

Public Document Pack



DISTRICT COUNCIL
NORTH OXFORDSHIRE

Committee: Executive

Date: Tuesday 2 September 2025

Time: 6.30 pm

Venue 39 Castle Quay, Banbury, OX16 5FD

Membership

| | |
|---|--|
| Councillor David Hingley (Chair) | Councillor Lesley McLean (Vice-Chair) |
| Councillor Tom Beckett | Councillor Chris Brant |
| Councillor Jean Conway | Councillor Nick Cotter |
| Councillor Ian Middleton | Councillor Robert Parkinson |
| 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. Requests to Address the Meeting

The Chair to report on any requests to address the meeting.

4. Minutes (Pages 9 - 18)

To confirm as a correct record the Minutes of the meeting held on 1 July 2025.

5. Chair's Announcements

To receive communications from the Chair.

6. HVO (Hydrotreated Vegetable Oil) Fuel (Pages 19 - 28)

Report of Assistant Director Environmental Services and Corporate Director Communities

Purpose of report

This report looks at the issues of cutting vehicle fleet emissions by the adoption of Hydrotreated Vegetable Oil (HVO) fuel to replace standard diesel fuel. The report considers the reduction in emissions and the potential increase in revenue costs from moving to HVO.

Recommendations

The meeting resolves:

- 1.1 To support the change from standard diesel to HVO diesel commencing from Autumn 2025 leading to a substantial reduction in emissions during 2025/26 & 2026/26.
- 1.2 To note the small increase in fuel costs as a result of moving to HVO which can be contained within the existing fuel budget.

7. Domestic Abuse Policy (Pages 29 - 54)

Report of Assistant Director Wellbeing and Housing

Purpose of report

To seek approval for a new Domestic Abuse Policy.

Recommendations

The meeting resolves:

- 1.1 To approve the new Domestic Abuse Policy.

8. Made in Banbury (Pages 55 - 98)

Report of Assistant Director Wellbeing and Housing

Purpose of report

A new cultural strategy for Banbury and an exploration of the economic impact of investment in the cultural sector offer a perspective on the importance of cultural organisations for the district. This report highlights the connection between the council's wellbeing strategy, the Banbury Area Priority Plan and the development of coordinated investment.

Recommendations

The meeting resolves:

- 1.1 To endorse Made in Banbury, a cultural strategy for the Town.
- 1.2 To acknowledge the impact investment in arts and culture can have on the local economy.
- 1.3 To support the Banbury Quays Consortium in their coordination of marketing cultural offers to audiences under a shared 'Made in Banbury' approach across the district with a grant of £3000 from existing funding allocations for the next two years.
- 1.4 To monitor the implementation and delivery of the action plan appended.
- 1.5 Given the independent nature of the cultural strategy, the area oversight groups are to consider culture in their placemaking plans. Ensuring the arts organisations of the district contribute to the cultural development of the district overall.

9. Bicester Market Square Project (Pages 99 - 114)

**** Due to the size of the documents, to assist access, the appendices are published as a supplement to the main agenda pack ****

Report of Corporate Director of Communities

Purpose of report

To provide an update to the Executive on the progress of the Market Square, Bicester regeneration and public realm improvement project and to seek approval to continue to the next stage of the project, and ultimately on to complete the project, subject to all of the required procurement processes being undertaken successfully. This report details the next steps of the design work required to the concept plan, seeking the required planning permissions, approval of the draft programme and budget approvals based on the estimated cost plans undertaken as part of stage 1 of the project.

Recommendations

The Executive resolves:

- 1.1 To note the progress of the project to date, including the public engagement process and how the proposed concept design was developed.
- 1.2 To approve the concept design presented for development to the next stage.
- 1.3 To approve that the £881,000 from Oxfordshire County Council town centre s106 funds be added to the currently approved £4.25m capital programme budget for this project – to give a maximum total project budget of £5,131,000 to complete this project in full.

- 1.4 To delegate to the Executive Portfolio Holder for Finance, Property and Regeneration in conjunction with the Corporate Director of Communities and the Assistant Director of Finance the tranches of budget for each stage of the project as required, into the capital programme to enable completion of this project.
- 1.5 To delegate to the Executive Portfolio Holder for Finance, Property and Regeneration in conjunction with the Corporate Director of Communities and Assistant Director of Law and Governance to approve the appointment of the preferred Consultant & Contractor, to work with the Councils project team to deliver this project following the required Council procurement processes.
- 1.6 To delegate to the Executive Portfolio Holder for Finance, Property and Regeneration in conjunction with the Corporate Director of Communities and the Assistant Director of Law and Governance the decision on the specific contract options & construction route to deliver the project in full (which is currently proposed as a two-stage contract process) (NEC 4E x22) following the Councils required procurement processes.
- 1.7 To note the current draft programme of works and estimated timescales of each stage of work, as provided by WSP, as part of their Stage 1 feasibility work as set out in Appendix 4.
- 1.8 To delegate to the Executive Portfolio Holder for Finance, Property and Regeneration in conjunction with the Corporate Director of Communities to confirm approval to submit the planning application of the detailed design.

10. Response to Motion: Government Review of Local Authority Funding (Pages 115 - 162)

Report of Assistant Director Finance (S151 Officer)

Purpose of report

To respond to the motion raised at the Council meeting of 21 July 2025 by Councillor Edward Reeves in relation to Government Review of Local Authority Funding.

Recommendations

The Executive committee resolves:

- 1.1 To note the Executive's response to the motion.

11. Finance, Performance and Risk Monitoring Report Quarter 1 2025 - 2026 (Pages 163 - 212)

Report of Assistant Director Finance (S151 Officer) and Assistant Director Customer Focus

Purpose of report

To report to Executive the council's forecast year-end financial, performance and risk position as of the end of Quarter 1 2025, further detail can be found in the report and its appendices.

Recommendations

The meeting resolves:

- 1.1 To consider and note the contents of the council's finance, performance and risk management report as at Quarter 1.
- 1.2 To approve the reprofiling of projects in the capital programme as per Appendix 1.
- 1.3 To approve £40k from Policy Contingency for pump priming The Hill.

12. Budget Process 2026/2027 (Pages 213 - 228)

Report of Assistant Director Finance (S151 Officer)

Purpose of report

To inform the Executive of the proposed approach to the 2026/27 Budget Process and provides context and background information on the existing Medium-Term Financial Strategy and information on latest government announcements relevant to the Strategy.

Recommendations

The meeting resolves:

- 1.1 To approve the Budget Process for 2026/27.
- 1.2 To approve the base assumptions to be used for the 2026/27 budget.
- 1.3 To approve a five-year period for the Medium-Term Financial Strategy to 2030/31 and five-year period for the Capital Programme to 2030/31.

13. Urgent Business

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

Councillors are requested to collect any post from their pigeon hole in the Members' Lounge at the end of the meeting.

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.

Evacuation Procedure

If you hear the fire alarm, please leave the building via the nearest available exit. The fire assembly point is outside the Premier Inn, adjacent to the canal.

Access to Meetings

If you have any special requirements, such as a large print version of these papers or special access facilities to view a meeting online or attend a meeting in person, please contact the officer named below, giving as much notice as possible before the meeting

Mobile Phones

Please ensure that any device is switched to silent operation or switched off.

Webcasting and Broadcasting Notice

The meeting will be recorded by the council for live and/or subsequent broadcast on the council's website. The whole of the meeting will be recorded, except when confidential or exempt items are being considered. The webcast will be retained on the website for 6 months.

If you make a representation to the meeting, you will be deemed by the council to have consented to being recorded. By entering the Council Chamber or joining virtually, you are consenting to being recorded and to the possible use of those images and sound recordings for webcasting and/or training purposes.

The council is obliged, by law, to allow members of the public to take photographs, film, audio-record, and report on proceedings. The council will only seek to prevent this should it be undertaken in a disruptive or otherwise inappropriate manner.

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 22 August 2025

This page is intentionally left blank

Cherwell District Council

Executive

Minutes of a meeting of the Executive held at 39 Castle Quay, Banbury, OX16 5FD, on 1 July 2025 at 6.30 pm

Present:

Councillor Lesley McLean, Deputy Leader of the Council and Portfolio Holder for Finance, Property & Regeneration (Vice-Chair, in the Chair)

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 Nick Cotter, Portfolio Holder for Housing

Councillor Ian Middleton, Portfolio Holder for Neighbourhood Services

Councillor Rob Pattenden, Portfolio Holder for Healthy Communities

Present virtually (no voting rights):

Councillor David Hingley, Leader and Portfolio Holder for Strategic Leadership

Councillor Robert Parkinson, Portfolio Holder for Safer Communities

Also Present:

Councillor Lynne Parsons, Chair, Overview and Scrutiny Committee

Councillor John Broad

Also Present Virtually:

Councillor Amanda Watkins, Leader of the Labour Group

Officers:

Ian Boll, Corporate Director Communities

Michael Furness, Assistant Director Finance & S151 Officer

David Peckford, Assistant Director Planning & Development

Christina Cherry, Planning Policy, Conservation & Design Manager

Denzil Turbervill, Head of Legal Services

Maria Dopazo, Principal Planning Policy Officer

Holly Jones, Planning Policy Officer

Natasha Clark, Governance and Elections Manager

Officers Attending Virtually:

Gordon Stewart, Chief Executive

Mona Walsh, Assistant Director - Property

Nicola Riley, Assistant Director Housing and Wellbeing
Richard Smith, Head of Housing

12 **Declarations of Interest**

12. The Granting of a New Lease at 36/37 Bridge Street, Banbury.
Councillor Rob Pattenden, Other Registerable Interest, as a trustee of Banbury Charities and would leave the meeting for the duration of the item.

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

There were no petitions or requests to address the meeting.

14 **Minutes**

The minutes of the meeting held on 10 June 2025 were agreed as a correct record and signed by the Chair.

15 **Chair's Announcements**

The Chair reminded Members that a Special Executive meeting had been scheduled for 6.30pm on Tuesday 22 July.

16 **Urgent Business**

There were no items of urgent business.

17 **Submission of the Cherwell Local Plan Review 2042**

The Assistant Director Planning and Development submitted a report to present the Cherwell Local Plan Review 2042 for approval and subsequent presentation to Council as a draft 'Submission' Local Plan. Subject to approval by Council the Proposed Submission Local Plan would be submitted to the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government for independent examination. This report also sought approval of an updated Local Development Scheme (LDS). An up-to-date LDS must support submission of the Plan.

In introducing the report, the Portfolio Holder for Planning and Development Management thanks officers for their hard work bringing the Cherwell Local Plan Review 2042

The adopted Local Plan was the main part of the statutory Development Plan, the starting point for considering development proposals. The review of the Cherwell Local Plan had commenced in 2020 with three public consultations

were undertaken prior to the publication of the Proposed Submission Local Plan in December 2024. Following Executive approval in December 2024, consultation on the Proposed Submission Local Plan commenced on 19 December 2024 and closed on 25 February 2025.

The 345 consultation responses had been considered by officers in reviewing whether the Cherwell Local Plan Review 2042 (the 'Plan') was 'sound' and legally compliant, the tests of the independent examination of the Plan started when the Proposed Submission Local Plan was submitted.

The view of officers was that the Plan was sound but that a number of 'proposed changes' and 'minor modifications' should be suggested to the examining inspector(s) in the interests of its improvement, clarification and updating and to address minor presentational, grammatical and typographical issues.

In response to Executive Member comments, the Portfolio Holder for Planning and Development Management confirmed that the Plan was sound, and evidence based and worthy of submission for independent examination.

The Leader, having apologised for being unable to attend the meeting in person due to being at the LGA Conference in Liverpool, highlighted that the Cherwell Local Plan Review 2042 was one of the most important documents for the district and added thanks to officers for their hard work. The Leader also thanked the Portfolio Holder for Planning and Development Management, and other political Groups for their engagement in the process through the Member Advisory Group. Thanks was also extended to parishes, residents and parties who had engaged in the process.

The Labour Group Leader commended officers and the Portfolio Holder for Planning and Development Management and confirmed the Labour Group supported the Proposed Submission Local Plan, the sooner it was adopted, the better for the Cherwell district.

Resolved

- (1) That the proposed submission Regulation 19 draft of the Cherwell Local Plan Review 2042 (December 2024) be recommended to Council.
- (2) That Council be recommended to approve the submission of the draft (the "Proposed Submission Local Plan") to the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government for independent examination with all necessary prescribed and supporting documents.
- (3) That the responses to the consultation on the Proposed Submission Local Plan draft of the Cherwell Local Plan Review 2042 summarised in the Statement of Consultation be noted.
- (4) That the supporting documents relevant to the preparation of the Cherwell Local Plan Review 2042 be noted.

- (5) That the Schedule of Proposed Changes and Minor Modifications to the Proposed Submission Local Plan draft of the Cherwell Local Plan Review be approved.
- (6) That the Local Development Scheme (July 2025) be approved.
- (7) That the use of £300,000 from the Council's reserve for the costs of the examination be approved.
- (8) That authority be delegated to the Assistant Director Planning and Development in consultation with the Portfolio Holder for Planning and Development Management and Corporate Director Communities:-
 - a) to make any necessary presentational changes to the Submission draft of the Cherwell Local Plan Review 2042 and to necessary prescribed and supporting documents before submission to full Council.
 - b) to propose changes and corrections to the Cherwell Local Plan Review 2042 and supporting documents, including policy updates, editorial changes, and correction of typographical and grammatical errors during the examination.
 - c) to invite the examining inspector(s), post submission, to recommend any modifications they consider to be necessary in accordance with section 20(7C) of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004.

Reasons

The Cherwell Local Plan Review has been prepared in the interest of having up to date planning policies which respond positively and effectively in meeting development needs and the planning issues that the district and our local communities face. An up-to-date Local Plan is important for a plan-led approach to decision making and contributing to the achievement of sustainable development. Preparation of the Proposed Submission Local Plan has been informed by three formal public consultations (Regulation 18), continuous engagement and cooperation and evidence gathering.

Consultation on the Proposed Submission Local Plan commenced on 19 December 2024 and closed on 25 February 2025. A total of 345 representations were received in response to the consultation. They have been considered by officers in reviewing whether the Proposed Submission Local Plan is 'sound' and legally compliant – the tests of the independent examination of the Plan that commences on the Proposed Submission Local Plan's submission.

The view of officers is that the Proposed Submission Local Plan is sound but that a number of proposed changes and 'minor modifications' should be made

to it in the interests of its improvement, clarification and updating, and to address minor presentational, grammatical and typographical issues.

An updated Local Development Scheme has also been prepared and this is presented for the Executive's approval.

Alternative options

Option 1: Not to approve the Proposed Submission Local Plan for Submission
Not approving the Proposed Submission Local Plan would mean that the Proposed Submission Local Plan would potentially require significant amendments. These amendments and the need to consult on them prior to Submission would result in the Proposed Submission Plan failing to meet the transitional arrangements set out in NPPF paragraph 234(a). The Council would then be obliged to prepare a revised Local Plan in accordance with the December 2024 NPPF. In addition to creating considerable delay, the revised Local Plan would have to meet the full objectively assessed housing need based on the December 2024 Standard Method figure for Cherwell.

Option 2: To approve the Proposed Submission Local Plan and seek significant changes.

Approving the Proposed Submission Local Plan with significant changes would mean that we would need to reconsult on these changes as an addendum to the Regulation 19 Local Plan. This would result in the Proposed Submission Local Plan failing to meet the transitional arrangements set out in NPPF paragraph 234(a). The Council would then be obliged to prepare a revised Plan in accordance with the December 2024 NPPF. In addition to creating considerable delay, the revised Plan would have to meet the full objectively assessed housing need based on the December 2024 Standard Method figure for Cherwell.

Option 3: Seek further proposed changes in response to specific issues raised in consultation on the Proposed Submission Local Plan draft.

Officers are mindful that the Council must consider the Proposed Submission Local Plan to be submitted to be a 'sound' and legally compliant Plan. Officers have proposed changes that do not affect the soundness of the Plan. Officers advise that any additional proposed changes and the reasons for them are given consideration by officers before they are presented to Council.

18

Temporary Accommodation Policy

The Assistant Director Wellbeing and Housing submitted a report to seek approval for a new Temporary Accommodation Policy.

In introducing the report, the Portfolio Holder for Housing explained that the Council had a duty to provide temporary accommodation for certain households who approach the Council for assistance and who are in housing crisis. The policy outlined the Council's approach, including how placements were made and managed providing clarity for those requiring assistance and a framework for officers in deploying resources.

Resolved

- (1) That the new Temporary Accommodation Policy be approved.

Reasons

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.

Alternative options

Option 1: Not to bring forward a Temporary Accommodation Policy. There is no statutory need to have a Temporary Accommodation Policy, so this is an option that could be considered. It is however considered good practice for Council's to have a Temporary Accommodation Policy in the Council's conversations with its homelessness advisors from the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government, and also is an approach that is and has been replicated by other Council's across the Country. This is therefore rejected.

19

Finance Monitoring Report May 2025

The Assistant Director Finance (S151 Officer) submitted a report to report to Executive the council's forecast yearend financial position as at the end of the May 2025.

There being no questions on the exempt appendix to the report, it was not necessary to exclude the press and public during this item.

Resolved

- (1) That the council's financial management report as at the end of May 2025 be noted.
- (2) That the Use of Reserve and Grant Funding Requests (Annex to the Minutes as set out in the Minute Book) be approved.
- (3) That the proposed write offs be approved.

Reasons

The report updates the Committee on the projected year-end financial position of the council for 2025/26. Regular reporting is key to good governance and demonstrates that the council is actively managing its financial resources sustainably.

Alternative options

Option 1: This report summarises the council's forecast revenue financial position up to the end of March 2026, therefore there are no alternative options to consider.

20 **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 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, 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.

21 **Finance Monitoring Report May 2025 - Exempt Appendix**

There being no questions on the exempt appendix, this item had been agreed as set out under Minute 19.

22 **The Granting of a New Lease at 36/37 Bridge Street, Banbury**

The Assistant Director Property submitted an exempt report in respect of the granting of a new lease at 36/37 Bridge Street, Banbury.

Resolved

(1) As set out in the exempt Minutes.

(2) As set out in the exempt Minutes.

Reasons

As set out in the exempt Minutes.

Alternative options

As set out in the exempt Minutes.

23 **Relocation of Greggs PLC from Unit 30 to Unit 6&7 Castle Quay**

The Assistant Director Property submitted an exempt report in respect of the relocation of Greggs PLC from Unit 30 to Unit 6&7 Castle Quay.

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.

The meeting ended at 7.41 pm

Chair:

Date:

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

Document is Restricted

This page is intentionally left blank

| This report is public | |
|--|---|
| Hydrotreated Vegetable Oil (HVO) Fuel | |
| Committee | Executive |
| Date of Committee | 2 September 2025 |
| Portfolio Holder presenting the report | Portfolio Holder for Neighbourhood Services, Councillor Ian Middleton |
| Date Portfolio Holder agreed report | May 2025 & 19 August 2025 |
| Report of | Assistant Director Environmental Services, Ed Potter / Corporate Director Communities, Ian Boll |

Purpose of report

This report looks at the issues of cutting vehicle fleet emissions by the adoption of Hydrotreated Vegetable Oil (HVO) fuel to replace standard diesel fuel. The report considers the reduction in emissions and the potential increase in revenue costs from moving to HVO.

1. Recommendations

The meeting resolves:

- 1.1 To support the change from standard diesel to HVO diesel commencing from Autumn 2025 leading to a substantial reduction in emissions during 2025/26 & 2026/26.
- 1.2 To note the small increase in fuel costs as a result of moving to HVO which can be contained within the existing fuel budget.

2. Executive Summary

- 2.1 The vehicle fleet is a significant contributor to the overall emissions of the Council. There are around 90 vehicles in the vehicle fleet with half these vehicles being Large Goods Vehicles (LGV)
- 2.2 Small vans and medium sized vans are increasing battery electric vehicles (BEV). Usually, battery electric vehicles are more expensive to initially purchase but have lower operating costs including fuel and maintenance costs. In addition, due to fewer moving parts, they are likely to have a longer life span.
- 2.3 For Large Goods Vehicles the choice of electric vehicles is more limited. In addition, the initial capital cost is 2-2.5 times the cost of a diesel vehicle. Operating costs can be lower than the diesel equivalent. However, the reduction in operating costs can

be small and this reduction does not cover the increased capital costs over the life time of the vehicle.

