equalities, Diversity and Inclusion groups should not continue as Overview and Scrutiny Working Groups. It was suggested that officers discuss with relevant Portfolio Holders the best way to monitor and review future progress made on these subjects.

Regarding the Climate Action working group, the Corporate Director – Communities explained that there would be a role for the group during the updating of the Climate Action Strategy, but that work was not due to start until later in the year. It was suggested that the group continue once that work was underway.

### **Resolved**

- (1) That the list of suggested subjects for the 2025-26 work programme (annexe to minutes as set out in the minute book) be approved.
- (2) That the Chair and Vice-Chair of the Committee work with officers to schedule the agreed items as appropriate.
- (3) That it be agreed that the Food Insecurity and Equality, Diversity and Inclusion working groups do not continue as Overview and Scrutiny Working Groups, and relevant officers from the service be requested to discuss with relevant Portfolio Holders the best way to monitor and review progress made on these subjects.
- (4) That the Climate Action continue later this Municipal Year, once work is underway to update the Climate Action Strategy.

The meeting ended at 7.55 pm

Chair:

Date:

## Draft Overview and Scrutiny Work Programme 2025-26

(Updated: 11 June 2025, to be considered by OSC 17 June 2025)

Items suggested for consideration in 2025-2026			
Subject	Content	Key Officers / Members	Committee view re adding to the work programme?
<b>Cherwell Safer Communities Partnership</b>  Attendance by the Chief Constable and the Police and Crime Commissioner for the Thames Valley	External Scrutiny - <b>Annual recurring item</b> To fulfil the Council's requirement regarding crime and disorder scrutiny to review or scrutinise decisions made, or other action taken, in connection with the discharge by the responsible authorities of their crime and disorder functions no less than once in every twelve-month period. All Members are invited to attend the meeting.	Ian Boll, Corporate Director Communities <b>Portfolio Holder for Safer Communities, Councillor Rob Parkinson</b>	Yes. Link in to follow-up on the Community Safety Plan update
<b>Follow-up on recommendation relating to Cherwell Safer Communities Partnership Plan</b>	At 11 March 2025 meeting of the Committee it was resolved - "(1) That the Committee recommends that the Executive, as a matter of urgency, ensure that the Cherwell Safer Community Partnership Plan be reviewed and updated and presented to this committee early in the next municipal year"	Ian Boll, Corporate Director Communities <b>Portfolio Holder for Safer Communities, Councillor Rob Parkinson</b>	Yes; tie-in with Community Safety Partnership presentation above



<b>Safeguarding Annual Return</b>	Holding the Executive to account - <b>Annual recurring item</b>	Nicola Riley, Assistant Director Wellbeing <b>Portfolio Holder for healthy Communities, Councillor Rob Pattenden</b>	Yes
<b>Performance Monitoring</b>	Performance Monitoring – <b>Quarterly item</b> To consider Council's performance against indicators each quarter, and make any comments or recommendations to Executive	Shona Ware, Assistant Director Customer Focus & Celia Prado-Teeling, Performance Team Leader <b>Portfolio Holder - Councillor Chris Brant, Corporate Services</b>	Yes
<b>Transformation Programme</b> (may feed into Local Government Reorganisation and Budget Planning) Suggestion from Chief Executive	Holding the Executive to account. To consider regular updates on the transformation programme; initial 'Case for Change' scheduled for Executive in July 2025, OSC involvement during implementation phase	Stephen Hinds, Corporate Director Resources and Transformation & Shona Ware, Assistant Director Customer Focus <b>Leader &amp; Portfolio Holder for Strategic Leadership, Councillor David Hingley</b>	Yes. Suggested quarterly reports initially.
<b>Service Levels</b>  Suggestion from Monitoring Officer	Holding the Executive to account  Following on from 'Case for Change' decision, scrutinising possible impact on service levels	Various	Yes. May tie-in with quarterly updates on Transformation Programme, this aspect to be clarified.
<b>Local Government Reform</b>	Is there a role for OSC in the LGR discussion?	Stephen Hinds, Corporate Director Resources and Transformation	No, as subject to be considered by Full Council