- 2.4 The change from standard diesel to HVO involves a number of steps such as gaining confirmation from our vehicle suppliers that engine warranties are not invalidated, confirmation of HVO prices, confirmation of the HVO coming from a sustainable source and following an implementation plan which is outlined in Appendix 1.
- 2.5 Moving to HVO fuel will increase fuel costs by around £25-30k in 2025/26 and a further £25- 30k in 2026/27. However, the current price of diesel is well below the budgeted price for 2025/26 so should be contained within the existing budget. The reduction in CO2 will be around 600-700 tonnes in 2025/26 and a further 600-700 tonnes in 2026/27. This will reduce fleet emissions overall from 1400 tonnes to less than 250 tonnes, an 85% reduction. This overall reduction in emissions of 1150 tonnes, comes at an estimated annual cost of £60k, this equates to around £50/tonne of CO2.
- 2.6 The 1150 tonnes reduction will reduce the overall emissions from the Council's operation by around 25-30 %.
- 2.7 The additional revenue cost of around £60k (difference between HVO & standard diesel) in a full year is a significant increase. However, the current price of diesel is well below the budgeted price. Consequently, the move to HVO should be covered within this year's budget. The benefit from this cost increase is that the change will deliver a large reduction in fleet emissions for an affordable price.
- 2.8 It should be noted that the move to HVO is a short-term move (up to five years) and that the longer term solution is to move the fleet fully over to battery electric and/or hydrogen. The HVO must be certified to show it has come from sustainable sources

Implications & Impact Assessments

| Implications | Commentary |
|----------------|---|
| Finance | HVO fuel typically costs around 10-12p/litre more than standard diesel. However, moving to HVO reduces emissions by 80-90%. HVO is a transition fuel until Battery Electric Vehicles (or Hydrogen vehicles) for Large Goods Vehicles are both available and affordable Joanne Kaye Head of Finance, 22 January 2025 |
| Legal | Legal services will need to review the proposed ESPO agreement and where necessary amend it to enable compliance with Council legal obligations and the Council's Constitution. Due diligence over the nature of this service and the supplier will need to be conducted in line with the Procurement Act 2023 and Procurement regulations. The use of HVO fuel has recently garnered some press attention and central government investigation over potential fraudulent claims over its use. This underpins the need for due diligence and risk management in this matter. The Council purchases fuel through a ESPO framework. Denzil Turbevill Head of Legal, 22 January 2025 |

| | | | | |
|--|---|---------|----------|--|
| Risk Management | The sustainability of HVO presents a risk. However, the Council will purchase HVO through a framework supplier (ESPO) with the sustainability of the HVO being certificated. Celia Prado-Teeling, Performance Team Leader, 22 January 2025 | | | |
| Impact Assessments | Positive | Neutral | Negative | Commentary |
| Equality Impact | | | | Not applicable |
| A Are there any aspects of the proposed decision, including how it is delivered or accessed, that could impact on inequality? | | Y | | Not applicable |
| B Will the proposed decision have an impact upon the lives of people with protected characteristics, including employees and service users? | | Y | | Not applicable |
| Climate & Environmental Impact | | | | Moving to HVO will reduce CO2 emissions by 85% compared to diesel. However, it is important that the HVO comes from a certified sustainable source. The intention is that the source material will be used cooking oil |
| ICT & Digital Impact | | | | No impact |
| Data Impact | | | | No impact |
| Procurement & subsidy | | | | Not yet applicable as rates are set on fuel |
| Council Priorities | Supporting Environmental Sustainability | | | |
| Human Resources | There are no immediate HR implications with the report. Claire Cox, Assistant Director of Human Resources, 22 January 2025 | | | |
| Property | N/A | | | |
| Consultation & Engagement | N/A | | | |

Supporting Information

3. Background

- 3.1 The Council operates around 90 vehicles to deliver its services. The vast majority of these vehicles operate on Waste Collection and on Street Scene & Street Cleansing services. 50% of these vehicles are Large Goods Vehicles (LGV) which are 7.5 tonnes or greater.
- 3.2 The vehicles are predominately fuelled by diesel with LGVs exclusively diesel powered. Small vans in the vehicle fleet have been changed over to electric vehicles since 2018, with very few diesel vehicles left. By the end of 25/26 all small vans should be battery electric vehicles. The lowest whole life cost for small vans is battery electric. Typically, the initial purchase cost is greater than the diesel equivalent. However, reduced fuel costs, lower maintenance costs and other benefits ensures the additional capital cost is covered by lower revenue costs in around 5 years. It is also likely that electric small vans will last 10-15 years rather than diesel vehicles which have had an economic life in the range 7-10 years.
- 3.3 Vehicles larger than small vans, typically vehicles up to 3.5 tonnes are being replaced by electric vehicles. Until very recently supply of 3.5 tonne chassis cab vehicles have been difficult to source, The first battery electric Ford Transit was delivered in June 2025 with two Ford Transit caged tippers delivered in July 2025. Two more Ford Transits are due for delivery In August/September 2025. In total there should be 19 electric vans in the fleet by October 2025. If the latest electric vehicles perform as expected seven more vehicles are on the vehicle replacement programme. By March 2028, virtually all the vehicles at 3.5 tonnes or less will be battery electric vehicles.
- 3.4 Replacing a small diesel van saves around one tonne of CO2 emissions per year. Replacing each Street Cleansing vehicle will reduce emissions by 1.5 -2.0 tonnes of CO2 emissions per year. It is expected by the end of 2027/2028 most vehicles below 3.5 tonnes will be battery electric.
- 3.5 However, for Large Goods Vehicles (LGVs) the solution isn't clear. There are some electric Refuse Collection Vehicles (RCVs) across the country which largely operate in tight geographies such as Westminster and City of London. The purchase cost is around 2.5 times the cost of the diesel equivalent and electrical infrastructure to charge the vehicles is extremely important. With most RCVs having 250 or 300kw battery packs a large incoming supply to the depots are needed to charge the vehicles. Typically, a charger of 50 kw plus is needed. For multiple RCVs the incoming electrical supply to charge such vehicles is substantial and there is no certainty there is sufficient electrical capacity in local electrical networks. An alternative solution may be hydrogen. However, the future route to decarbonise LGVs is not fully clear. Currently the lowest whole life cost for a RCV is diesel

4. Details

- 4.1 The fleet make up a very large part of the overall Council emissions accounting for 40% of the total emissions of the Council.
- 4.2 In 2023/24 emissions from the vehicle fleet were around 1400 tonnes, Large Goods Vehicles (LGV) make up 50% of the vehicle fleet but, over 80% of the vehicle fleet emissions. There are a number of barriers to reducing emissions from the LGV fleet, these include:
- Charging infrastructure at the two depots
 - Availability of battery electric LGVs
 - Very high capital costs of battery electric LGVs
- 4.3 LGVs typically have batteries of 250- 300kw. Consequently, the chargers to recharge these batteries are large and the incoming power supply to the depots need to be much higher than the current incoming supply. Currently the supply to Thorpe Lane depot is 100kVA, a single charger for a single LGV is likely to need a supply of 50KVA. A project to uprate the supply initially with funding has been approved to uprate the incoming supply to 500 kVA. This project is awaiting a start date from the District Network Operator (DNO) to install the relevant transformer.

Hydrotreated Vegetable Oil (HVO)

- 4.4 HVO fuel is made from vegetable and other waste oils. None is currently produced in the UK. HVO is imported and it is important that the sustainability of the fuel source is understood. A certification process exists to confirm that the fuel source is sustainable and hasn't come from the result of crops being grown on former rainforest. The intention is to use HVO from a sustainable source certified by the Renewable Fuel Assurance Scheme (RFAS). In addition, the HVO will largely use waste cooking oils as its feedstock.
- 4.5 HVO fuel represents about 1% of diesel fuel sales. Our current diesel supplier, BWOC (ESPO framework supplier) has supplied both standard diesel prices and HVO fuel prices on a weekly basis. The difference fluctuates but, is within a range of 10-12p/litre, this is about 10% higher than standard diesel. BWOC currently collects HVO diesel which has been imported from Tilbury docks or Cardiff port. The standard diesel it supplies usually comes from a depot in Birmingham.
- 4.6 HVO and diesel are largely interchangeable. The warranties from the major vehicle manufacturers are not compromised by moving to HVO. However, before moving to HVO our vehicle manufacturers will be contacted to confirm that this is the case.
- 4.7 The interchangeability between HVO and standard diesel means that changeover does not require fuel tanks to be cleaned out.
- 4.8 Equivalent net CO₂ emissions from HVO fuel are up to 85-90% lower than standard diesel. In addition, there are lower emissions in other areas such as Nitrogen oxides (Nox) and particulates.
- 4.9 It should be remembered that HVO is a transition fuel which produces lower net CO₂ emissions when made from renewable feedstocks. However, to achieve full

Net Zero at the tailpipe, vehicles will not be able to be fuelled either by diesel or HVO fuel.

- 4.10 In addition from 2035 the government is looking to ban the sale of new diesel vehicles at 26 tonnes and below.
- 4.11 Hence the intention is to use HVO as a fuel while the fleet continues to move over to electric vehicles.

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: Continuing using diesel until either Battery Electric Vehicles or Hydrogen Vehicles are available at an affordable price. Fleet emissions will remain very high until the current Large Goods Vehicles are replaced. This may take a considerable number of years.

6 Conclusion and Reasons for Recommendations

- 6.1 To move to HVO fuel with the implementation plan commencing from Autumn 2025, this will reduce fleet emissions in 2025/26 and further with the full year effect in 2026/27.

Decision Information

| | |
|---|------------------------------------|
| Key Decision | Yes – financial & service delivery |
| Subject to Call in | Yes |
| If not, why not subject to call in | N/A |
| Ward(s) Affected | All |

Document Information

| | |
|--------------------------|--|
| Appendices | |
| Appendix 1 | Implementation Plan |
| Background Papers | None |
| Reference Papers | None |
| Report Author | Ed Potter, Assistant Director Environmental Services |

| | |
|--|---|
| Report Author contact details | ed.potter@cherwell-dc.gov.uk , 01295 221574 |
| Corporate Director Approval (unless Corporate Director or Statutory Officer report) | Corporate Director for Communities, Ian Boll, 08/01/25 & 19/08/25 |

This page is intentionally left blank

Appendix 1

Implementation Plan for the introduction of HVO fuel

- 1 Ensure the supply of HVO fuel has come from a sustainable source including a robust certification system
- 2 Work with the other main fuel user, Oxfordshire County Council, to ensure their vehicle can use HVO fuel
- 3 Gain confirmation from our vehicle suppliers that engine warranties will not be compromised by the change to HVO
- 4 Work with our fuel supplier to develop a delivery plan to change over from diesel to HVO fuel

This page is intentionally left blank

| This report is public | |
|--|--|
| Domestic Abuse Policy | |
| Committee | Executive |
| Date of Committee | 2 September 2025 |
| Portfolio Holder presenting the report | Portfolio Holder for Housing, Councillor Nick Cotter |
| Date Portfolio Holder agreed report | 24 July 2025 |
| Report of | Assistant Director Wellbeing and Housing, Nicola Riley |

Purpose of report

To seek approval for a new Domestic Abuse Policy.

1. Recommendations

The meeting resolves:

- 1.1 To approve the new Domestic Abuse Policy.

2. Executive Summary

- 2.1 The Council has duties and responsibilities across housing and other service areas to provide advice, assistance and support for victim/survivors of domestic abuse. The Domestic Abuse Policy outlines the services, our approach and how and when partners and other commissioned services are engaged.

Implications & Impact Assessments

| Implications | Commentary |
|--------------|---|
| Finance | There are no financial implications arising from this report. The provision of services identified in the policy are within existing budget whilst the DA Co-ordinator role is funded through grant. Kelly Wheeler, Finance Business Partner, 24 July 2025 |
| Legal | The report notes that the Council has a number of legal obligations in relation to supporting residents who are victims of domestic abuse in conjunction with Oxfordshire County Council. Having a robust policy to set out how we will achieve this is good practice and will help to ensure that the Council meets its legal obligations to support victims of domestic abuse in the area. Denzil – John Turbervill, Head of Legal Services, 30 July 2025 |

| | | | | |
|--|---|---------|----------|---|
| Risk Management | There are no risk implications associated with this report. Celia Prado-Teeling, Performance Team Leader, 30 July 2025 | | | |
| Impact Assessments | Positive | Neutral | Negative | Commentary |
| Equality Impact | x | | | The outcome of the report will contribute to the provision of services that consider the needs of vulnerable people, as outlined within associated Legislation. Celia Prado-Teeling, Performance Team Leader, 30 July 2025 |
| 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 | | Not from the policy directly |
| Climate & Environmental Impact | | x | | Not applicable |
| ICT & Digital Impact | | x | | Not applicable |
| Data Impact | | x | | Not applicable |
| Procurement & subsidy | | x | | Not applicable |
| Council Priorities | Quality Housing and Place Making | | | |
| Human Resources | Not applicable | | | |
| Property | Not applicable | | | |
| Consultation & Engagement | None | | | |

Supporting Information

3. Background

- 3.1 The Council has duties to provide advice and assistance with housing to victim/survivors of domestic abuse. These are outlined in the Domestic Abuse Act 2021 and within other housing legislation and associated guidance. The Council also has duties to report and record safeguarding concerns associated with vulnerable adults and children, as victim/survivors and children within the household could be at risk.
- 3.2 The Council will have more direct responsibilities to lead and coordinate support and responses to domestic abuse when its statutory housing duties are triggered. However, the policy aims to outline and raise awareness of the support available for victim/survivors of domestic abuse. Even when this support may be provided by a partner agency.
- 3.3 Overall, domestic abuse and associated commissioning strategy and oversight is provided by Oxfordshire County Council. Cherwell has high rates of domestic abuse when compared to other areas within Oxfordshire. Therefore, there are a higher proportion of people in need of or receiving support than in other areas.
- 3.4 Cherwell has used grant funding available to provide a Domestic Abuse Coordinator within the housing team, with an aim of improving awareness, services and partnership activities. The Council is seeking an accreditation for its work in this area from the Domestic Abuse Housing Alliance (DAHA).

4. Details

- 4.1 The new Domestic Abuse Policy outlines the Council's role and responsibilities and how residents receive advice and support.
- 4.2 It provides an overview of what residents can expect from the Council when they approach the Council for support with domestic abuse and how the Council will ensure that their circumstances are handled confidentially, sensitively and non-judgmentally.
- 4.3 It provides an overview of the housing support that is provided by the Council, particularly through the housing options team, housing register and through the Sanctuary Scheme, which provides additional security measures to properties.
- 4.4 It outlines the multi-agency role and multi-agency arrangements that the Council is part of and that are in place within Oxfordshire to coordinate responses, provide support and monitor perpetrators.

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 to bring forward a Domestic Abuse Policy. The Council has statutory duties in delivering housing services and participating in multi-agency arrangements regarding victim and perpetrator management, however, there are no statutory duties to have a domestic abuse policy. The Council is aiming to achieve an accreditation in recognition of its practice and focus on this area, and a policy is an important part of achieving this. This option is therefore rejected.

6. Conclusion and Reasons for Recommendations

- 6.1 It is important that the Council has up to date policies and procedures for key service areas and it is important that they are legislatively and operationally sound.

Decision Information

| | |
|---|------------------------------|
| Key Decision | Yes, community threshold met |
| Subject to Call in | Yes |
| If not, why not subject to call in | N/A |
| Ward(s) Affected | All Wards |

Document Information

| | |
|--|--|
| Appendices | |
| Appendix 1 | New Domestic Abuse Policy |
| Appendix 2 | 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 |
| Corporate Director Approval (unless Corporate Director or Statutory Officer report) | Ian Boll, Corporate Director – Communities, 28 July 2025 |



Cherwell
DISTRICT COUNCIL
NORTH OXFORDSHIRE

Domestic Abuse Policy

2025

| Version | Date | Author | Change |
|---------|-------------|---------|--------|
| 1.0 | August 2025 | R Smith | |

Contents

| | |
|------------------------------|---|
| 1. Introduction..... | 3 |
| 2. Aims and Objectives | 4 |
| 3. Statutory guidance | 4 |
| 4. Policy Outline..... | 5 |

1. Introduction

The Cherwell District Council domestic abuse policy aims to ensure that residents affected by domestic abuse and who approach the Council for support and advice are supported in a manner that is sensitive and non-judgemental.

The Council, at all times, will put the safety and housing security of those experiencing domestic abuse at the forefront and will drive the actions it takes. The Council will also aim to assist in holding perpetrators to account for their behaviour.

The Council will support residents who disclose experiences of domestic abuse. We aim to foster an environment that is open and supportive, ensuring that victim/survivors of abuse are and feel heard.

Domestic abuse is a very serious offence, and no person should live in fear of violence or abuse. This policy commits to deal efficiently and effectively with reports the Council receives. The Council is committed to working effectively with partners and specialist agencies in providing a coordinated response with support that is tailored to the needs of the individual, who is the victim/survivor.

The Council recognises that there can be an under-reporting of domestic abuse, and victim/survivors have barriers to reporting. The Council therefore will treat all matters reported with empathy and confidentiality.

The Council will aim to raise awareness of domestic abuse and the support that it and partner agencies provide locally. We will participate in and support national awareness raising campaigns and produce our own communications to help raise awareness and encourage those experiencing abuse to access support. The Council also aims to improve the services that it offers to residents and staff by achieving accreditations, such as the Domestic Abuse Housing Alliance (DAHA).

When referring to domestic abuse and for the purposes of this policy, the statutory definition of abuse applies, which is outlined within section 3.

The policy supplements with wider Oxfordshire County Council Domestic Abuse Strategy. Many of the advice and support mechanisms associated with domestic abuse are commissioned at a county level, in which the district and city councils and their residents can access. This partnership enables a range of support and safe accommodation options, including women's refuge. Certain roles and responsibilities, such as housing advice and assistance, are retained at a district level.

Within the Policy, those affected by domestic abuse are referred to as victim/survivors.

2. Aims and Objectives

The Domestic Abuse Policy aims to ensure that:

All residents are aware of the Council's role and responsibilities and where they can receive advice should they need it.

All residents who ask for support in addressing domestic abuse are able to access the appropriate advice and support, which includes the signposting to partner agencies and commissioned services, where appropriate.

All residents experiencing domestic abuse and are seeking the support and assistance from the Council can be confident that their individual circumstances will be handled confidentially, sensitively and non-judgementally.

That staff are appropriately aware and are trained on how to support and assist residents asking for assistance in relation to domestic abuse, where they be victim/survivors or perpetrators.

3. Statutory guidance

The Domestic Abuse Act 2021 defines domestic abuse as

Behaviour of a person ("A") towards another person ("B") is "domestic abuse if

- (a) A and B are each aged 16 or over and are personally connected to each other, and*
- (b) The behaviour is abusive.*

Behaviour is "abusive" if it consists of any of the following –

- (a) Physical or sexual abuse*
- (b) Violent or threatening behaviour*
- (c) Controlling or coercive behaviour*
- (d) Economic abuse*
- (e) Psychological, emotional or other abuse*

And it does not matter whether the behaviour consists of a single incident or a course of conduct.

"Economic abuse" means any behaviour that has a substantial adverse effect on B's ability to-

- (a) Acquire, use or maintain money or other property, or*
- (b) Obtain goods or services*

For the purposes of this Act, A's behaviour may be behaviour "towards" B despite the fact that it consists of conduct directed at another person (for example, B's child)

People are "personally connected" to each other if any of the following applies

- (a) They are, or have been, married to each other*
- (b) They are, or have been, civil partners of each other*
- (c) They have agreed to marry one another (whether or not the agreement has been terminated)*
- (d) They have entered into a civil partnership agreement (whether or not the agreement has been terminated)*
- (e) They are, or have been, in an intimate personal relationship with each other*
- (f) They each have, or there has been a time when they each have had, a parental relationship in relation to the same child*
- (g) They are relatives*

Domestic Abuse Act 2021 Section 1 & 2

4. Policy Outline

4.1 Support

The Council will ensure that all reports of domestic abuse are treated confidentially and in a manner that is sensitive and non-judgmental. The Council recognises that not all people who have experienced domestic abuse will see themselves as victims and we will ensure that we are sensitive not to label them as such.

The Council will take a victim/survivor centred approach to those experiencing domestic abuse and will make the safety and well-being of the victim/survivor a priority.

All reports of domestic abuse will be handled in accordance with the relevant adults and children's safeguarding policies and procedures.

The Council will carry out or facilitate a risk assessment in accordance with the DASH model. The DASH model is a UK wide assessment process used by agencies to understand the risk posed, make onward referrals and how best survivors and children will be supported.

The Council will refer the victim/survivor to other agencies that are more appropriate to provide the specific and specialist support services that the victim/survivor may need. We will make sure that the victim/survivor is aware of the actions that we are taking or plan to take and that they, where appropriate and necessary, can agree to them.

The Council will agree with you how best we can communicate with you, whether this be by phone, video call, at a safe space etc.

The Council will encourage, where appropriate, for the victim/survivor to report what they are or have experienced to the Police, whether they are the victim/survivor themselves or a witness to abuse.

The Council will ensure appropriate safeguarding arrangements are followed when victim/survivors and their families approach the Council for support. Employees are trained in processes surrounding safeguarding children and adults and cases will be dealt with in accordance with Safeguarding Policies and Procedures. Employees also receive awareness training for domestic abuse through their corporate training package.

4.2 Housing

We will provide advice and assistance regarding alternative safe accommodation. When approaching the housing service for advice and assistance, the member of staff will be appropriately trained to discuss the next steps available to the victim/survivor. The officer allocated to the case will be the same throughout the case progression wherever possible. We will also aim to tailor the meeting to the needs of the victim/survivor, such as offering additional flexibilities over your appointment format, or offering workers of a certain gender.

The Council will offer advice and support to assist those experiencing domestic abuse and will act in accordance with our responsibilities within legislation. The Council will support in identifying potential options for the victim/survivor, whether this be rehousing, emergency housing or support to remain in their home. The Council will help access emergency accommodation or access refuge services where required. The Council will signpost and refer to other agencies who are better placed to provide advice and support on certain aspects of housing and the law pertaining to, where appropriate. Particularly in cases where joint tenancies or mortgaged property are involved.

Following the DASH risk assessment process, we will take into account the needs of the individual victim/survivor and recognise that our response and actions will need to be based on that assessment. The Council will ensure that advice is provided on all the potential courses of action, which could be immediate or longer term.

The Council recognises that victim/survivors may not want to take legal action, but we will offer advice for those that wish to and make victim/survivors aware of the options that are potentially open to them. This may include signposting or assisting in accessing legal advice around injunctions, non-molestation orders and tenancy or mortgage advice regarding ending joint arrangements.

The Council does not hold a housing stock of a significant size. The vast majority of social housing in the Cherwell district is provided by other Registered Providers. Officers will work with partner Registered Providers to consider how best the housing

options of victim/survivors may be met. This may include transfers within social housing.

Victim/survivors of domestic abuse will receive prioritised banding for housing in accordance with the Council's Allocations Scheme.

The Council ensures that its staff who are involved in the assessment of homelessness or housing applications receive enhanced levels of training, through the Safeguarding Board and Reducing the Risk, and this training is regularly refreshed. This is to ensure that victim/survivors approaching the Council for assistance receive a good service and are given the best possible advice and housing options.

4.3 The Sanctuary Scheme

The Council works with survivors of domestic abuse to enable them to stay in their own home, if they do not wish to move, and to do so in a safe and sustained manner. This scheme is also referred to as Target Hardening. The Sanctuary Scheme has no affiliation with the Registered Provider, Sanctuary.

A Sanctuary Scheme provides security enhancements and improvements to a property where the perpetrator of abuse has left the property. Requests to access the Sanctuary Scheme are generally received from a partner agency who is working with the victim/survivor on a casework and support basis. Referrals are received by the Housing Options Team for consideration.

When receiving a referrals, the Council will consider

- The landlord and tenure of the property. It may be necessary to gain permission of the landlord before completing any works.
- The likely cost of the work and whether these are viable as opposed to other options.
- Whether the works will draw significant attention to the property, if approved.
- Whether the works will leave the property potentially unsafe due to fire or other safety reasons.
- Whether alternative solutions, such as a move to alternative accommodation, are more suitable than the works being requested and the risk level.
- Whether a homeless application would be a more suitable and appropriate route.

The Council will routinely consider the following works as part of the Sanctuary Scheme.

- Changes to locks and replacement keys
- Improvements to door security and letterboxes

- Improvements to window furniture, such as window locks and keys
- Alarms
- Exterior lighting improvements
- Improvements to fencing and gates
- Interactive doorbells and similar technology

The following works will generally not be considered as part of the Sanctuary Scheme

- Installation of safe rooms or panic rooms
- Installation of bars, boarding up or blocking up exists or windows
- Installation of CCTV systems
- Any other referral that is contrary to building regulations or that would create a hazard in accordance with the Housing Health and Safety Rating System.

Upon receipt of the referral, the Council will liaise with the landlord, tenant or both, as appropriate.

The Council would expect Registered Providers to carry out works to their own properties, to facilitate the improvements, or reimburse the Council if it carried out works with their agreement.

The decision of whether the security improvement is approved and appropriate will be made by the Housing Options Manager or the Head of Housing as appropriate.

4.4 Perpetrator Management

The Council will take into account the wishes of the victim/survivor and not make assumptions that they will want matters to be reported to the Police, or that they want a shared living arrangement to end.

Where it is appropriate and the victim/survivor wishes for the Council to assist in doing so, the Council will make a report to the police.

In the course of dealing with a case of domestic abuse and where property is involved, the Council may have a role or receive representations from the alleged perpetrator of the abuse for support with their housing. The alleged perpetrator will receive housing support and advice in accordance with our responsibilities within legislation.

The Council will assess any potential application to the Housing Register from the alleged perpetrator in accordance with its Allocations Scheme. Officers assessing the application will consider whether clause 4.9.1 Unacceptable Behaviour applies.

The clause contains specific reference to domestic abuse. If applied, this can lead to disqualification from the housing register.

Where counter allegations of abuse exist, the Council will work with specialist partner agencies to ensure that appropriate support is provided.

The Council will ensure that, where appropriate, information and support is available to perpetrators of abuse who wish to address their behaviour and seek support and signpost accordingly.

4.5 Partnership Working

The Council will retain up to date information and services available for victim/survivors and will routinely provide this on our website.

The Council will work proactively in partnership and participate in partnership activities relating to domestic abuse including:

- The Multi Agency Risk Management Conference (MARAC)
- Attending and being an active member of the Strategic Management Board of MARAC
- The Cherwell Community Safety Partnership
- The Oxfordshire Domestic Abuse Strategic Board and Safe Accommodation Subgroup
- Co-commissioning and oversight of the Oxfordshire Domestic Abuse Services.

The Council will share information with other organisations to ensure that victim/survivors receive the appropriate support in accordance with their specific circumstances. The Council will do so with the permission of the victim/survivor, unless provisions relating to the urgent safeguarding of an vulnerable adult or child apply.

4.6 Prevention and Awareness

The Council is committed to improving practice and will provide staff with appropriate training and awareness and will offer additional and enhanced training to front line employees. Awareness throughout the Council will be promoted and facilitated by the network of domestic abuse champions, which are embedded within individual service areas.

The Council will actively raise awareness of domestic abuse and the support available. This applies to residents and staff.

The Council will raise awareness of domestic abuse through its media channels and other communications and with relevant partners and agencies.

The Council will seek to learn and improve services through accreditation processes, when appropriate.

4.7 Equality and Diversity

The Council has a statutory duty to have due regard to the need to promote disability, race and gender equality. The Council recognises that domestic abuse occurs in society, regardless of age, sex, gender identity, race, religion or belief, sexual orientation, marital status, disability, pregnancy, wealth, level of educational attainment and whether they live in an urban or rural area.

We recognise that domestic abuse is a gendered crime and disproportionately affects women and is disproportionately perpetrated by men. Domestic abuse can affect anyone. Some victim/survivors might be disproportionately affected or particularly vulnerable and some groups are affected by specific forms of domestic abuse. The Council also understands there are cultural and other barriers to reporting domestic abuse. We will take all of this into account in the support we provide.

We are committed to ensure our services are accessible to everyone and residents can access services in the way they need.

4.8 Monitoring Performance and Review

The performance against the policy will be reviewed regularly by the service.

The policy will be monitored and reviewed on a 5 yearly basis and will be reviewed more frequently if there are changes in legislation or guidance that affect the policy, for instance.

Minor changes which make no significant difference to service provision will be made to the document with the agreement of the Assistant Director – Wellbeing and Housing and the Portfolio Holder for Housing.

Cherwell District Council
Equality and Climate Impact Assessment

Cherwell District Council Domestic Abuse Policy

Contents

Section 1: Summary details..... 3

Section 2: Detail of proposal..... 4

Section 3: Impact Assessment - Protected Characteristics..... 5

Section 3: Impact Assessment - Additional Community Impacts 7

Section 3: Impact Assessment - Additional Wider Impacts 9

Section 3: Impact Assessment - Climate Change Impacts 10

Section 4: Review 12

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 Domestic Abuse Policy |
| Is this a new or existing function or policy? | New 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 Cherwell District Council domestic abuse policy aims to ensure that residents affected by domestic abuse and who approach the Council for support and advice are supported in a manner that is sensitive and non-judgemental. It outlines the services that Council provides and what support victim/survivors can expect. As well as how the Council will involve and be involved in multi agency partnership working.</p> <p>Where domestic abuse is linked to housing and the support the Council provides, the prioritisation of different households is outlined with legislation regarding priority need and additional support provided to applicants that are fleeing domestic abuse</p> |
| Completed By | Richard Smith |
| Authorised By | Nicola Riley |
| Date of Assessment | August 2025 |

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>The Council has an important role in ensuring that victim/survivors of domestic abuse receive appropriate support. This is both in its role as a statutory agency and housing authority within multi agency arrangements such as MARAC, within its role as part of the Community Safety Partnership, its statutory role within safeguarding adults and children as well as its statutory duties to provide housing advice and support, temporary accommodation where appropriate and provide access to permanent housing options.</p> <p>The policy brings together these different roles and responsibilities into one policy document.</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 policy document is considered prudent. It provides an overview and provide clarity on the Council's approach and its commitment to support victim/survivors and work with partners to achieve better outcomes</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</p> | <p>Cherwell District Council has a higher prevalence of domestic abuse prevalence compared to the Oxfordshire average.</p> <p>Between April and June 25, as a snapshot, Cherwell had the highest rate across the following metrics when compared with other districts and Oxford City.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • New referrals to MARACs • Police recorded occurrences of Domestic Abuse • Children (social care cases) assessed with a Domestic Abuse risk factor |

| | |
|--|--|
| <p>different individuals, communities or groups and our ability to deliver our climate commitments.</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Victim/survivors of Domestic Abuse in contact with Drug and Alcohol services. <p>Domestic abuse approaches within the housing service are also rising. In 24/25, the Council recorded 163 instances of victim/survivors requesting homelessness assistance because of domestic abuse, this was a significant increase on the year before. Clients fleeing domestic abuse make up around 10% of the households within temporary accommodation, which is outside those housed through the domestic abuse pathways.</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>Not to bring forward a Domestic Abuse Policy. The Council has statutory duties in delivering housing services and participating in multi-agency arrangements regarding victim and perpetrator management, however, there are no statutory duties to have a domestic abuse policy. The Council is aiming to achieve an accreditation in recognition of its practice and focus on this area, and a policy is an important part of achieving this. This option is therefore rejected.</p> |

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 checked="" type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | N/A | None | N/A | N/A |
| Disability | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | | None | N/A | N/A |
| 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"/> | Households that are pregnant are classed as priority need and are therefore provided with temporary accommodation when the approach the Council in housing crisis. | N/A | Housing Options Manager | Annual monitoring |
| Race | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | N/A | N/A | N/A | N/A |

| | | | | | | | |
|---------------------------|-------------------------------------|-------------------------------------|--------------------------|---|--|-------------------------|-------------------|
| Sex | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | Domestic Abuse is predominantly an offence committed by males against females. | Whilst these are national and societal trends, the support provided through the policy will hopefully lead to increases of reporting and increasing of support being accessed, which in turn should achieve better outcomes. | Housing Options Manager | Annual monitoring |
| Sexual Orientation | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | N/A | N/A | N/A | N/A |
| Religion or Belief | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | There are some cultural barriers that could make reporting and support more difficult | The monitoring of all characteristics are monitored when applicants apply for housing or request the support of the housing team. Any patterns or under-reporting can therefore be identified. | Housing Options Manager | Annual monitoring |

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 checked="" type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | N/A | N/A | N/A | N/A |
| Armed Forces | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | N/A | None | N/A | N/A |
| Carers | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | N/A | None | N/A | N/A |
| Areas of deprivation | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | N/A | 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"/> | Increased reporting and awareness could have an associated impact on providers of services. | Existing partnership working and contract monitoring is in place. Issues will be raised accordingly through those mechanisms | Head of Housing | Annual monitoring |
| Social Value ¹ | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | N/A | N/A | N/A | N/A |

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

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 | Head of Housing |
| Authorised By | AD Wellbeing and Housing |

| This report is public | |
|--|---|
| Made in Banbury | |
| Committee | Executive |
| Date of Committee | 02 September 2025 |
| Portfolio Holder presenting the report | Portfolio Holder for Councillor Rob Pattenden |
| Date Portfolio Holder agreed report | 16 July 2025 |
| Report of | Assistant Director Wellbeing and Housing |

Purpose of report

A new cultural strategy for Banbury and an exploration of the economic impact of investment in the cultural sector offer a perspective on the importance of cultural organisations for the district. This report highlights the connection between the council's wellbeing strategy, the Banbury Area Priority Plan and the development of coordinated investment.

1. Recommendations

The meeting resolves:

- 1.1 To endorse Made in Banbury, a cultural strategy for the Town.
- 1.2 To acknowledge the impact investment in arts and culture can have on the local economy.
- 1.3 To support the Banbury Quays Consortium in their coordination of marketing cultural offers to audiences under a shared 'Made in Banbury' approach across the district with a grant of £3000 from existing funding allocations for the next two years.
- 1.4 To monitor the implementation and delivery of the action plan appended.
- 1.5 Given the independent nature of the cultural strategy, the area oversight groups are to consider culture in their placemaking plans. Ensuring the arts organisations of the district contribute to the cultural development of the district overall.

2. Executive Summary

- 2.1 Banbury Quays Consortium, an independent Community Interest Company (CIC), grew out of the desire for professional arts and culture organisations to consider their impact, recognising their unique contributions and audiences and their ambition to see Banbury continue to be a place that promotes urban regeneration and facilities for all age groups, for recreation, art, performance, culture, education

and other leisure activities in order to encourage participation by all those living in Banbury and the surrounding area, and to make Banbury a destination for visitors.

- 2.2 A commission to Art Reach, a national acclaimed specialist consultancy, enabled them to come together and capture not only the current offer, but solidify their joint ambition to make the arts and cultural organisations the drivers of regeneration and investment in the Town Centre.
- 2.3 There is a recognition that the significant professional organisations in this sector are based in Banbury but that their audiences are drawn from the whole district and beyond.
- 2.4 Consequently an economic impact study was undertaken to assess the value of investment into these organisations made by Cherwell District Council and other grant making bodies. Cultural and leisure events can work as a powerful magnet to attract residents and visitors to a town centre with cafes, restaurants, pubs, shops and other facilities able to benefit from the footfall and accompanying spend.
- 2.5 The Council's Wellbeing Strategy recognises the impact the arts and engaging in creative activity can have on the wellbeing of residents. Goal 5, everyone can connect with culture specifically talks to the benefits of creative and cultural activity for individuals but also as drivers of community cohesion and resilience.
- 2.6 The Banbury Area Priority Plan identifies the actions determined from the Banbury Vision 2050 engagement findings which support the regeneration of the Town Centre and will develop Banbury as a destination for residents and for visitors from near and far.
- 2.7 Considerable work is being considered by all tiers of local authority and the Integrated Care Board to coordinate and catalyse development locally to improve the health outcomes of residents, as well as attract investment to sustain and develop a vibrant Town Centre. This report draws together potentially disparate actions into a coordinated and consistent plan of action with Banbury Quays Consortium at the heart of the activity overlaid by the structure and support from local authorities. The appended Alignments document captures this.
- 2.8 The district's key arts organisations are based in Banbury, but they all have an impact beyond the town. Consideration of how to maximise their district wide impact should be considered through the Area Oversight Groups.

Implications & Impact Assessments

| Implications | Commentary |
|-----------------|---|
| Finance | |
| Legal | |
| Risk Management | There are no risk implications arising directly from this report. Any risk arising will be managed through the service operational risk |

| | | | | |
|--|---|---------|----------|---|
| | and escalated to the leadership risk register as and when deemed necessary. Julie Miles, Performance Analyst & Developer, 04 August 2025 | | | |
| Impact Assessments | Positive | Neutral | Negative | Commentary |
| Equality Impact | x | | | Arising from the implementation of plans referenced in the report |
| A Are there any aspects of the proposed decision, including how it is delivered or accessed, that could impact on inequality? | x | | | Supporting a vibrant and responsive cultural sector will positively impact on residents and provide opportunities that reduce inequality. |
| B Will the proposed decision have an impact upon the lives of people with protected characteristics, including employees and service users? | x | | | Building a strong, cohesive, and resilient Town will have positive benefits for people with protected characteristics. |
| Climate & Environmental Impact | | x | | |
| ICT & Digital Impact | | x | | |
| Data Impact | | x | | |
| Procurement & subsidy | | x | | |
| Council Priorities | An enterprising economy with strong and vibrant centres Healthy resilient and engaged communities | | | |
| Human Resources | N/A | | | |
| Property | N/A | | | |
| Consultation & Engagement | The Cultural Strategy developed by the Banbury Quays Consortium is the result of consultation undertaken with a selection of cultural organisations in Banbury and a direct public survey linked to the Banbury Vision 2050 engagement programme. | | | |

Supporting Information

3. Background

- 3.1 The District Council's Wellbeing strategy identifies culture as an important element of residents' wellbeing. It is reproduced here for ease but the whole strategy is available following its approval at Executive in December 2023.

Goal 5: Everyone can connect with culture



Achieving this ambition would mean creative activities lead to improved personal health and wellbeing, as well as contributing to vibrant urban environments that boosts economic regeneration.

Commitments

- *Community assets are recognised and protected.*
- *Maintain strong partnerships with providers of cultural events and programmes, especially at The Mill Arts Centre and Banbury Museum.*
- *Residents will have the opportunity to engage with local culture, including public art, in a way that promotes connection and a sense of belonging.*

Suggested Measurements

1. *The Council and its partners will develop and deliver realistic plans for specific projects and actions and direct resources to recognise and protect its cultural assets.*
2. *Through locally based trusted relationships and networks the providers of cultural events and programmes sector feel supported by CDC and can thrive.*
3. *More residents engage with local culture and feel connected to its aims (Measured by an annual survey).*

- 3.2 Banbury Quays Consortium (BQC) have developed the cultural strategy 'Made in Banbury' in response to the district council's Wellbeing Strategy, 'Everyone's Wellbeing' and the placemaking programme resulting from Banbury Vision 2050. Recognising the opportunity being created by the newly articulated policies for Wellbeing and Regeneration.

- 3.3 The role of the district council is to enable and support the development plans of the cultural organisations and consolidate actions arising from both regeneration and wellbeing strategies to maximise their impact for residents and investors.

4. Details

- 4.1 The cultural strategy appended to this report details the vision and necessary actions to achieve a Cultural Vision for Banbury. A summary of that strategy is captured here
- 4.2 ***Made in Banbury.*** *Creative Banbury is a community of confident innovators, working together to ensure Banbury is a vibrant town of cultural opportunities where people can make their own way and shape their own futures. A cultural vision for Banbury can be organised under three priority themes: **Place, People and Partnerships.***

THEME 1: PLACE

DESTINATION – Banbury is a cultural destination that is proud of its distinct heritage and culture and is known for its unique cultural activities and events that cater to a range of tastes.

IDENTITY – Banbury is known to be friendly, welcoming and inclusive, with an independent streak of creative inventiveness and cultural ambition.

ECONOMY – Banbury is attractive as a place to live, work and visit due to its thriving cultural scene which attracts investment and contributes to its healthy economy.

LIVING WELL – Banbury is a place where people want to live, work and play because of its thriving cultural offer.

FACILITIES – Banbury has a well-developed infrastructure of a range of buildings, spaces and facilities which support creativity, learning and creative enterprises to thrive.

THEME 2: PEOPLE

CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE – the new generations are confident with creative aspirations, supported by Banbury's facilities, safe creative spaces, and opportunities for skills development and progression.

INCLUSION – cultural activity in Banbury supports wellbeing and healthy living through culture for all at any age and brings people together to share and celebrate the diversity of Banbury's communities.

ENGAGEMENT – Banbury's people are engaged and involved in shaping cultural decisions for their town.

THEME 3: PARTNERSHIPS

COLLABORATIVE – cultural organisations in Banbury work together to achieve more and address gaps in cultural provision for Banbury's people.

- 4.3 Objectives have been drawn up for each theme, to identify how these goals for Banbury can be achieved as in the vision described above. Delivery will be guided by the Cultural Strategy Steering Group made up from the Banbury Quays Consortium and Cherwell District Council representatives.
- 4.4 A comprehensive Action Plan has been developed by the steering group of the BQC to deliver these objectives which will be monitored and reported to the Banbury Area Oversight Group. Appendix 2
- 4.5 An award of UKSPF funding allowed for the commissioning of an economic impact study. Not appended due to commercial sensitivity. This report does however show a significant slice of the arts and cultural economy in Banbury in a very positive light. It is a limited study of a micro economy but demonstrates how four of the key diverse cultural organisations are making an impact on the vitality of the town, creating a joint economic value of over £2 million annually.
- 4.6 The report examines data over 2 consecutive financial years 2022-23 and 2023 – 24. Critically, it demonstrates the resilience of the sector, in that, despite the cost-of-living crisis, ongoing pandemic after-effects and catastrophic flooding forcing the closure and temporary relocation of The Mill Arts Centre’s operation over several months, the data still shows a steady growth in all fields; audience development, employment stats, volunteers experience, earned income and attracting external funding investment.
- 4.7 The report is based on the economic impact of four very different models of cultural activity in the canalside area of Banbury and shows how their complimentary approaches underpin the collaborative ambitions of the Cultural Strategy ‘Made in Banbury’ and suggests further positive returns of economic and social benefits through investment in the arts for the future.
- 4.8 Ensuring that the cultural offers available in the Market Towns and centres of population in Cherwell is a key driver in successful place making. As the retail offer available shifts and changes, having a strong cultural offer, from commercial outlets as well as the subsidised sector, will both maintain and strengthen the visitor economy over and above supporting the wellbeing of residents.
- 4.9 The importance of vibrant market towns as destinations directly impacts on public perception, investment and town centre footfall. Creating strong communities through shared experiences, activity and quality public realm deliver best when partnership is at the heart of an approach. On its own the district council can bring about change but with partners and through consultation and ongoing conversations with residents, businesses and the widest spread of stakeholders those beneficial actions get embedded, and the evolution of places is shared and understood.

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 endorse Made in Banbury and the consequent actions

This has been rejected as the strategy and action plan support the published policies of the Council and the small financial contribution can be achieved from existing funding over the next two years.