Suggestion from Cllr Phil Chapman		<b>Leader &amp; Portfolio Holder for Strategic Leadership, Councillor David Hingley</b>	
<b>Graven Hill</b> Carry over from 2024-25 work programme	Holding the Executive to account / External Scrutiny Multiple items across the year; September 2025 - update on Phase 2 of the site, performance during last financial year and governance arrangements. October 2025 – review planning process for Phase 2 July 2026, then annually – review of previous year's performance and monitoring of Phase 2 implementation.	Stephen Hinds, Shareholder Representative <b>Leader &amp; Portfolio Holder for Strategic Leadership, Councillor David Hingley</b>	Yes
<b>Action Plans stemming from Planning and Development</b> <b>To include:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>PAS Review</li><li>Merton College PR9 Site Appeal</li><li>Housing Delivery Action Plan (as discussed at 3.6.25 Committee)</li></ul> Suggestion from Monitoring Officer	Holding the Executive to account Multiple items across the year; Scrutinising implementation of the various action plans	David Peckford, Assistant Director Planning & Development & Paul Seckington, Head of Development Management <b>Portfolio Holder for Planning and Development Management, Councillor Jean Conway</b>	Yes
<b>Simpler Recycling Projects – Government legislation</b>	Holding the Executive to account	Ed Potter, Assistant Director Environmental Services	Yes



Suggestion from Corporate Director – Communities	Understanding the implications of national changes to recycling announced by Government	<b>Portfolio Holder for Neighbourhood Services, Councillor Ian Middleton</b>	
<b>Homelessness Waiting Lists and Rough Sleeping</b>  Suggestion from Cllr Lynne Parsons	To understand waiting lists and rough sleeping status Potential Spot-Light Review meeting?	Nicola Riley, Assistant Director Wellbeing <b>Portfolio Holder for Healthy Communities, Councillor Rob Pattenden</b>	Yes [Wording to be clarified; no waiting list for homelessness; housing and temp accommodation? Need clarity from Cllr Parsons as Cllr who raised the subject]
<b>Review of CDC Employee policies</b>  Suggestion from Cllr Zoe McLernon	Cllr McLernon feels there is a gap in the provision of maternity / paternity / IVF / adoption policy for current council employees and it's something that should be explored  Cllr McLernon has also contacted Cllr Watkins as Chair of Personnel Committee.	Claire Cox, Assistant Director Human Resources <b>Portfolio Holder - Councillor Chris Brant, Corporate Services</b>	No; Personnel Committee undertaking a regular review of employee policies. Cllr McLernon advised to contact Assistant Director – Human Resources with initial queries
<b>Flytipping</b>  Suggestion from Ian Boll following discussion with Cllr Amanda Watkins	Cllr Watkins has reported flytipping issues in Banbury specifically. Ian has suggested flytipping for the work programme	Ian Boll, Corporate Director Communities, and Ed Potter Assistant Director Environmental Services <b>Portfolio Holder - TBC</b>	Yes
<b>Sale of Bodicote House</b>	Holding the Executive to account  Update on sale of Bodicote House	Stephen Hinds, Corporate Director Resources and Transformation & Mona Walsh, Assistant Director Property	No



Raised by Cllr Phil Chapman on behalf of others		<b>Portfolio Holder for Finance, Property &amp; Regeneration, Councillor Lesley McLean</b>	
<b>On the night suggestions</b>			
<b>Performance of S106 delivery</b>  Raised by Cllr Dr Isabel Creed	Many housing developments across the district, particularly in Banbury, are having houses built but then developers appear to not be completing additional infrastructure such as play parks.	David Peckford, Assistant Director – Planning and Development <b>Portfolio Holder for Planning and Development Management, Councillor Jean Conway</b>	Yes. Ian Boll suggested framing as Performance of S106 delivery, with Shiraz Sheikh advising scope of subject to be clarified due to the volume of S106 agreements in place.

## Working Groups

**Equality, Diversity and Inclusion** (joint with Personnel Committee) – decision not to continue as a working group. Officers previously involved in the group to discuss with relevant Portfolio Holder the most appropriate way to monitor and review future work.

**Food Insecurity** – decision not to continue as a working group. Officers previously involved in the group to discuss with relevant Portfolio Holder the most appropriate way to monitor and review future work.

**Climate Action** – Corporate Director Communities, Ian Boll, advised that there would be a role for the group when work begins on updating the Climate Strategy later this year, but nothing at the moment. Decision to continue the group later in the year.

General comments from Committee relating to working groups, should there be the need for a specific inquiry in relation to any of the areas previously covered by the working groups, they should be scheduled as a standard agenda item.