6 Conclusion and Reasons for Recommendations

- 6.1 Culture has an important role to play in the delivery of successful placemaking strategies and in the economic health of our Towns. In endorsing the work of the sector through these plans and providing an enabling and supportive policy context for the development of place, activity and employment, Cherwell District Council can effect change. The quality of life local residents enjoy is positively impacted by a vibrant cultural sector and the range of recommendations will help support the sectors efforts to provide a range of opportunities for audiences and residents wanting to pursue a career in the creative industries.

Decision Information

| | |
|---|--------------------------------|
| Key Decision | Yes - Community threshold met. |
| Subject to Call in | Yes |
| If not, why not subject to call in | N/A |
| Ward(s) Affected | All Banbury Wards |

Document Information

| | |
|--------------------------|---|
| Appendices | |
| Appendix 1 | Made in Banbury - a cultural strategy for the town |
| Appendix 2 | Cultural Strategy Alignments |
| Background Papers | Economic Impact study of cultural organisations in Banbury 2025 |
| Reference Papers | <p>Reports and Minutes Everybody's Wellbeing – A new strategy for Cherwell 4 December 2023 https://modgov.cherwell.gov.uk/ieDecisionDetails.aspx?ID=4554</p> <p>Culture - led regeneration; Achieving inclusive and sustainable growth LGA; Calouste Gulbenkian Foundation 2019 https://www.local.gov.uk/publications/culture-led-regeneration-achieving-inclusive-and-sustainable-growth</p> |
| Report Author | Nicola Riley, Assistant Direct Wellbeing and Housing |

| | |
|--|---|
| Report Author contact details | Nicola.riley@cherwell-dc.gov.uk 01295221724 |
| Corporate Director Approval (unless Corporate Director or Statutory Officer report) | Corporate Director for Communities |

Banbury Cultural Strategy

| | |
|-----------------------------|-----------|
| About Banbury | 2 |
| Assets | 2 |
| Strategic Context | 6 |
| Consultation | 12 |
| Conclusions | 15 |
| Priorities and Themes | 17 |
| Where we want to be | 17 |
| How we will get there | 18 |
| Actions | 20 |
| List of Appendices | 27 |

About Banbury

As one of the key towns in the Cherwell District, Banbury has an emergence of cultural assets, makers and promoters with the potential to grow not only the town but also its contribution to the cultural development across the District. The development of a Cultural Strategy was borne out of the increasingly collaborative working by the cultural organisations clustered around the canalside in Banbury and therefore a focus on the place and the cultural lives of its people and communities is at its Heart.

The value of this collaborative working operates beyond Banbury, with many of the Town's Cultural organisations actively working more widely with partners across the District; in programming, delivery and training. Therefore the benefits and learning from success in Banbury will further support increased cultural engagement district-wide.

Assets

Banbury Museum & Gallery

A town centre redevelopment at Castle Quay provided the opportunity to build a new museum, purpose designed, with more space for displays and activities, in the canal-side location. Funded by the Heritage Lottery Fund and the community, the new Museum, designed by ECD Architects of London, opened in September 2002.

From the 1940s until 2013, the museum in Banbury was provided by the Local Authority. In November 2013, a new charity, The Banbury Museum Trust, took full responsibility for the Museum. The current Mission is stated as “Banbury Museum & Gallery is a place of new ideas: we reflect world-changing ideas of the past and work with people from all backgrounds to create the future.” Banbury Museum & Gallery offers a year round programme of events and exhibitions, a library, a cafe and shop, school activities and reminiscence, and meeting space for Banbury Historical Society.

The Mill Arts Centre

The Mill Arts Centre is the cultural hub for Banbury and the surrounding area. Run by The Mill Arts Centre Trust, in 2022 The Mill Arts joined the Arts Council England National Portfolio, as the only NPO in the district.

As the only dedicated arts and performance venue in the area, The Mill’s vision is to inspire creativity and enrich the lives of local communities by providing a high quality, varied artistic, education and participatory programme. By offering communities the chance to engage with and be entertained by a variety of art forms, The Mill plays a significant role in the cultural, social and economic development of the town. The Mill Arts Centre Trust position themselves as a strategic cultural leader for Banbury.

The Mill offers an expansive live and participatory events programme including theatre, dance, music, comedy, film, workshops and classes. Alongside this, they run a number of community projects and initiatives with partner organisations. Also on offer is a cafe bar and Gallery showing local artists work. Spaces at The Mill, including a studio theatre seating up to 237, dance studio and artist studio, are used by many local cultural organisations and freelance artists to deliver their activity as well as being available for hire.

The Mill also runs outreach programmes and arts development programmes, particularly around dance development and outreach into Bicester, which does not have a cultural venue in its locality.

At the time of writing, The Mill Arts Centre is located at The Mill by the canalside. The old building, though much loved, has complex access difficulties and regularly floods, making it unsuitable for continued use as an arts centre requiring modern standards of facilities.

In spite of the significant shortcomings of the building, the organisation has seen exponential growth in activity and audiences over recent years, especially post-COVID19 pandemic, and has outgrown a building which no longer has the capacity to support a sustainable model. Therefore, feasibility of re-locating the Arts Centre within the town centre is being actively explored, both to mitigate the risks presented by the current location, but also an opportunity to address the evident need for a larger performance space in the town. Potentially this move, along with the relocation of the library too, will support the development of the town centre cultural zone for Banbury.

People's Theatre Collective

For over twenty years (19 of them as Cherwell Theatre Company) People's Theatre Collective has aimed to empower and inspire young people to be dynamic participants in their own lives and that of their communities through the transformative power of the arts. The Collective works with over 100 young people across Banbury in weekly sessions and Holiday provision.

Specific projects reach thousands of people a year. The young people have co created performances in many venues across Banbury: Castle Quay, The Mill, Broughton Castle, the Market Place, Tooley's Boat Yard, the Town Hall, Peoples Park, Green Spaces on Housing Estates and the old Nuclear Bunker.

The Company tours professional Children's Theatre to primary schools and libraries across the region. Their Park Ranger programme brings environmental arts projects to primary schools across the area, and every two years the Tell Your Story Festival enables young people to take over Castle Quay and The Mill Arts Centre, showcasing creative work by young people from across Banbury, perform new works written by young Theatre Makers and provide arts workshops to inspire more young people to get involved in the cultural life of Banbury.

Based at the Mill, where they work in partnership to support the development of the next generation of young creatives in Banbury, the Collective are looking to secure an additional space in Castle Quay for a Young People's Cultural Enterprise Centre.

Castle Quay, Lock29

Cherwell District Council bought the Castle Quay shopping centre in 2017 when the developer withdrew from plans to develop the centre and in August 2020 the Council opened Lock29 on the ground floor of the former BHS store.

Lock29 has grown into a hub for food, creativity and community with a diverse range of artisan food and drink outlets and independent retailers. The venue provides a space for live music and events which are open to the whole community, as well as a cinema room which can be hired and used for arts, educational or business activities.

Major retail stores have moved out of Castle Quay, leaving empty units. Plans are underway to relocate the library into Castle Quay, and an option to relocate The Mill Arts Centre to Castle Quay is in discussion.

The Light Cinema

The Light opened in 2022 as part of the District Council's Castle Quay Waterfront regeneration project. This exciting three floor entertainment venue is home to a premium seven screen cinema, 10 lane bowling alley, a retro arcade, climbing centre and waterfront restaurants.

Tooley's Boatyard

Tooley's Boatyard is situated in the heart of Banbury on the South Oxford Canal, this has one of the oldest working dry docks on the Inland Waterways, working continuously since 1778. The site also includes a blacksmith's forge and carpenter's workshop. Tooley's Boatyard Trust supports the history and heritage of the site and provides attractions for the general public. They provide guided tours of the boatyard and forge, boat trips and a wide range of unique gifts, souvenirs, canal maps and books are available from the shop.

St Mary's Church

St Mary's Church offers a significant size venue (able to seat 700), where Banbury does not have a similarly large arts venue on offer. St Mary's has launched Arts at BSM, an initiative to bring their community closer together through offering a programme of arts activities and events. The church also has a strong ethos of inclusivity and recognises its role in "contributing to the flourishing of our town and region so that all might have life in all its fullness". The seating capacity is significant but there are limitations for the venue since the seating is fixed and the stage area is not large enough for large casts or performances requiring a larger area such as dance.

Library

Banbury Library has been housed in Marlborough Road, in a building built in 1884 which now restricts the modernisation of the library. Moving the library presents the opportunity to develop a more modern and fit for purpose library.

Organisations

There is a wealth of quality amateur arts and heritage groups and societies in Banbury, as well as some professionally run organisations. A list of organisations and groups is attached in the Appendix 2. The list of arts organisations active in Banbury suggests that the provision for the performing arts is healthy, but other artforms such as visual art and creative writing are under served, and both the offer for audiences and visitors as well as offer for participation are limited for other artforms.

The Mill Arts Centre is the only organisation in the district of Cherwell that is part of the Arts Council England National Portfolio for 2023-2027.

Banbury Museum & Gallery is an NPO Associate of the Arts Council funded Oxford University Museum Partnership.

In consultation, arts organisations have said that there is a lack of professional arts freelancers in the area, making it difficult for organisations to deliver work as there is low capacity of skills to fulfil requirements.

Cultural organisations have come together to form the Banbury Quays Consortium to drive more collaborative working. After a 4 year break, the Banbury Canal Festival returned in 2022 which allowed cultural organisations to test ways of collaborative working that could have greater impact through their working together.

Oxfordshire Age UK is running a project to explore Banbury's heritage, funded by Historic England and working with Age Friendly Banbury. This is a new partnership project that explores how communities can lead heritage projects and research in their local areas to support wellbeing and build positive relationships, supporting older people to become heritage project co-leaders.

Festivals

Fairport's Cropredy Convention

Formerly the **Cropredy Festival**, this is an annual festival of folk and rock music, headed by British folk-rock band Fairport Convention and held on the edge of the nearby village of Cropredy. The festival has taken place in August annually since 1976.

Fairport's Cropredy Convention attracts up to 20,000 people each year. The festival features a single stage at the lower end of the sloping arena field. There are also ancillary events, such as Morris dancing in the streets and live music at the village's two pubs.

Canal Festival and Banbury Town Council events

Organised by Banbury Town Council, the Canal Festival is a free to enter weekend of activity by and on the water. The event celebrates the canal's historic and integral role in the town's growth since its establishment in 1778. The canal features floating markets, fairground attractions, arts performances, music, comedy and theatre, as a fun packed weekend for all the family. The festival involves many of the local venues who host activities as part of the event, including Castle Quay, Lock29, Tooley's Boatyard, The Mill Arts Centre, Banbury Museum, The Waterside Bar, Bridge Street Park and Bridge Street Community Garden.

Banbury Town Council also organise events throughout the year including Food and Drink Festivals in April and August; a Christmas lights switch-on event; and civic celebrations for Armed Forces Day, Battle of Britain Day and Remembrance Sunday parade. Local bands perform at the Banbury Music Mix in Banbury Market Place on a Friday in July.

Tell Your Story

Biennially, Tell Your Story is a weekend of pop ups and a takeover of Castle Quay Shopping Centre and The Mill Arts Centre by young people working with People's Theatre Collective. Young people work with professional artists in community settings across Banbury to devise work, which is then performed or displayed in the festival. Using visual art, comedy and performing arts, young people tell their stories and host activities such as storytelling sessions and craft workshops.

Strategic Context

Cherwell District Council (CDC)

CDC supports cultural organisations in the area with regular funding, including The Mill Arts Centre and Banbury Museum. Nicola Riley, Assistant Director for Housing and Wellbeing (with the responsibility for culture) at CDC is supportive and plays an active role in regularly meeting with and supporting local organisations. However, support for cultural development and activity is focused under the remit for health and wellbeing (Culture comes under the priority of Healthy, resilient and engaged communities in CDC's Business Plan 2023-24), which is important, but there is scope for culture to support more areas that the council has responsibility for. This Strategy could make the case for culture to support the economy (visitor economy and the creative economy), regeneration (contributing towards vibrant town centres), and community cohesion (sharing cultures).

Banbury Quays Consortium

Initially conceived as developing a 'Banbury Cultural Quarter', this group was established in 2020 and formally constituted as a CIC in July 2023 with its charitable aim being "to carry on activities which benefit the community and in particular (without limitation) to transform Banbury into an exciting destination, to offer experiences in a rich cultural environment, and to create pride for everyone in our town."

The Quays Consortium comprises representatives of Banbury Museum & Gallery, The Mill Arts Centre, Tooley's Boatyard, Banbury Historical Society, Cherwell District Council, Castle Quay Shopping Centre and Banbury Town Council. It sees itself as an enabler, and does not employ staff or deliver capital projects itself. The BQC seeks to be an advocate; to commission research; to connect people; to shine the spotlight on issues; to raise the 'cultural' bar.

The Quays Consortium led the argument for development of a Banbury Cultural Strategy, and commissioned this report enabled by funding from The Mill Arts Centre, Cherwell District Council and Banbury Museum & Gallery.

Banbury Business Improvement District (Banbury BID)

Banbury BID was established in April 2018 and is now midway through its second five year term of office. It not only plays a key role in promoting Banbury town centre and its retail, cultural and leisure offer but also runs its own programme of events to increase footfall to and spend within the town centre, creating experiences for people to enjoy and giving businesses the opportunity to gain more customers.

The BID's free to access events include Summer Fest and Winter Lantern Parades and a three day Winter Market as well as popular town centre trail competitions which involve ten primary schools. In both 2023 and 2024 the BID delivered visual arts projects at Banbury Railway Station which were grant funded by Chiltern Railways and garnered participation from artists, residents, businesses and community groups alike in order to be enjoyed by everyone who visits the station.

Banbury 2050

Following the successful opening of Castle Quay Waterfront in 2022, in 2023 Cherwell District Council commissioned Hemingway Design and NewMasterplanning to develop a vision for

Banbury 2050. Cherwell District Council started work on a comprehensive consultation and engagement programme called Banbury Vision 2050 as the first phase of regeneration plans for Banbury. The Vision will help shape the important elements for a thriving Banbury, including retail, culture and tourism, the evening economy, housing, employment, and connectivity.

The Banbury 2050 project responds to the recognition that town centres are changing and must adapt, and this essential project will enable Cherwell District Council and stakeholders to prepare and set a direction of travel for Banbury in the coming years.

Brighter Futures

Brighter Futures is a long term programme of projects designed to relieve deprivation by improving access and opportunity for individuals within Banbury's most disadvantaged areas. The Brighter Futures partnership brings together the anchor organisations working within the three wards – such as schools, sports providers, charities and the police, housing providers, as well as community groups and faith groups.

A steering group of professionals bring together both information and intelligence from residents and service providers to support all the partners. The group is focussed on breaking down barriers which get in the way of actions to break the cycle of deprivation. They aim to support residents in building a strong and cohesive community.

The partnership work focusses on three wards in Banbury: Ruscote, Neithrop, and Grimsbury and Castle. These wards contain areas which rank on the lower end of the Indices of Multiple Deprivation and rank amongst the 20 per cent most deprived in the country.

Underpinning all the projects are the aims of increasing opportunity, social sustainability and community cohesion and community resilience. Plans aim to build on our strengths and use lessons learned to make work even more effective than before. The programme aims to improve joint working practices, develop projects in conjunction with the community, and build on community strengths to support people to find their own solutions.

Cultural Education Partnerships

Cherwell's Cultural Education Partnership was initiated in 2017, in step with the Oxford City CEP, to develop a locally specific network for North Oxfordshire (NOxCEP) to strengthen links between the local Arts & Cultural Organisations and freelance Artists with Schools and Further Education, also including some Health and Social Agencies, to help improve access to and experience of high quality arts for children and young people. NOxCEP and OXCEP have since transitioned to join up under the OXYGEN CEP banner to make a county-wide network.

NOxCEP enabled the district arts team to secure ACE funds to develop two major strands of work between 2018 – 2023 with local arts partners and schools in Banbury and Bicester: The Schools Connect and Better Lives through Culture programmes. These were administered and supported by the South East Bridge Organisation Artwork as part of a £1 million investment programme to create lasting impact and strategic change for children and young people. Artwork sets out to

make “arts and creativity available to absolutely everyone” and to “break through barriers and develop new ways for people to discover the success, empowerment and sheer joy that the arts and creativity can bring to classrooms, communities and careers”.

Schools Connect Partnership Investment Programme

11 schools registered for ArtsMark to embed quality arts across their curriculum as part of their School Improvement Plan, 3 achieved Silver status in the course of the programme with 2 re-registering for Gold. 26 new Arts Award Advisors were trained from participating schools and arts organisations and artists, with nearly 1000 children achieving Arts Award Certificates as a result of the new partnerships established in the course of this programme despite the disruption of the Covid outbreak in the final year.

The Better Lives through Culture (BLTC) Partnership Investment programme

This hugely successful programme involved two arts organisations, 18 professional artists, eight Banbury schools and two community settings to engage over 1,200 children and young people in inspiring creative activity including animation, theatre, dance, visual arts, sculpture, carnival and music. The children taking part had all been affected by the Covid 19 pandemic. The results of this programme demonstrated positive effects on children’s wellbeing and education, in line with research findings from the Cultural Learning Alliance. Headteachers from schools in the Brighter Futures wards recognised the value of the project, noting that for some pupils the cultural activities were outside their experience. Headteachers also noticed wider benefits to children, absolutely meeting the brief of “better lives through culture”.

The Mill Community Connections initiative

The purpose of this initiative, is to enable community groups, schools, and organisations in the Brighter Futures wards to access high quality arts and cultural opportunities. This allows residents of all ages living in the three Banbury wards to attend live performances, workshops, and activities free of charge and where transport or accessibility are a barrier, this can be funded too.

The objective of this initiative is therefore to enable residents from target neighbourhoods to access arts and cultural opportunities at The Mill, which they would otherwise be unable to access.

Originally established in 2023 through the District Council’s UK Shared Prosperity Fund monies, the successful initiative has continued beyond the life of the original funding, made possible by customer donations and other project grants secured by The Mill Arts Centre.

The fund is prioritised towards:

- Reaching people who have not previously attended any of The Mill’s programme
- Community groups who have never previously, or haven’t recently accessed The Mill’s programme

- Groups who have enabled their users to choose what they want to access.

Through this programme, The Mill is able to build stronger links with local communities to help shape the future programme, so that it reflects the communities it sits within.

Bridge Street Community Garden

The garden secured a tranche of the District Council's 2022-2025 UK Shared Prosperity Fund monies for projects encouraging new groups to use the garden and have their own growing spaces for their users to access all year round. The funds were also used to develop a programme of skills workshops for Banbury residents to learn and encourage the importance of growing food and accessing nature.

Oxfordshire County Council

Oxfordshire County Council's "Our strategic plan 2023-2025" identifies 3 themes: Greener, Fairer, Healthier; and 9 priorities, however none of these explicitly mention culture.

An up-to-date arts or cultural strategy for the County Council was not available through web searches and does not appear to exist.

OxLEP (Oxfordshire Local Enterprise Partnership) does have an Arts and Culture Strategy Framework, written in February 2020 (pre-pandemic), aligning with the newly published ACE Strategy Let's Create, and to be delivered by the Culture and Visitor Economy Sub Group.

The Strategy specifically recognises the important role of The Mill Arts Centre as a cultural driver, Banbury Museum & Gallery and the new Light Cinema, creating a new cultural quarter.

The Framework also identifies one of the priorities for the CEP where young people are not engaging with education, and states work in partnership in Bicester and Banbury to provide life skills through the arts and progression into apprenticeships' and training. The Framework identifies the aspiration to use the cultural assets of Oxfordshire more to connect with young people in areas where they have low access: Point 26 "Oxfordshire is rich in arts and cultural resources, but they do not reach and involve as many people as they should. In particular, children and young people experience uneven access to opportunities to express themselves through creative activities as they are growing up."

OxLEP aims to continue to highlight the global capabilities of Oxfordshire's creative industries through its Showcase. "Inspiring the next generation".

OxLEP have produced a Creative, Cultural, Heritage and Tourism Investment Plan (CCHTIP), up to 2030. The priorities of the CCHTIP were:

- Productive and engaging experiences
- Skills, talent development and business growth
- Creative place-making

It recognises the role of Banbury's cultural assets and regeneration plans to drive more cultural offer in Banbury as a key town in Cherwell. However, it does not appear to suggest more link-up between, for example, some of Oxford's significant cultural assets and Banbury, to benefit Banbury more inclusively in wider plans.

Other relevant County-wide strategies include:

- Libraries and heritage services strategy 2022-27
- Music Service
- OXYGEN Cultural Education Partnership, as noted above

Arts Council England

Arts Council England published their 10-year strategy, Let's Create, 2020-2030. The strategy has three outcomes and four investment principles:

Outcomes:

- Creative People: everyone can develop and express creativity throughout their life;
- Cultural Communities: villages, towns and cities thrive through a collaborative approach to culture;
- A Creative & Cultural Country: England's cultural sector is innovative, collaborative and international.

Investment Principles:

- Ambition and Quality: cultural organisations are ambitious and committed to improving the quality of their work;
- Inclusivity & Relevance: England's diversity is fully reflected in the organisations and individuals that we support and in the culture that they produce;
- Dynamism: cultural organisations are dynamic and able to respond to the challenges of the next decade;
- Environmental Responsibility: cultural organisations lead the way in their approach to environmental responsibility.

Cultural Compacts. In 2019, Arts Council England supported the creation of 20 Cultural Compacts and reviewed their effectiveness. These Compacts are partnerships designed to support the local cultural sector and enhance its contribution to development, with a special emphasis on cross-sector engagement beyond the cultural sector itself and the local authority. The Compacts aim to increase the connectivity between the arts and cultural sector and broader local aspirations and priorities, including local recovery plans within Compact areas through strategic partnerships with relevant sectors. Arts Council England may invest in Cultural Compacts where they see that they can significantly enhance place-making and embed culture into other sectors locally.

National Lottery Project Grants – In 2022 ACE raised the threshold for small grants from £15,000 to £30,000 maximum, and in November 2023 ACE simplified their application process for grant applications under £30,000, making it more accessible to smaller groups. ACE continues to offer larger grants of £30,000-100,000, which can be applied to through their Project Grants.

In Cherwell, between 2019 and 2024, an average of 6.6 ACE Project Grants were awarded each year to organisations or individuals in the District. The majority of these were for smaller grants awards: from 2019 to 2021 the maximum that could be applied for from smaller grants was £15,000; from 2022 to 2024 this was increased to £30,000. In Cherwell, from 2019 to 2021 only smaller grants under £15,000 were awarded. From 2021 to 2024 a few larger grants started to be awarded, however the average was still low at £26,064 and the highest grant awarded was £49,993. Applying for over £50,000 from ACE Project Grants requires a higher level of financial information, which suggests that organisations in Cherwell do not feel confident or do not have capacity to apply for larger grants.

Of the organisations who received Project Grants during this period, 7 were based in Banbury and 2 were individual applicant artists, out of a total of 18 applicants. Of these, People's Theatre Collective secured 4 awards, The Mill Arts Centre 2, and Anjali Dance Company 2 and The Village Butty 2. Organisations who have achieved several awards and thus have a good track record could be expected to start to seek higher amounts, however only The Mill Arts Centre has really built on their achievements by securing the NPO funding from Arts Council. There seems to be more potential in Banbury for organisations to secure more funding from ACE, however they are holding back, either through lack of confidence, lack of knowledge of how to develop a fundraising strategy, or through lack of capacity to apply for or deliver larger projects.

ACE funds music services through Music Hub programmes. For Banbury, this will have been the Oxfordshire Music Hub up to 2024. On 7 May 2024 the new Music Hubs that will start in September 2024 were announced by ACE. The new Music Hub relevant to Banbury is now the Hub for Buckinghamshire and Oxfordshire, with the lead organisation the Buckinghamshire Music Trust. This is a new era for music services across the two counties, with the potential to share more widely knowledge and expertise, but also with a larger administrative burden to ACE as the funder (as with all other Music Hubs) and requirements to find match funding, which will have implications for the partnership's capacity.

Capital funds that are available from ACE at intervals through the year are:

- Cultural Development Fund (CDF)
- Libraries improvement Fund (LIF)
- Museum Estate and Development Fund (MEND)

Heritage Fund

The Heritage Lottery Fund launched a new 10 year strategy in 2023. The strategy focuses on investing in places, not just projects. It has a long term focus, wanting to invest in activity that will have long term impacts as strategic interventions, transformational long-term projects. The Heritage Fund is interested in supporting more partnerships which will make greater impacts on place. It wants to strengthen heritage's contribution to local economies, and support heritage organisations' resilience.

Through their Delivery Plan, they will offer a Strategic initiative on Place, aiming to identify 20 places in a rolling programme where they aim to invest in heritage.

Their strategy also identified priorities as inclusion, access and participation in heritage, and protecting the environment.

Lottery funding offered through the Heritage Fund changed its thresholds in 2023. Their grants for under £10,000 closed in October 2023 and will be allocated through a partner organisation. Grants from £10,000-£10million closed in November 2023 and reopened in January 2024.

Securing grants from the Heritage Lottery Fund appears to be very low for Banbury; between October 2022 and March 2024 Banbury Museum Trust was the only organisation in Banbury who secured an award, of £9,750 in March 2024 (according to available data on the HLF website). There is more potential for heritage funds to be drawn to Banbury organisations. Again this could be due to low capacity, or low confidence or skills for organisations in Banbury to access these grants.

Consultation

Consultation undertaken

The Steering Group relied on partners to conduct some of the consultation, which was collated and analysed by Art Reach. Consultation undertaken was:

- A workshop, run in partnership with Banbury Vision 2050 and Art Reach, for the cultural sector in Banbury;
- A public survey, launched by Banbury Vision 2050 with additional questions from Art Reach;
- Workshops with young people conducted by People's Theatre Collective;
- A survey aimed at education providers, conducted by Art Reach.

Consultation with Banbury Vision 2050

In 2023 an online survey was conducted for Banbury 2050, in partnership with Art Reach and the Banbury Cultural Strategy commissioners, who integrated questions regarding culture in Banbury into the survey. In addition, Art Reach and The Mill Arts Centre supported Banbury 2050 in running a consultation workshop for the cultural sector in November 2023. The following summarises the findings, with more detail contained in the Banbury 2050 report at Appendix 2.

Summary of survey results

Highlighted the relative strength of the cultural sector as a draw for Banbury, as well as the events, but notes that people still wanted to see it improved and that this would encourage them to visit Banbury more often.

The survey results showed the importance of The Light, The Mill Arts Centre and The Museum as cultural attractions and evening destinations. The old town also provided a second destination, particularly in the evening.

Park and green spaces were identified as strengths and as important elements in the town's cultural and leisure offer.

Summary of Consultation workshop findings

Working with Art Reach, a stakeholder workshop focusing on the issues relevant to cultural and creative organisations was held on November 28th 2023, hosted by the Mill Arts Centre. The purpose was to present key findings and issues coming out of the survey to date and to have the invited guests discuss the findings in a workshop session, responding to a series of questions.

Common themes identified by discussion groups:

- Canal and adjacent cultural spaces are a great asset – needs to complement retail in Banbury, so that the town is a cultural place and destination not just retail. General support for developing Castle Quay with cultural venues.
- Cultural offer needs to have diversity, something for all age groups and demographics.
- There is a need for a larger performance venue – St Mary's has a space that can seat 700 so potential here.
- More coordination of information about cultural activity in Banbury.
- Safety concerns in the town centre – how can cultural activity help address this?

Three words for Banbury vision that were repeated:

- Connected – Inclusive – Vibrant

Young people

People's Theatre Collective conducted consultation sessions with 96 young people across several of their groups in early 2024, to feed into this Cultural Strategy. Details of the feedback from young people are in Appendix 3. Conclusions drawn from the consultation are:

- Young people are concerned about the number of empty shops in the town centre and wish to see them used more.
- The look and feel of the streets is important to them, and they would like to see things better maintained and less litter.
- There is not enough variety, too many coffee shops and not enough activities to do.
- They would like more places to just hang out, relax, including sensory spaces and places for mental health and wellbeing. A centralised hub for young people. They also want activities and clubs where they can make friends, which could include intergenerational groups too – one suggestion was a community garden/ gardening club.
- The Museum, the library and the Mill are all places with the potential to have workshop activity for young people. They like the vibe at the Mill and they have positive childhood experiences of the Museum. Currently they do not see the library as a space for young people.
- They enjoy markets and charity shops because they are cheap and sustainable.
- Museums and history are of interest.
- They would like parks where there are things to do, such as a green gym, spaces for dogs, water parks, trampolines, sports, roller skating, a legal graffiti wall.
- They would like places where they can learn new skills and learn about careers and different jobs.
- Affordability is a concern for activities.
- Outdoor festivals are popular as they are accessible, the canal festival was an example.
- They want more green spaces and places for biodiversity. Taking care of the environment is important to them.
- Performing spaces and opportunities are wanted, for choirs, music and bands, and a theatre. They also would like more touring companies to come to Banbury.
- Ideas for keeping young people engaged with the strategy includes online meetings, Youth Council involvement, and using social media such as Instagram. Young people want to see their impact and would be interested to know more even if they are not actively speaking up. It's important to address young people specifically, social media will work well for this.
- Overall, cultural ambition in young people seems lacking. Their aspirations do not go further than wanting things to do, there is little conversation about creative careers but they do suggest they want to know more about career possibilities. The request for touring companies suggests that they wish to experience more variety of arts. The conclusion is that they have not had the opportunity to experience enough variety of arts or much cutting edge, new art forms, and therefore their cultural horizons are limited.

Education survey

A survey was carried out with the Banbury partners emailing schools on their contact lists to contribute to the survey.

Although the number of respondents was low, some useful insight was received, and comments were backed up by responses coming through in the public survey. The full results of the education survey can be seen at Appendix 4.

Summary of key findings

Both schools and arts partners recognise that they would like arts provisions for children and young people to be part of the wider community more, with programmes that link up schools and communities, all ages and demographics.

“In order for this to be really engaging there needs to be a true integration of arts into the whole community” Arts partner

Schools commented that there needs to be:

“Definitely broadening horizons and making it accessible for more.”

“More advertising so they know what is on offer”

“Work experience opportunities bringing communities together as not enough mixing”

Many of the schools felt there needs to be more on offer for young people that is extra curricular or outside school time, such as after school clubs, Saturday workshops, mini festivals and summer activities.

Schools also wanted to be able to work more with arts organisations, such as working with local artists, more engagement with the Music Service, Theatre In Education exploring current issues for young people etc. One responder mentioned that attracting young people to take part is a challenge, and considered digital engagement as a way to interest them:

“this is really tricky: motivation is the key factor here. Most young people will not want to get involved in opportunities like the ones listed, because they don't recognise what the benefit will be...

maybe make the whole thing instagrammable... as a lever to encourage participation”

The lack of provision of digital arts or moving image is possibly due to lack of skills to teach these or lack of the specialist equipment used for creative new technologies. However, it is likely that children and young people would be interested in engaging creatively with digital and new technologies so this could be an area for particular focus.

There is a recognition that the arts and creativity are also essential for wellbeing, not just about careers or skills development. A comment from a school on the value of arts education explains:

“At Harriers, the Arts are at the heart of our enriched curriculum. We currently provide opportunities for children to develop socially, emotionally and culturally in their learning and believe these contribute positively to children’s mental health. The Arts give an opportunity for all children to shine and develop their creativity.”

Conclusions

- The Steering Group organisations wish to create a **Cultural Vision** which inspires greater confidence for Banbury to be proud of its cultural offer as well as being motivated to achieve greater things. They feel a new narrative needs to be generated for Banbury.
- The survey shows that culture is a significant draw for people to visit Banbury town centre, however the potential **economic contribution** of cultural activities and assets for the town has not been fully recognised by stakeholders. There is a stronger case to be made to those who would invest in the town, for example the BID and Cherwell District Council, especially aligned with town centre regeneration plans. Forming a Cultural Compact could be considered as a way of boosting the ability for Banbury to make stronger impact through culture.
- There is significant potential for **collaborative working**, building on partners' involvement in the Canal Festival and the work of Banbury Quays Consortium, as well as good relationships between cultural organisations, Banbury Town Council, the BID and Cherwell District Council.
- Various initiatives (Brighter Futures, Better Lives Through Culture and The Mill Community Connect) are laying good foundations for collaborative working where culture supports community cohesion and wellbeing. Learning from these projects will be invaluable to continue building on **community and culture initiatives**.
- **Young people's cultural ambitions** appear quite low and this could be as a result of them not having enough opportunities to experience the variety of high quality arts and culture that could inspire them. Their comments suggest that they would be interested in widening their horizons and they would be interested in learning more about career options in the sector.
- Young people also recognise the part that arts and culture can play in supporting their **wellbeing** and providing socialising spaces.
- Young people want to be kept informed and **spoken to directly** about opportunities and developments.
- **Minimal funding** is being secured by organisations in the District from sources such as Arts Council England and Heritage Lottery Fund and there could be more growth potential from these sources. Reasons for not achieving more needs exploring with organisations.
- The dominant audience profiles for Banbury and surrounding areas include **families** looking for days out, with taste for mainstream arts, heritage and museums. They are all looking online for activities to do. Wrap around offers are important to provide a full day out, and discounts to encourage families and groups. There are also **affluent audiences** who like traditional and high quality arts and are willing to travel and spend for an exclusive experience. These audience profiles suggest that days such as the Canal Festival or other full-town events will be popular, but that special, high profile events could also bring in the more affluent commuters.
- The audience profile for Oxford City is quite different and it could be difficult to draw audiences to Banbury from this area. The dominant audience segment are younger people seeking contemporary, new experiences. A strategy towards **improving culture for young people** in Banbury would need to start by involving young people in developing their own activities that are more mainstream, such as live music, and developing this over time to

more cutting edge arts such as immersive theatre. At this point, there could be an attraction to audiences from Oxford but it could take some time to develop a reputation for this in Banbury, and the offer would need to be something very unique that is not offered in Oxford. This strategy also reflects a step-by-step approach to increasing the cultural ambition for young people in Banbury.

Priorities and Themes

MADE IN BANBURY:

A Cultural Strategy leading Growth in Banbury and across Cherwell

Creative Banbury is a community of confident innovators, working together to ensure Banbury is a vibrant town of cultural opportunities where people can make their own way and shape their own futures.

Where we want to be

A cultural vision for Banbury can be organised under three priority themes: **Place, People and Partnerships**. Where we envisage we want to be with each theme:

THEME 1: PLACE

DESTINATION – Banbury is a cultural destination that is proud of its distinct heritage and culture and is known for its unique cultural activities and events that cater to a range of tastes.

IDENTITY – Banbury is known to be friendly, welcoming and inclusive, with an independent streak of creative inventiveness and cultural ambition.

ECONOMY – Banbury is attractive as a place to live, work and visit due to its thriving cultural scene which attracts investment and contributes to its healthy economy.

LIVING WELL – Banbury is a place where people want to live, work and play because of its thriving cultural offer.

FACILITIES – Banbury has a well-developed infrastructure of a range of buildings, spaces and facilities which support creativity, learning and creative enterprises to thrive.

THEME 2: PEOPLE

CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE – the new generations are confident with creative aspirations, supported by Banbury's facilities, safe creative spaces, and opportunities for skills development and progression.

INCLUSION – cultural activity in Banbury supports wellbeing and healthy living through culture for all at any age, and brings people together to share and celebrate the diversity of Banbury's communities.

ENGAGEMENT – Banbury's people are engaged and involved in shaping cultural decisions for their town.

THEME 3: PARTNERSHIPS

COLLABORATIVE – cultural organisations in Banbury work together to achieve more and address gaps in cultural provision for Banbury's people and visitors to the town.

How we will get there

THEME 1: PLACE

DESTINATION

- Banbury will provide a day and evening, wrap-around visitor offer: culture supports the visitor economy + the hospitality and retail offer supports cultural activity = reasons to stay a full day in town.
- Banbury will build on its distinct cultural characters: further develop its unique canal festival, animate its unique heritage, stories and characters, develop the live independent music scene, and assert its own distinctiveness as a visitor destination.
- Banbury will develop vibrancy and variety – of artforms, genres, tastes, experimental and traditional, animating heritage, presentations of cultural diversity, risk-taking and cutting edge activities and events; live activities outdoors and in public spaces that engage everybody.

IDENTITY

- Banbury will project itself through messaging and communications as friendly, welcoming, kind, inclusive, offering something for everybody. All cultural activities, events and spaces will ensure they are as accessible and welcoming as possible to all.
- Cultural organisations in Banbury will confidently invent, be ambitious, and embrace risk taking creative innovation.
- Banbury will promote itself confidently and project its image outwards as a place that creates culture and innovates.

ECONOMY

- Cultural organisations will make the case for culture to support the economy and advocate for this to local businesses and the local authority.
- Cultural organisations will work with the town centre to ensure that cultural offer is a major draw for people to visit the town centre.
- Cultural organisations will work to enable Banbury's talented community to stay and invest in cultural careers in Banbury, building a creative economy.

LIVING WELL

- Cultural groups and organisations will work collaboratively with community services and providers such as Age UK and healthy living services to ensure that cultural activity is supporting wellbeing and cultural aspirations, especially in geographical areas with lower cultural opportunities. They will ensure that opportunities for funding culture that supports community wellbeing are accessed. This builds on and learns from activity already taking place such as Age Friendly Banbury, Brighter Futures, Better Lives Through Culture Partnership Investment Programme and The Mill Community Connect Initiative.

FACILITIES

- Banbury partners will continue to work together to develop cultural spaces in Castle Quays which are fit for purpose with facilities suitable for the expectations of contemporary audiences and participants, and address accessibility.
- Banbury venues and the local authority will work together to ensure that the cultural sector is able to make best use of the variety of spaces on offer including The Mill Arts

Centre, the Museum, St Mary's Church, the Library, Lock 29 event space and empty shops and community spaces.

- Opportunities to respond to the clear ambition for more performance spaces will be considered where feasible to complement existing spaces and add to the range of spaces available to support cultural activity. Spaces that are currently lacking in Banbury include a larger theatre space, significant art exhibition space, smaller spaces for rehearsal, recording studios and making spaces with facilities such as pottery kilns, printmaking equipment and digital suites.

THEME 2: PEOPLE

CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE

- Banbury's cultural community will work together, with schools and within the wider community to develop confidence and aspirations for young people, working towards offering opportunities all year round.
- Banbury will develop spaces for young people which are welcoming, creative and safe spaces that enable young people to create on their own terms.
- Banbury will develop facilities and support for Cultural Enterprise, hubs and satellite spaces, making spaces and rehearsal spaces, digital and new technology facilities and skills development, and joined-up progression routes to learn creative skills.
- Banbury will employ a family-wide strategy to nurture children as cultural consumers and creators of the future, and involving the wider family through their children's engagement.

INCLUSION

- Cultural organisations will work to provide activities that support wellbeing through culture for all, for younger people and older people.
- Cultural organisations in Banbury will create activities that bring people together, mixing ages, sharing cultures, celebrating diversity.
- The effectiveness of activities will be evaluated including for accessibility, and evaluation will inform future planning to continually improve accessibility.

ENGAGEMENT

- Cultural leaders in Banbury will facilitate community panels and open days that engage people in the community in cultural decision making and influence their leadership. Panels and open days will be tried using a range of methods to ensure inclusivity and a range of participants, monitoring those who engage and addressing gaps.
- Cultural organisations in Banbury will seek ways to engage people where they are in their communities, and encourage participation.

THEME 3: PARTNERSHIPS

COLLABORATIVE

- Cultural organisations and education providers will coordinate their offers to provide progression routes for all, addressing gaps.

- Local Cultural Leadership will develop partnerships with smaller organisations in order to continually raise quality and support fundraising.
- Banbury will promote connectiveness, supporting cultural organisations to work collaboratively to achieve greater impact, sharing communications and promotions.
- Culture, community, health and voluntary organisations and Local Authorities will work together more to ensure that culture supports healthy living and feeling good, especially for those at risk of isolation, ill health or who have access needs.
- Cultural organisations, businesses and local authorities work together more to ensure that cultural offer supports economic wellbeing in Banbury.
- Cultural organisations will make the case for culture and advocate for culture to support living well, supporting health, learning and the economy.
- Cultural organisations will respond to the priorities of Arts Council England, Heritage Fund and Banbury's young people by taking a lead on environmental responsibility and encouraging good practice in the sector.
- The Banbury Cultural Strategy will work to support Oxfordshire's strategic priorities where relevant, the OxLEP Arts and Culture Strategy Framework (see Appendix 1 Context), and connect in with NPOs across Oxfordshire.

Actions

This Strategy is ambitious and long-term. Actions towards delivering the Strategy will need to take place step by step over the ten year period, to build towards the vision.

The following are actions that can take place initially, in order to lay foundations and ensure some immediate progress where possible.

| Action | Lead | Delivery | Theme | Timeline |
|--|----------------------------------|---|---------------------|----------|
| Develop the remit and terms of reference for the Cultural Strategy Steering Group | Cultural Strategy Steering Group | <p>The Steering Group will clarify their constitution and remit under the Quays Consortium CIC within their Terms of Reference.</p> <p>The Steering Group will clarify in consultation with partners whether there is an aspiration to work towards forming a Cultural Compact for Banbury.</p> <p>Steering Group remit is to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • check on progress, identify areas that need more focus and initiate action with local organisations and groups. • identify task groups and local organisations who can deliver elements of the Strategy, supporting them to do so. • advocate for culture into all areas of life and improve collaboration and alignment between organisations to amplify impact. <p>The Steering Group will seek an Environmental Responsibility expert to join the group as an adviser for all activities.</p> | Oversees all themes | 3 Months |
| Seek local authority endorsement of the strategy, and alignment with policy across resources, transformation and communities | Cultural Strategy Steering Group | <p>Steering group to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • work with Cherwell District Council and Banbury Town Council officers to seek formal endorsement of the strategy, and advocate for alignment across portfolios. • engage Oxfordshire County Council with the strategy through the Area Oversight Group for Banbury, and advocate for alignment within the Banbury Area Action Plan. | All themes | 6 Months |

| Action | Lead | Delivery | Theme | Timeline |
|--|--|--|---|----------|
| Identify way to create a single centralised information point for all cultural activity in Banbury to demonstrate and promote the town's vibrancy. | Cultural Strategy Steering Group | Steering Group to explore innovative solutions to achieve core objective through collective promotion of whole Banbury cultural offer. Steering group to identify a structure, capacity and resource to enable this to happen. | Place: Destination Partnerships: Collaborative | 6 Months |
| Advocate for a stronger case for culture to support economy | Cherwell District Council Cultural Strategy Steering Group | Commission an Economic Impact Study to quantify the impact of Banbury's cultural organisations and their activities on the local economy. Work with key partners to demonstrate the impact of increasing the contribution that culture can make in place-shaping and developing the town's economy. | Place: Destination Place: Economy | 3 Months |
| Activity alignments & mapping | Cultural Strategy Steering Group | Steering group to coordinate mapping of cultural organisations' activities to identify alignments with strategy aims, and opportunities for future alignment, coordination and collaboration of activity to amplify overall impact. | All themes | |
| Continue to work with key stakeholders to identify opportunities to develop cultural | Relevant individual organisations and local authority stakeholders | The Mill Arts Centre relocation and expansion to incorporate developing a larger scale town centre theatre / performance venue in response to consultation feedback. Town centre library development including new digital services. | Place: Facilities | |

| Action | Lead | Delivery | Theme | Timeline |
|--|--|--|--|----------|
| facilities, venues and assets. | | <p>People's Theatre Collective development of a self-curated Young People's Cultural Enterprise Centre in Castle Quay.</p> <p>Opportunities to identify smaller spaces and/or meanwhile use to develop rehearsal spaces or making spaces.</p> <p>Opportunities to develop digital media suites.</p> <p>Supporting local small venues (pubs, cafes) to offer performance opportunities for emerging artists.</p> <p>Support St Mary's Church to make more connections to local organisations who might want to use their venue and raise awareness.</p> | | |
| Map the inclusion of the range of communities resident in Banbury | Cultural Strategy Steering Group | Twice per year, map where communities are being successfully engaged with and where there may be communities not yet engaged. Devise strategy and action plan to connect with those not yet engaged. Explore commonalities through culture. | People: Inclusion | |
| Make use of annual festivals and events to introduce strategic developments and raise awareness. | October Canal Festival (annual) and Tell Your Story (biennial) | <p>Use key annual events as an opportunity to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> involve communities that have not been connected with promote the Culture Strategy priorities try out new initiatives etc. <p>Work with Festival and event organisers to build new offers in to their programmes and evaluate their impact. This in turn will inform development into cultural organisations programmes.</p> | <p>Place: Destination</p> <p>Partnerships: Collaborative</p> | |
| Work with town centre stakeholders to support sense of | Cultural Strategy Steering Group | Explore how the methodology for the successful "village greens" project by People's Theatre Collective could be applied to the town | <p>Place: Destination</p> <p>Place: Identity</p> | |

| Action | Lead | Delivery | Theme | Timeline |
|---|--|---|--|----------|
| belonging to the town. | | centre, to develop connections and ownership within surrounding communities. | People: Inclusion. | |
| Explore the appetite for developing Culture Days for schools | Task group to be identified | Test the demand for an initiative to hold an annual Culture Day which invites students and parents/guardians from all schools to meet local arts organisations, connect with them and find out what they have to offer for children and young people. | People: Children and Young People Partnerships: Collaborative | |
| Keep up to date on available resources and funding opportunities that could support cultural activity, and identify how they can be accessed to support Strategy. | Cultural Strategy Steering Group / Cherwell District Council | Steering Group shares opportunities they have identified at group meetings. Link these to where they fit the Strategy themes. Identify an appropriate task group to take action. For example, S106 funds; new ACE funds or government initiatives. | All Strategy themes | |
| Develop a website page for the Cultural Strategy which can be updated with current projects. | Marketing task group (to be identified). Website host to be identified. | Promote the Cultural Strategy widely with a link to the website page, encouraging people to see what is in progress and enabling them to link in with projects and appreciate the scale and scope of the cultural offer. | Partnerships: Collaborative | |
| Launch a public conversation about the Cultural Identity of Banbury. | Cultural Strategy Steering Group / marketing task | The cultural identity of Banbury is still confused in the public perception. Launch an ongoing conversation through media communications and at events to explore this with the public. Feed this into an ongoing marketing process for Banbury. | Place: Identity | |

| Action | Lead | Delivery | Theme | Timeline |
|---|--|---|--|----------|
| | group (to be identified) | This could be delivered through a creative project, for example planned wall art project by Quays Consortium | | |
| Hold an annual Cultural Strategy review day, inviting all cultural organisations (professional and voluntary) | Task group (to be identified – this could be the local NPOs) | To share achievements, progress, and look at new challenges or opportunities. Involves the wider sector and continues momentum, this could be aligned with an existing event for example Canal Festival. | People: Engagement | |
| Map the provision of artform education and opportunities for children and young people. | Cultural Strategy Steering Group | Consultation has shown that some artforms (performing arts) are relatively well provided, whereas others have low provision for children and young people. Map where the gaps are and devise strategies to bring in and develop artform skills in Banbury. Focus on one artform at a time. | People: Children and Young People Partnerships: Collaborative | |
| An aspiration for future years is for cultural organisations to support creative careers routes. | Cultural Strategy Steering Group | A longer term ambition is for cultural organisations to identify ways in which they can support creative careers within Banbury, such as increasing freelance opportunities and providing work placements. Identify opportunities arising from local developments, for example proposed Puy Du Fou park in Bicester in order to leverage opportunities for supporting individuals to aspire to careers within the creative industries locally. | Place: Economy | |

| Action | Lead | Delivery | Theme | Timeline |
|--------------------------------|----------------------------------|---|------------|----------|
| Identify targets and measures. | Cultural Strategy Steering Group | Targets and measures will be identified by the Cultural Strategy Steering Group to evaluate activities undertaken. This will ensure that all partners are clear on the impact that activities intend to make. | All themes | Ongoing |

List of Appendices

| | |
|------------|---|
| Appendix 1 | Audience Profiles |
| Appendix 2 | Banbury List of Cultural Assets and organisations |
| Appendix 3 | Banbury Vision 2050 Cultural Workshop Report |
| Appendix 4 | PTC Consultation with young people report |
| Appendix 5 | Banbury Education Survey summary |
| Appendix 6 | Case for Culture Supporting Economic Development |
| Appendix 7 | Banbury Public Survey summary |

This page is intentionally left blank

Banbury Cultural Strategy Alignments – July 2025

| | The Mill Arts Centre | Banbury Museum and Gallery | Castle Quay | Peoples Theatre Collective | Banbury BID | Banbury Town Council |
|-------------------------------|---|---|---|--|---|---|
| PLACE: DESTINATION | <p>Open 7 days a week, daytime and evening.</p> <p>Provides a regular programme of shows and live events alongside creative learning through education classes and workshops.</p> <p>Provides gallery space, café/bar and rooms available for hire and use by tenants.</p> <p>Promotes the development of the Mill as a Dance Hub: USP is drawing audiences in from further afield including Oxford, Milton Keynes, Stratford etc.</p> <p>Key contributor to Canal Festival, explores other festival opportunities, has links to Banbury Town Council town events programme and to Dancin' Oxford Festival.</p> | <p>Open 6 days a week 10.00 - 16.00; Sundays 11.00 – 15.00.</p> <p>The museum shop and Welcome Atrium provide information about things to see in Banbury and the surrounding areas, places to visit and activities to take part in.</p> <p>The Pye Gallery offers special exhibitions and activities that celebrate Banbury's rich history, as well as exhibitions with a national and international focus.</p> <p>Supports the Banbury Historical Society, providing a venue for the winter programme of lectures, technical support</p> | <p>Open 6 days a week 08.30 – 18.00; Sundays 10.30 – 16.30.</p> | <p>Office opens Monday – Thursday, 9.00 – 16.00.</p> <p>Holds regular sessions for young people; provides open access support space for freelance creatives; contributes to Tell Your Story Festival, biannual event.</p> <p>Supports future development of Young People's Cultural Enterprise Centre in Castle Quay from diverse communities in order to develop skills, self-esteem, confidence and experience shared development.</p> <p>Supports training for people engaged in creative work or planning with young people.</p> | <p>Banbury BID is led, on behalf of its Levy payers, by a Board made up of volunteer Directors of the Banbury BID Company. Works to provide a cleaner, greener, safer and more vibrant town centre, collaborating to support businesses and build a connected business community.</p> | <p>Organises an annual programme of events for the public in multiple venues around the town including the Canal Festival; Banbury Music Mix; Banbury Food and Drink Festival; Battle of Britain celebrations; and the Christmas lights switch-on event.</p> <p>Offers the opportunity to use Banbury Town Hall as a venue for cultural events.</p> <p>Works with external partners and stakeholders to provide and/or consult on tourism and marketing materials, such as Banbury Town</p> |

| | | | | | | |
|----------------------------|--|--|--|---|---|---|
| | Undertakes continual paid-for marketing and promotion of programmes across digital and traditional channels - which support promoting Banbury as a destination. | and a home for and access to the Rosemarie Higham Library. Supports the Banbury Quays Consortium (BQC), an advocate for a canal centred cultural quarter, and events including the annual Banbury Canal Festival. | | | | Council's recent town guide. Works alongside other Banbury organisations such as The Mill, Banbury Museum, and Castle Quay on certain Banbury events including the Banbury Canal Festival, platforming and supporting our partners and building a collective identity. |
| PLACE: IDENTITY | Inclusion is at the fore of the organisational Vision, Mission & Values. The Audience Development Plan and Programme Framework identify key deliverables to consolidate brand identity. | The museum's Audience Development Policy ensures the style and content of communication is welcoming and projects an ambitious, dynamic heritage service. | | Aims to empower and inspire young people to be dynamic participants in their own lives and that of their communities. Values inclusion and collaboration as an integral part of our process. | Promotes partners and their own town centre events via a number of different platforms, including 'What's On' printed guides for Spring, Summer and Autumn. | Aims to provide a broad range of events and activities which appeal to a wide section of the population of the town and surrounding areas and to visitors. It is building a collective identity with 'tentpole' organisations across the town which aim to |

| | | | | | | |
|---------------------------|---|--|--|--|--|--|
| | | | | | | foster greater cultural platforming and enhancement. E.g. Banbury Canal Festival and Banbury Show. |
| PLACE: ECONOMY | <p>Active member of BQC.</p> <p>Status as an Arts Council England NPO (National Portfolio Organisation) raises profile of Banbury within key networks.</p> <p>Offers a Sustainable Business Model: >65% of turnover generated as earned income, further contributing to wider economy.</p> <p>The establishment of a permanent Development Manager role within team supports growth in investment / philanthropy in culture.</p> <p>Future developments: a collaborative approach to retaining</p> | <p>Supports the BQC, to develop a cultural quarter stretching from Banbury Railway Station to the Light Cinema, growing the economy and image of historic Banbury for visitors.</p> <p>Actively seeks partnerships to support the growth of Banbury's town centre economy.</p> | | Future developments: the training and retention of young | Runs a programme of projects and initiatives to increase footfall to and spend within the town centre, creating experiences for people to enjoy and to give businesses the opportunity to gain more customers. | Banbury Town Council's events programme aims to encourage more use of the town centre and other amenities such as the parks, generating economic benefits for traders. |

| | | | | | | |
|---|--|---|---|--|--|---|
| | <p>talent within creative industries through</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • careers • work experience/ apprenticeship • T-level • volunteering • links to Puy Du Fou opportunity. | | | people in the cultural economy. | | |
| <p>PLACE: LIVING WELL</p> <p>Page 94</p> | <p>Offers a broad adult education programme supporting creative development and reducing risk of social isolation.</p> <p>Provides regular programme for seniors (Chair Yoga, The Remarkable Dance Company, Ballroom, Creative Café) working with Age UK, Age Friendly Banbury on projects e.g. Banbury Heritage mosaic.</p> <p>Supports schools' outreach projects e.g. CODE (knife crime/county lines)</p> | <p>Offers a programme for seniors to encourage engagement in the community, building friendships, reducing risks from isolation, poor health and mobility. Participants share life experiences, which may be recorded, and engage with a rich cultural programme.</p> <p>Works with partners, such as Age Friendly Banbury, to ensure the museum is accessible and welcoming.</p> | <p>Supports Pop Up art exhibitions and installations. Regular Book club and Culture club meetings.</p> <p>Offers half term workshops with a focus on wellbeing and community.</p> | <p>Offers numerous programmes which address self-identified issues for young people including mental health for young men, safeguarding on line, connecting with nature, violence against young women and healthy relationships.</p> <p>Collaborates with schools, the Community Garden, Connexions support.</p> | <p>Aims to raise awareness of and attract people to cultural and leisure activities with the potential to enrich lives and combat health risks such as loneliness and isolation.</p> | <p>Aims to offer activities and events which are aimed at a wide range of individuals of all ages and ethnicities giving the opportunity for interactions which otherwise may not occur.</p> <p>Offers a wide array of sports facilities and upcoming installations ensuring access across the town to healthy, active lifestyle opportunities.</p> <p>Leases rooms in Banbury Town Hall out to organisations which encourage</p> |

| | | | | | | |
|--|--|---|--|---|---|---|
| | | Supports community engagement that enriches lives and promotes good health. | | | | healthier habits and lifestyle guides. |
| PLACE: FACILITIES | <p>The 237 seat auditorium is the only professional performance space within the Cherwell district.</p> <p>Local tenants & regular hirers include Banbury Community Church, People's Theatre Collective, Pork Shack, Banbury Cross Players</p> <p>Provides loft space at the Mill (6 artist studio workspaces)</p> <p>Future development plans respond to demand for larger theatre & creation spaces.</p> | <p>Provides an attractive town centre venue, open 7 days a week, which is easily accessible.</p> <p>Free to enter and offers a broad range of heritage based cultural activities.</p> | <p>Offers diverse cultural venues on site.</p> <p>Hosts cultural events in open access spaces.</p> | <p>Provides resources for young people to create their own theatre and art in their community venues.</p> <p>Uses non theatre venues to create performances. Develops curriculum development tools for schools. Offers a team of experienced youth art practitioners.</p> | | <p>Offers potential for increased use of Banbury Town Hall as a cultural venue; and ensuring better use of all public areas in the town for events.</p> |
| PEOPLE: CHILDREN & YOUNG PEOPLE | <p>Provides regular high profile Early Years programming (family-wide strategy)</p> <p>Currently developing the schools offer, and delivering work in-</p> | <p>Provides an extensive range of services for children and young people. Provides a popular onsite and offsite programme which</p> | <p>Free inclusive space for soft play; Community Hub for young people under discussion; Ping Pong space.</p> | <p>Works with over 7,000 young people annually in schools, arts venues, festival locations (through Amplify programme) and their community</p> | <p>Involves 10 primary schools in the seasonal town centre trail competitions, with children decorating items to be showcased in BID businesses on the trail.</p> | <p>The events programme is aimed at all sections of the community in age terms, including children and young people.</p> |

| | | | | | | |
|--------------------------|--|--|--|--|--|--|
| | <p>school both in Banbury & Bicester.</p> <p>Offers facilities for sharing and showcasing for local organisations; schools, dance schools, People's Theatre Collective (PTC), Stagecoach Banbury Cross Players.</p> <p>Increasing collaboration with PTC to support development of youth offer/theatre groups.</p> | <p>supports the National Curriculum.</p> <p>Low cost and free activities available at weekends and through the school holidays, drawing on stories from the collections, aiming to be both creative and fun.</p> | <p>Currently formalising communications with schools and FE college.</p> | <p>venues on a weekly basis.</p> <p>Supports young people, as part of Young Theatre makers; research and development; and to write their own plays.</p> <p>Future plans include collaboration with The Mill to put our young theatre company at the centre of our contribution to the Cultural Strategy, with them and other young people as dynamic participants.</p> | <p>Holds lantern making workshops in local primary schools and Castle Quay in the run-up to the annual Winter Lantern Parade.</p> <p>Promoted participation in the 2025 Summer Fest Parade activities by North Oxfordshire Academy's samba band and pupils from the Joanne Mills School of Dance.</p> | <p>Provides a variety of children's play areas and facilities across the town, with frequent and consistent expansion and enhancement of these.</p> |
| PEOPLE: INCLUSION | <p>Strategic focus on dance as a successful audience development tool (non-verbal, universal language).</p> <p>Supported Artist scheme places artists working with community groups including young carers and new mothers.</p> | <p>Offers a programme and activities for all ages, from pre-school to families, schools, special interest groups and seniors.</p> <p>Offers a social, multi-generational space with the opportunity to meet others and</p> | <p>Offers a Community Hub space, Book Nook, participates in the Warm Space Network and Chatty Café.</p> <p>Changing spaces facility</p> <p>Baby Feeding space</p> <p>Potential reflection / quiet space.</p> | <p>Offers access support to all young people, in a range of different communities and venues across Banbury, including Let's Play and the Mosque.</p> <p>Our Theatre group cites the inclusive nature of the work as being a crucial</p> | <p>Organises free-to-access events for the local community, including dog walks, Summer Fest Parade, Winter Lantern Parade, and a three-day Winter Market. The August Car Show is delivered in partnership with Banbury Car & Bike Meet. The popular arts projects at Banbury Railway Station, grant</p> | <p>The Town Council's recently established events committee will explore how the Council can further enhance inclusion, diversity and accessibility.</p> <p>Works to offer activities and events which are</p> |

| | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|--|--|---|---|
| | <p>Community Connections Fund – subsidises access to the Mill programmes for groups from Brighter Futures areas, with plan to roll it out to CDC You Move cardholders.</p> <p>Inclusive youth dance programme launching for disabled and non-disabled young people.</p> | <p>be creative in building an appreciation of Banbury as a special place.</p> <p>Revises the Museum's Audience Development Policy annually, to review and manage audience engagement in Banbury and beyond.</p> | | <p>motivator for participation.</p> <p>Developing new ways of producing theatre to adapt to cognitive disability.</p> | <p>funded by Chiltern Railways, garnered participation from artists, residents, businesses and community groups.</p> | <p>aimed at a wide range of individuals of all ages and ethnicities, giving the opportunity for interactions which otherwise may not occur.</p> <p>Access to events for all ethnicities, ages and for otherwise disadvantaged groups is always a principal consideration.</p> |
| <p>PEOPLE:</p> <p>ENGAGEMENT</p> <p>Page 97</p> | <p>Currently establishing Mill focus groups, Dance Advisory Group and young programmers' group with PTC to ensure effective feedback loop informs programme development.</p> <p>Offers Out of The Mill programme and Community-led learning – outreach activity.</p> | <p>Consults with audiences, encouraging feedback used to design future programmes.</p> | <p>Offers half term workshops with a focus on wellbeing and community.</p> | <p>Sessions take the lead from young people in terms of content and product.</p> <p>Co-creates work with young people and empowers them to create their own theatre and art on their terms.</p> <p>CORE group brings young people together from across the organisation to develop the Young People's Standing Orders and looks at</p> | <p>Engages with its Levy payers (approximately 390) via in-person visits, business-to-business networking events, e-newsletters and social media platforms.</p> | <p>Collection and analysis of feedback at events, on social media and other platforms of communication to better understand and improve engagement in as many areas as possible.</p> <p>Frequent changes and trials in event promotion, organisation and coverage, based</p> |

| | | | | | | |
|------------------------------------|---|--|---|---|--|---|
| | | | | all aspects of the company. Supports cohort of freelance creatives who contribute to the value base and direction of the company through regular sharing sessions. | | on changing trends and audience research / feedback. |
| PARTNERSHIPS: COLLABORATIVE | <p>Key delivery partners:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Arts Council England local authorities People's Theatre Collective, Dancin' Oxford, BQC (and constituent members), Puy Du Fou, Banbury Town Council, Age Friendly Banbury, Abingdon & Witney College Rural Touring Dance Initiative (The Place, London), House Theatre Network. | <p>Supports the BQC.</p> <p>Works with local partners, such as AGE UK, to extend the reach and accessibility of its services.</p> <p>Works with Arts Council England and museums across the UK, to raise standards and bring exceptional exhibitions home to Banbury, for the benefit of our communities.</p> <p>Works with the Mill, recognising a key local partner.</p> | <p>Fundraising activity continues for The Sunshine Centre.</p> <p>Supports town cultural events with space and sponsorship.</p> <p>'Made in Banbury' artisan products are offered in Lock 29.</p> | <p>Partners with the Mill, as well as other organisations across Banbury.</p> <p>Works collaboratively with a range of arts groups for young people and schools for the Tell your story Festival.</p> <p>Works with freelance creatives in our ambition for young people.</p> | <p>Key delivery partners to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Banbury Town Council Cherwell District Council Savills (Castle Quay Management) The Mill Arts Centre Banbury Museum & Gallery Chiltern Railways Banbury Car & Bike Meet Cherwell Crime Partnership | <p>Continues to support the Banbury Quays Consortium in its aim to promote and develop the Banbury's canalside cultural quarter.</p> <p>Works closely with many agencies to ensure the smooth operation of Banbury Canal Festival in particular but also many other of the Town Council's events.</p> |

| This report is public | |
|--|---|
| Bicester Market Square Project | |
| Committee | Executive |
| Date of Committee | 2 September 2025 |
| Portfolio Holder presenting the report | Executive Portfolio Holder for Finance, Property and Regeneration, Councillor Lesley McLean |
| Date Portfolio Holder agreed report | 25 June 2025 |
| Report of | Corporate Director of Communities, Ian Boll |

Purpose of report

To provide an update to the Executive on the progress of the Market Square, Bicester regeneration and public realm improvement project and to seek approval to continue to the next stage of the project, and ultimately on to complete the project, subject to all of the required procurement processes being undertaken successfully. This report details the next steps of the design work required to the concept plan, seeking the required planning permissions, approval of the draft programme and budget approvals based on the estimated cost plans undertaken as part of stage 1 of the project.

1. Recommendations

The Executive resolves:

- 1.1 To note the progress of the project to date, including the public engagement process and how the proposed concept design was developed.
- 1.2 To approve the concept design presented for development to the next stage.
- 1.3 To approve that the £881,000 from Oxfordshire County Council town centre s106 funds be added to the currently approved £4.25m capital programme budget for this project – to give a maximum total project budget of £5,131,000 to complete this project in full.
- 1.4 To delegate to the Executive Portfolio Holder for Finance, Property and Regeneration in conjunction with the Corporate Director of Communities and the Assistant Director of Finance the tranches of budget for each stage of the project as required, into the capital programme to enable completion of this project.
- 1.5 To delegate to the Executive Portfolio Holder for Finance, Property and Regeneration in conjunction with the Corporate Director of Communities and Assistant Director of Law and Governance to approve the appointment of the preferred Consultant & Contractor, to work with the Councils project team to deliver this project following the required Council procurement processes.

- 1.6 To delegate to the Executive Portfolio Holder for Finance, Property and Regeneration in conjunction with the Corporate Director of Communities and the Assistant Director of Law and Governance the decision on the specific contract options & construction route to deliver the project in full (which is currently proposed as a two-stage contract process) (NEC 4E x22) following the Councils required procurement processes.
- 1.7 To note the current draft programme of works and estimated timescales of each stage of work, as provided by WSP, as part of their Stage 1 feasibility work as set out in Appendix 4.
- 1.8 To delegate to the Executive Portfolio Holder for Finance, Property and Regeneration in conjunction with the Corporate Director of Communities to confirm approval to submit the planning application of the detailed design.

2. Executive Summary

- 2.1 In 2023, Cherwell District Council approved the regeneration of Bicester Market Square as part of the Bicester Garden Town Programme. A consultant (WSP) was appointed through a competitive procurement process, and a comprehensive public engagement programme was undertaken, including surveys and design workshops with residents and businesses. To support this process, a communications-led strategy was implemented to ensure widespread awareness, community participation, and stakeholder involvement. The multi-channel campaign contributed to more than 1,500 survey responses and over 400 in-person engagements, as outlined in Appendix 5a. Insights from this engagement have directly informed the development of the preferred concept design, which now requires approval to progress to the next stage: detailed design and pre-construction.
- 2.2 This report sets out the strategic context, updated vision and project goals, and findings from extensive research and public engagement undertaken in collaboration with WSP. A targeted communications approach underpinned this work, helping to increase visibility, shift the community early negative sentiment, and secure positive, wide representation across stakeholder groups. The report also outlines the preferred delivery options, a proposed maximum budget, and an indicative programme and cost plan. Executive approval is now sought to proceed to the next phase of the project, and onwards to completion of the project.
- 2.3 Bicester Market Square requires regeneration to enhance its public realm. Following two years of community engagement, a preferred design has been developed. The project is now ready to move into the detailed design and pre-construction phase, requiring formal decisions to maintain momentum and transition from concept to detailed design, to secure planning permissions and finalise material and design palettes, to approve the updated maximum budget and delivery approach, and to enable a timely delivery aligned with strategic and community priorities.
- 2.4 Approval is also sought for the additional £881k from OCC to be included to the existing approved project budget, bringing it to a total of £5.131m in line with the estimated cost plan for the preferred design. Considerations also include the delivery options, where either CDC can retain ownership, ensuring control over design, cost and delivery, or OCC can assume responsibility, introducing risks around control and alignment. Lastly, the cost plan and programme are appended

where key dates and costs have been outlined, although these will be subject to further refinement as the project progresses through the procurement, design and planning processes.

Implications and Impact Assessments

| Implications | | Commentary | | |
|--|--|---|---------|----------|
| Finance | | <p>Funding for the Bicester Market Square has already secured £4.25m of which £180k has so far been approved for spend as Executive took the decision to allocate budget in stages. To progress to the next stage Executive must approve the preferred design and therefore approve the next tranche of budget to be released into the capital programme. Confirmation of further S106 funding from OCC of £881k takes the total funding to £5.131m which the cost plans are showing as adequate funding for the preferred design plan. However, it must be noted that this is dependent on material choices, levels of inflation and delivering the project within the given timeframe. This project, if progressed to construction will need close monitoring by the project team with support from Finance, to ensure the project is delivered within budget.</p> <p>Kelly Wheeler, Finance Business Partner, 18 June 2025</p> | | |
| Legal | | <p>The council's consultant and contractor in respect of these works will be subject to the relevant Procurement Legislation and the Council's own Contract Procedure Rules. Compliant routes to procure, such as via a framework, should be assessed to cover the detailed design, pre-construction & construction phase in a compliant manner. Relevant KPIs will need to be set and monitored to ensure successful delivery of this phase.</p> <p>Mubin Khan, Lawyer (Contracts and Procurement), 20 June 2025</p> | | |
| Risk Management | | <p>There are no risk implications arising directly from this report. Financial resilience and any risks link to it are managed through the Corporate Leadership Risk register.</p> <p>Julie Miles, Performance Analyst & Developer, 19 June 2025</p> | | |
| Impact Assessments | | Positive | Neutral | Negative |
| Equality Impact | | | | |
| A Are there any aspects of the proposed decision, including how it is delivered or accessed, that | | | | No |

| | | | | |
|--|---|--|--|--|
| could impact on inequality? | | | | |
| B Will the proposed decision have an impact upon the lives of people with protected characteristics, including employees and service users? | | | | Positive effect |
| Climate & Environmental Impact | | | | Yes – this will be considered by the project team and is a key outcome that a positive climate and environmental impact is achieved |
| ICT & Digital Impact | | | | N/A |
| Data Impact | | | | N/A |
| Procurement & subsidy | | | | Any procurement actions or processes will need to follow the Contract Process Procedures and follow legal guidance on any contract that is put into place. Internal Process must be followed in line with the Contract Procedure Rules and Public Contract Regulations. Chris Wain 17/06/2025 |
| Council Priorities | <p>An enterprising economy with strong and vibrant local centres – this project aims to support local businesses within Bicester town centre, including those in Market Square, Sheep Street, and the market traders.</p> <p>The project will improve the area and will promote Market Square as a visitor destination, attracting investment in the town centre.</p> <p>The project will be delivered in partnership through public and business engagement, improving the outcome for the community this area will serve.</p> | | | |
| Human Resources | N/A | | | |
| Property | N/A | | | |
| Consultation & Engagement | Appendix 5 | | | |

Supporting Information

3. Background

3.1 On the 4 September 2023 the Executive were presented with a report: Bicester Garden Town Programme - Market Square Project Business Need & Next Stages.

The three recommendations from that report which were approved were –

- to confirm the business need for transformational public realm improvements at Bicester Market Square
- to approve the expenditure (up to a level of £180k) required for consultants to undertake detailed design through to planning permission and
- consultation with stakeholders; to include associated studies on;
 - the relocation of parking and wider impacts of parking within Bicester
 - traffic movement and flows through Market Square and around the Town Centre, including access for existing businesses/users
- a full design of the Market Square public realm improvement project with full business case for the capital expenditure and future revenue impact from changes to car parking income and any future costs
- to note the governance of the project to monitor and review development of the full business case which will return to Executive for approval prior to delivery of the project

3.2 As part of the September 2023 report it stated - *There is strong support and justification for the Bicester Market Square project through existing and emerging planning policy and the Corporate Business Plan. The current Cherwell Local Plan 2011-2031 acknowledges the need to 'support the viability and vitality of the existing town centre' and to 'improve the character and appearance of the centre of Bicester and the public realm'. The emerging Local Plan (Cherwell Local Plan 2040 reg 18 Consultation – yet to be approved by members) states that there are specific areas of change identified for Bicester, with the Market Square being one of them;*

- *Site three - Market Place (Square) - This area offers the opportunity to become a focal point of the Town Centre and a venue for periodic events that could drive interest and footfall in Bicester. Removal of car parking would facilitate improvements to the public realm, including widening of pavements, enable outside seating for the nearby food and beverage traders and create an attractive 'café culture' environment where visitors will want to spend more time. It is important this area provides a successful multi-functional space, enhanced landscaping and a high-quality pedestrian environment.*

3.3 The report went on to confirm –

Further consultation, engagement and research on various issues is now required to understand the full scope and implications of the project and to develop the concept ideas into a final design. Other factors such as the London Road Level Crossing requirements and whether vehicular traffic will be restricted here could

influence the design ethos. It is important that this is considered and investigated, but that it does not define the Market Square project which may need to come forward ahead of any decision on this.

- 3.4 The September 2023 report is provided in Appendix 1 for information, as it does provide further background to the growth of Bicester, as well as the initial basis for the Market Square project from 2019 – 2023 including the business case at that time for this project.
- 3.5 This report will now set out the detailed work which has been progressing since September 2023. It is also worth noting at this stage of the report that the administration of the Council changed in May 2024.

4. Details

- 4.1 In May 2024 the Council's administration changed with a clear directive that this project needed to be driven by the Bicester community with a "bottom up" approach.
- 4.2 In July 2024 a new, permanent Bicester Garden Town Programme Manager was appointed to lead this project, and in consultation with the Portfolio Holder, Cllr McLean, the project was reviewed over the summer of 2024 to clarify the vision, strategic context, why improve the square and clear project objectives.
- 4.3 It became very clear during the review process with feedback from previous public consultation, the local community and businesses did not want to consider a fully pedestrianised design for the Market Square. Maintaining parking, ideally at the current levels, was a clear priority. Pedestrianisation was therefore discounted as an unviable option to move forward with.
- 4.4 The following documents were developed to confirm this approach. Full details are provided in Appendix 2.

Updated Strategic Context and Vision

1.1.1 BICESTER-WIDE IMPROVEMENT AREAS

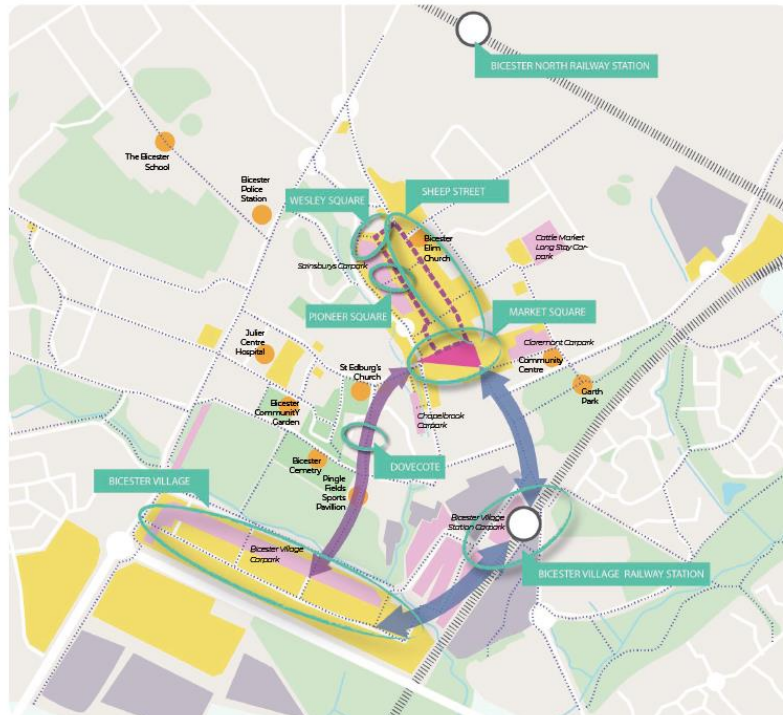
The following plan highlights the current improvement areas across the town. It pulls together a strategic plan to highlight how the Bicester Market Square is connected to the wider development of Bicester.

This plan highlights the three main key connections which need to be considered in the development of Market Square:

1. Sheep Street, The Lanes of Crown Walk and Bure Place. This is the main pedestrian loop, with retail and commercial shops.
2. Direct corridor link to Bicester Village Railway Station and Bicester Village Shopping Village.
3. Leisure walking route past St Edburg's Church, the Dovecote and greenspace.

KEY

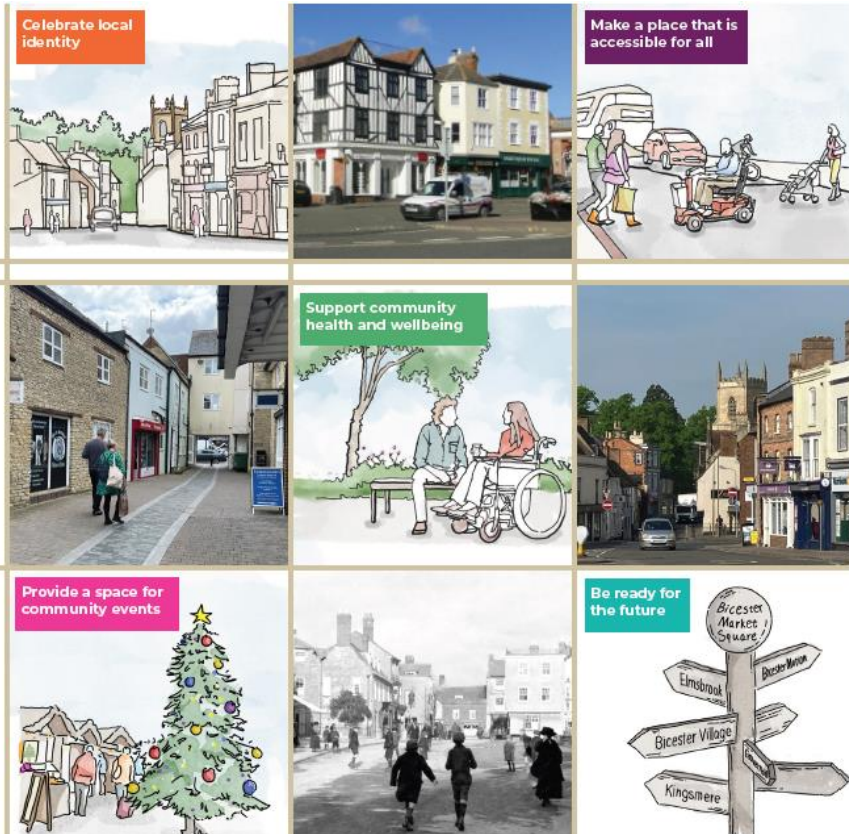
-  Key Improvement Areas
-  Surrounding Community Assets
-  Sheep St / Lanes / Market Square Loop
-  Key Pedestrian Links
-  Commercial Areas
-  Public Carparks
-  Industrial Areas
-  Parks
-  Built-up Areas
-  Countryside
-  Waterways
-  Key Connecting Roads
-  Railway & Stations
-  Proposed Corridor Improvements
-  Proposed Walking Route Improvements



Why improve the square?

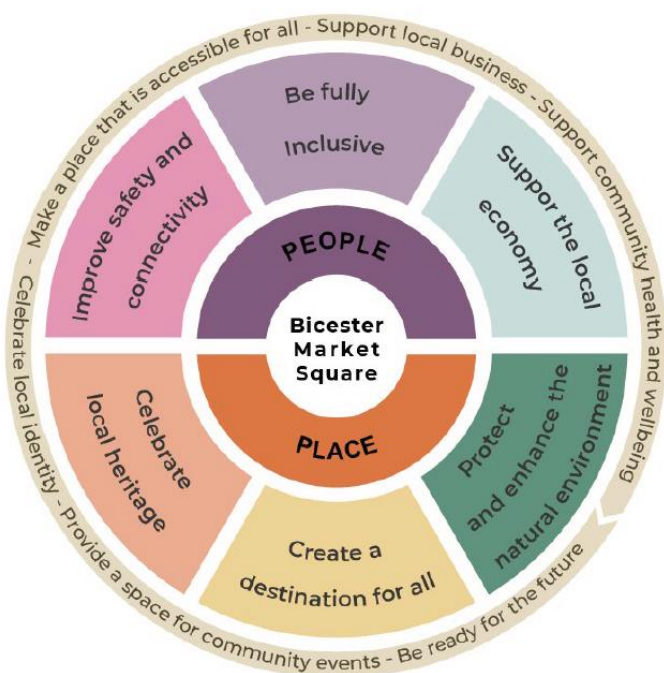
Bicester Market Square

Working together to...



Clear project objectives

1.3.1 THE MARKET SQUARE CORE PROJECT OBJECTIVES



Be fully inclusive

- Promote and integrate walking, cycling, buses, taxis, and private vehicles.
- Provide for all ages, abilities and demographics.

Improve safety and connectivity

- Improve connectivity to surrounding lanes and car parks.
- Enhance links to the town centre, for example; Bicester Village, Bicester Avenue, Bicester Gateway, Bicester Motion and both railway stations.

Celebrate local heritage

- A sensitive heritage focused design that enhances Market Square.
- Consider opportunities for arts projects, including the potential for a war memorial.
- Ensure a consistent heritage look and feel within Bicester.

Create a destination for all

- Develop flexible spaces for the community to enjoy events and activities.
- Consider technology and how it can enhance visitor/user experience.
- Improve lighting and highlight focal points, to help improve night time experience.

Support the local economy

- Continue to develop both day-time and night-time economy.
- Consider current and future parking within the town centre to accommodate growth.
- Provide access and loading for local businesses.

Protect and enhance the natural environment

- Incorporate planted areas to create visually appealing and accessible green spaces which enhance the town centre and its buildings.
- Create shaded, protected and comfortable resting places.

4.5 Once the internal review was completed and the project objectives were agreed, the project team moved to the next stage – Community engagement and concept development. The detailed process which was developed is provided in the attached Appendix 2 document:
Bicester Market Square - Public Realm improvements – Concept development.

4.6 To support and enable high-quality engagement, a dedicated communications and engagement specialist was brought into design and deliver a comprehensive strategy. This included proactive media outreach, targeted digital advertising, a public display in the local library, printed posters, roller banners and relationship-building with local stakeholders, including councillors, schools, and community groups. The communications campaign reversed early negative sentiment, generated awareness across a wide audience, and directly contributed to more than 1,500 survey responses and over 400 event participants. The communications approach was phased in line with key project milestones, using creative assets, physical displays, and digital targeting to maximise reach. Further detail, including campaign performance and engagement data, is provided in Appendix 5a.

4.7 As part of the extensive public engagement, the project objectives were clearly communicated alongside the “why” slide, which helped establish a shared understanding of the need for change and the vision for Market Square. The first Concept and Design workshop was then held with local businesses from the Market Square and surrounding area, alongside community interest groups (e.g. Bicester BUG) and councillors from Oxfordshire County Council, Cherwell District Council, and Bicester Town Council. The event took place at the Chesterton Hotel,

Bicester, on 25th November 2024. Three early concept design ideas were presented, generating a range of feedback from participants.

- 4.8 This was followed by a public display at Bicester Library, which remained in place throughout the engagement period. The display launched with an in-person event at the library on 26th November 2024, marking the start of the wider public engagement. A second public event was held at Bicester Friday Market on 29th November 2024. Across both events, the project team engaged with over 400 members of the public, who provided valuable feedback on the three design options.
- 4.9 An online public survey titled “Have Your Say” ran throughout November and December, generating over 1,500 responses from members of the Bicester community. To ensure accessibility, the survey was also made available in paper format as part of the library exhibition, with a dedicated drop-off box for completed responses.
- 4.10 These engagement events were well attended and received positively by the majority of the community, with collaboration and active listening at the heart of each session. A full list of businesses and community groups consulted during this process is provided in Appendix 2.
- 4.11 A further series of engagement events took place in January and February 2025, including a second business and Councillor session, as well as repeating the public events. These sessions invited the community to indicate their preferred option from the three concept designs presented. Full details of these events are provided in Appendix 2.

To note: For any future engagement sessions we are committed to holding sessions during the working week, evenings and Saturdays to ensure the events are well attended and provide the fullest opportunity for residents and businesses to be involved.

4.12 The responses from all of the events were reviewed with the following outcome –

2.6.2 ENGAGEMENT PREFERENCES

Through engagement with local businesses in Market Square, community groups, key stakeholders, and the wider public, a clear preference has emerged for Design Idea 02. This approach brings together key elements from both Design Idea 01 and Design Idea 03, bridging the gap between differing views. As a result, it delivers a well-balanced design that reflects the needs and aspirations of the community.

Through-out the engagement process there has been clear messages with :

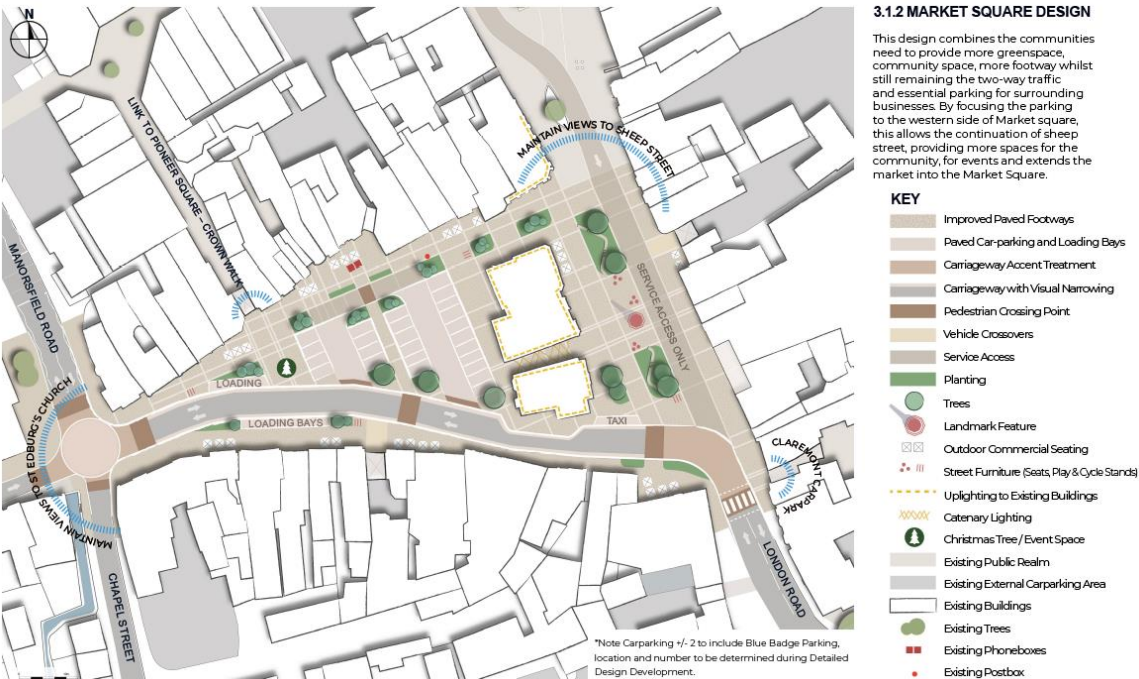
- The importance of supporting local businesses, residents and visitors
- The need to maintain accessible parking options to improve usability
- A strong and clear call for enhancing Market Square, while preserving its historic character.

| | Colour |
|-----------------|--------|
| Most Preferred | |
| Mid Preferred | |
| Least Preferred | |

| | | DESIGN IDEA 01 Existing road layout, Market Square enhanced | DESIGN IDEA 02 2-way road and Market Square enhanced | DESIGN IDEA 03 2-way road, Market Square enhanced and relocated parking |
|--|---|---|---|--|
| 1st Co-Design Workshop Preference | | | | |
| 2nd Co-Design Workshop Preference | | | | |
| Bicester Local Businesses Preference | | | | |
| Market stall traders Preference | | | | |
| Bicester Bug Preference | | | | |
| Public Feedback Survey - (Library & Market Stall) Preference | | | | |
| Professional Analysis | Safety for pedestrian (when considering Road Layout / Traffic) | | | |
| | Carparking Places *Subject to revision in Detail Design | | | |
| | Space available for Community | | | |
| | Space available for Planting *Note without underground surveys the location and number of planting might change | | | |
| Budget Considerations | *Note this would require confirmation from a Cost specialist | Could be achieved | Would need additional funding and require a phased approach | Would need additional funding and require a phased approach |

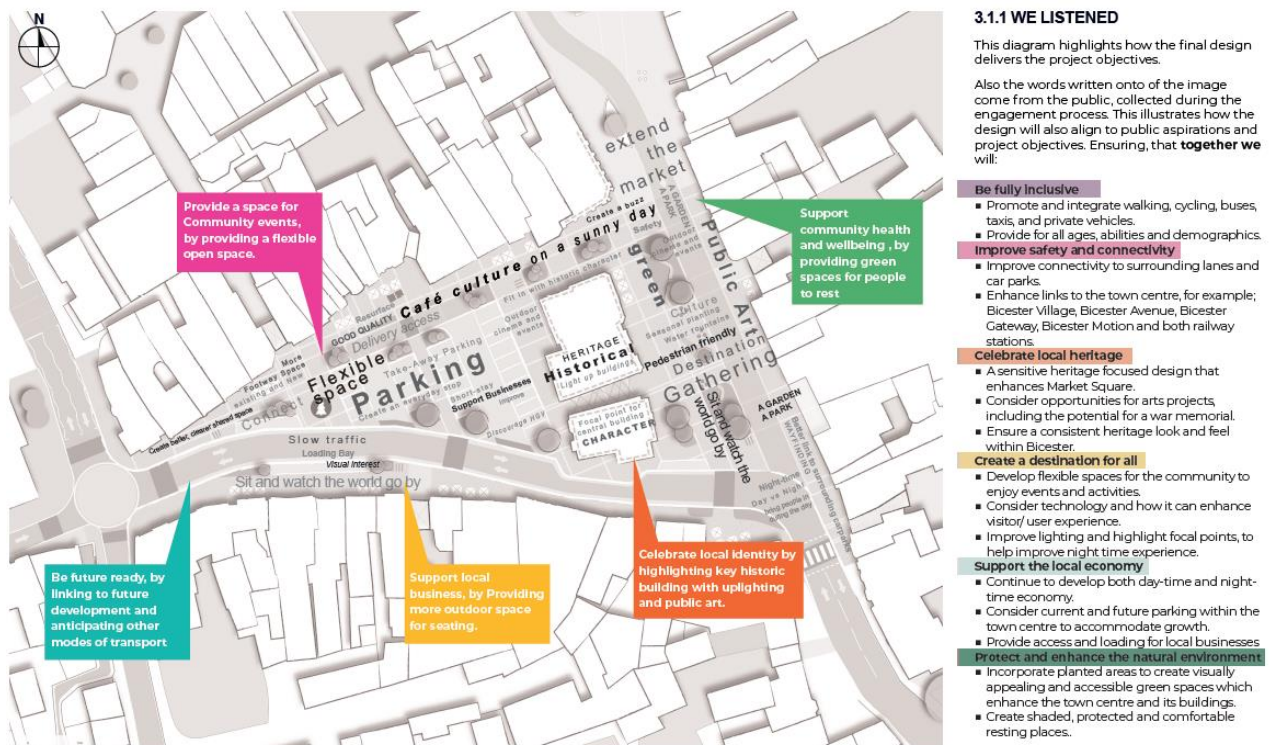
Reviewing the responses from the public, local businesses, community groups and the co-design workshops, it is recognised that there emerges a preference for Design Idea 02.

The Preferred Concept Design



We Listened

This diagram highlights how the preferred concept design delivers the project objectives.



4.13 Further studies and surveys are required to ensure that this design can be fully developed into the final design.

The following outlines the main technical studies needed. This work will begin over the summer 2025.

- Highway and Traffic Engineers to review and input into junction area re-designs.
- Survey requirements for better understanding loading, public parking and servicing access.
- Car parking spatial requirements to be developed in greater detail, including locations for blue badge parking, taxi bays and car parking circulation study.
- Designing the localised pinch point in the highway and give way arrangements in greater detail.
- Potential impacts on movements to be reviewed by traffic Engineers.
- A detailed review of potential issues related to underground structures, including investigation of cellars and foundations of previously demolished building, including any archaeological requirements.
- Consultation with the local heritage group and local community for any possible new landmark or memorial design, including location.

- Viability of tree planting location with underground investigations and visibility studies.
- Review landownership – currently identified CDC and OCC as landowners.

4.14 The Appendix 2 document provides further details on potential design palettes, including surface material options and ideas for lighting, planting, seating/street furniture. All of these decisions will be taken as part of the next stage of design and will be in part led by the planning process. The project team will still have significant input into this process as part of the detailed design process.

Delivery of the project

4.15 There are several ways this project could be developed and delivered. Traditionally within Cherwell District a project of this size would have been handed over to Oxfordshire County Council (OCC) to develop the detailed design, appoint and manage a contractor to deliver the scheme out.

4.16 This project could be handed over to OCC, however there are risks to CDC with this approach which include -

- limited involvement with the detailed design - the design could be delivered with significant differences from the preferred concept design currently recommended
- limited involvement in selecting materials and potential concerns with quality, time and cost controls.
- A significant proportion of the total budget - £4.25m, is CDC capital funding, however if we are not delivering the project on site, there could be reputational risks if the project was delayed, or significant cost rises were out of CDC control.

4.17 In discussions to date with the Executive Portfolio Holder for Finance, Property and Regeneration another delivery plan has been discussed where CDC retain the detailed design and delivery of this project. This approach would include –

- CDC project team progressing the pre-construction stage of the project as outlined in the attached programme in appendix 4. This retains control particularly of the details design process, and development of the planning application. The project team would still work very closely with OCC colleagues.
- As part of this a two-stage contract process is recommended (NEC 4E x22 contract suggested)
- The first stage would be advertised via a Framework within CDC procurement rules and following corporate policies. The successful contractor would then develop the design within a target cost. Stage one also allows for value engineering to ensure the design meets the set budget.
- If all ok with stage one, we then progress to appoint for stage two – delivery of the scheme, within the costs identified in stage one.
- This ensures CDC retain control of costs, design and timings for delivery.
- Alternatively, a Design and Build JCT contract could be entered into. This route is likely to attract larger contractors, not so good potentially at the detail, quality and cost mitigation, or prepared to work with the project team as closely.

Budget and Indicative Cost Plan

4.21 The earlier Executive report from September 2023 outlined the following –

In February 2023 Council approved £4.25m to be allocated towards this capital project and further funds of c.£880k may become available through OCC s106 town centre funding which could reduce resources required for this project or further resources could be requested depending on the agreed final project plan.

OCC have confirmed £881k is available from s106 town centre funding and they are currently seeking the required approvals to transfer this to CDC.

This report is therefore requesting the OCC s106 funding is added to the £4.25m budget already identified to provide a maximum project budget of £5.131m. £180,000 has been spent to date get the project to this stage, as approved in the September 2023 report.

There are two indicative cost plans for the preferred concept design attached as Appendix 3. One plan is an indicative cost to include higher cost materials e.g granite, with an estimated total cost of £5,029,640 (appendix 3a) (excluding risk and inflation = £3,808,929). The other is for lower cost materials eg manmade materials; with an estimated total cost of £4,499,466 (appendix 3b) (excluding risk and inflation = £3,434,729)

(To note – a new estimated cost plan will be available ahead of the Exec meeting on the 2nd September, subject to the surveys to be completed over the summer so will be updated for accuracy during the CLT to Exec process)

Estimated Programme

- 4.22 The estimated programme to deliver the currently proposed design is attached in Appendix 4. This is dependent on the outcome of the surveys due to begin over the summer 2025, including the archaeological surveys and progress of the planning application process. These are identified as the two main risks to the programme currently.

(To note – a new estimated programme will be available ahead of the Exec meeting on the 2nd September, so will be updated for accuracy during the CLT to Exec process)

July/August 2025 – Data collection and surveys

Autumn 2025 – seek pre-app planning advice

From Sept/October 2025 – development of concept design onto detailed design

Early 2026 – Submit planning application

Early 2026 – Procurement for construction contractor

Summer 2026 – Construction starts

Summer 2027 - Completion

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 one: To approve a previously available design from the one presented which does pedestrianise the Market Square. This is not an option for the local businesses

and community of Bicester; during engagement this was a very clear message along with the request to retain some parking and if possible, at the current level.

Option two: To approve one of the other presented designs in Appendix 2. This would not be the preferred design from the public and business engagement, but it is possible to deliver one of the other concept designs at this stage.

Option three: To pause or stop this project now and not continue to the next stage. This would save the project budget to be spent on other projects or Council priorities; however this project has been discussed within the community for over 20 years and during the last year the team have been working very closely with our Portfolio Holder who has been supporting this project.

6 Conclusion and Reasons for Recommendations

- 6.1 The Bicester Market Square improvement project has been in the public domain for many years. A report to the Executive was presented on the 4th of September 2023:
Bicester Garden Town Programme - Market Square Project Business Need & Next Stages.
- 6.2 This report follows the stages of the project over the last two years to date; specifically following an internal review in summer 2024 with the Executive Portfolio Holder for Finance, Property and Regeneration in conjunction with the Corporate Director of Communities, the project has progressed with a full public engagement process completing, as well as confirming project “why” and project priorities.
- 6.3 The outcome of the public engagement process has been a preferred concept design, together with a draft programme which outlines next steps, together with estimated cost plans depending on choice of materials to deliver this project.
- 6.4 The cost plans are estimating the preferred plan can be delivered within a total maximum project budget of £5,131,000, (dependent on material choices) with £180,000 spent to date.
- 6.5 This report therefore sets out recommendations to take forward the next steps of this project onto successful delivery and completion.

Decision Information

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

Document Information

| | |
|--------------------------------------|--|
| Appendices | |
| Appendix 1 | Bicester Garden Town Programme - Market Square Project Business Need and Next Stages |
| Appendix 2 | Bicester Market Square - Public Realm improvements – Concept development |
| Appendix 3 | (3a) Bicester Market Square Cost Plan (Granite paving option) (3b) Bicester Market Square Cost Plan (Manmade paving option) |
| Appendix 4 | Bicester Programme |
| Appendix 5 | WSP Market Square Engagement |
| Appendix 5a | Communications and Engagement Performance Summary |
| Background Papers | Bicester Garden Town Programme - Market Square Project Business Need and Next Stages – Sept 2023 |
| Reference Papers | none |
| Report Author | Julia Harrington Head of Regeneration and Growth |
| Report Author contact details | 07540433310 Julia.harrington@cherwell-dc.gov.uk |
| | |

This page is intentionally left blank

| This report is public | |
|--|---|
| Response to Motion: Government Review of Local Authority Funding | |
| Committee | Executive |
| Date of Committee | 2 September 2025 |
| Portfolio Holder presenting the report | Leader, Councillor David Hingley |
| Date Portfolio Holder agreed report | 19 August 2025 |
| Report of | Assistant Director of Finance (S151 Officer), Michael Furness |

Purpose of report

To respond to the motion raised at the Council meeting of 21 July 2025 by Councillor Edward Reeves in relation to Government Review of Local Authority Funding.

1. Recommendations

The Executive committee resolves:

- 1.1 To note the Executive's response to the motion.

2. Executive Summary

- 2.1 The motion raised by Cllr Reeves "requested as a matter of urgency that the Leader:

(i) writes to our Members of Parliament with a view to their raising these concerns with Ministers;

(ii) works through the District Councils Network, the Local Government Association and/or other relevant organisations to ensure that there is the strongest possible lobbying of the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government, highlighting the plight of a high-growth district like Cherwell;

(iii) issue as strong an individual submission to the government's Fair Funding consultation as possible with a view to mitigating the effects of these cuts."

- 2.2 Over the last 18 months, the council has used its influence, both officers and members, to lobby the Government via various routes to ensure the Government is aware of the potential scale of implications to the council. Over this period the council has provided:

(i) The briefing presentation provided to the MPs for Banbury and Bicester and Woodstock on 28 July (Appendix 1); the letter from the Leader to the MPs for Banbury and for Bicester and Woodstock sent in May 2025 (Appendix 2).

(ii) The letter sent to the Secretary of State for Business & Trade in July 2025 (Appendix 3); the letter sent to the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government in September 2024 (Appendix 4).

The Executive also note the voluntary involvement of key officers in:

- MHCLG's Business Rates Retention Implementation Working Group which has regularly discussed ideas around how they can make the core principles of business rates retention work in practice.
- District Councils Network's Finance and Investment Group which designs all of the DCN's finance responses and positions to feed back to government.
- LGA membership which Officers have also used influence, and for networking.
- Direct meetings between council officers and MHCLG civil servants explaining the council's potential financial position along with alternative solutions that could mitigate this whilst implementing the Government's ambitions.

Involvement in these working groups puts Cherwell in a position to influence government decisions at various levels, from the very practical level of how Fairer Funding could work in practice and the unintended consequences to the implications on Districts and the sector as a whole.

(iii) the letter sent to the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government (Appendix 5) alongside the council's response to the Fair Funding 2.0 consultation, submitted on 15 August 2025 (Appendix 6)

Implications & Impact Assessments

| Implications | Commentary | | | |
|--|--|---------|----------|------------|
| Finance | There are no financial implications arising directly from this report. Joanne Kaye, Head of Finance (Deputy S151 Officer), 6 August 2025 | | | |
| Legal | There are no legal implications arising directly from this report. Shiraz Sheikh, Assistant Director Law and Governance/Monitoring Officer, 22 August 2025 | | | |
| Risk Management | There are no risk implications arising directly from this report. Celia Prado-Teeling, Performance Team Leader, 20 August 2025 | | | |
| Impact Assessments | Positive | Neutral | Negative | Commentary |
| Equality Impact | | | | N/A |
| A Are there any aspects of the proposed decision, including how it is | | | | N/A |

| | | | | |
|--|-----|--|--|-----|
| delivered or accessed, that could impact on inequality? | | | | |
| B Will the proposed decision have an impact upon the lives of people with protected characteristics, including employees and service users? | | | | N/A |
| Climate & Environmental Impact | | | | N/A |
| ICT & Digital Impact | | | | N/A |
| Data Impact | | | | N/A |
| Procurement & subsidy | | | | N/A |
| Council Priorities | N/A | | | |
| Human Resources | N/A | | | |
| Property | N/A | | | |
| Consultation & Engagement | N/A | | | |

Supporting Information

3. Background

- 3.1 The government has committed to overhauling the way funding is allocated to local authorities, including the business rates retention scheme. The impact of these changes was expected to reduce the council's funding by up to 40%. It is therefore crucial that the council puts its views across to government via consultation responses and through direct lobbying.
- 3.2 The Business Rates Reset consultation in April focussed on the technical detail of particular aspects of how a full business rates reset could work. The government made it clear in the introduction to the consultation that they had already decided that a full reset was going to happen so no other options on whether it was full, or partial were up for discussion.
- 3.3 The Fair Funding Review 2.0 consultation focuses on the government's proposed approach to local authority funding reform through the Local Government Finance Settlement starting from 2026-27. It is another technical consultation focussing on

the calculations required to redistribute funding to upper tier authorities with adult and children's social care responsibilities. The consultation confirms that phasing the ultimate funding changes will happen over 3 years; over the committed 3-year settlement period.

4. Details

4.1 The Fair Funding 2.0 consultation covers:

- determining local authority funding allocations
- approach to consolidating funding
- measuring differences in demand for services and the cost of delivering them
- measuring differences in locally available resources
- the New Homes Bonus
- transitional arrangements and keeping allocations up-to-date

4.2 It also covers:

- long-term approach to the business rates retention system
- devolution and wider reforms, including how we can bring Strategic Authorities closer to the Local Government Finance Settlement
- ways we can reduce demands on local government to empower them to deliver for communities; and sales, fees and charges reform.

4.3 The council recognises that the implications of the Fair Funding Review 2.0 could have significant financial implications for the authority. As a result the council has used its influence, both officers and members, to lobby the Government via various routes to ensure the Government is aware of the potential scale of implications to the council.

4.4 The latest indications from Government are that a funding floor will be introduced which would limit the council's exposure to funding reductions. This indicates that the lobbying the council has undertaken has had an impact on Government decision making when considering how it implements Fair Funding 2.0. The council will continue to work through all of its contacts to exert what influence it can to ensure that the council's financial position is understood and considered in Government decision making.

5. Alternative Options and Reasons for Rejection

5.1 No alternative options have been identified.

6 Conclusion and Reasons for Recommendations

6.1 The Leader and officers have taken opportunities to maximise the amount of influence on the Government to ensure that it is aware of the financial challenges that Cherwell would face if anticipated changes were implemented without any financial safeguards being put in place.

Decision Information

| | |
|---|--|
| Key Decision | No |
| Subject to Call in | No – report for information and noting |
| If not, why not subject to call in | N/A |
| Ward(s) Affected | All |

Document Information

| | |
|--|--|
| Appendices | |
| Appendix 1 | Briefing Presentation to CDC Local MPs July 2025 |
| Appendix 2 | Letter to CDC Local MPs re Business Rates Reset May 2025 |
| Appendix 3 | Letter to Secretary of State for Business and Trade July 2025 |
| Appendix 4 | Letter to Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government July 2024 |
| Appendix 5 | Letter to Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government August 2025 |
| Appendix 6 | Fair Funding 2.0 Consultation Response |
| Background Papers | None |
| Reference Papers | None |
| Report Author | Joanne Kaye, Head of Finance (D151) |
| Report Author contact details | Joanne.Kaye@cherwell-dc.gov.uk 01295 221545 |
| Corporate Director Approval (unless Corporate Director or Statutory Officer report) | N/A – report of statutory officer, S151 Officer |

This page is intentionally left blank

Fair Funding Review

Appendix 1

Page 121

July 2025



Cherwell
DISTRICT COUNCIL
NORTH OXFORDSHIRE

Overview

The Fair Funding Review 2.0. consultation includes final proposals to:

- make major changes to the main funding formula with a stronger link to levels of deprivation and population.
- reset the baseline for retained business rates in full in 2026-27
- scrap the New Homes Bonus and return the funding to the core settlement.
- simplify and consolidate several grant pots, including grants for homelessness prevention, rough sleeping and temporary accommodation.
- provide transitional funding, including a minimum funding floor, to protect councils from the full impact of the funding changes.
- move gradually towards greater local freedom on setting fees and charges, but no concrete proposals.

These changes will be implemented over three years, beginning in 2026-27. They will be delivered via a multi-year finance settlement published later in 2025.

The consultation does not propose any changes to council tax funding.

Funding Simplification (Chapter 3)

- MHCLG to confirm grants to incorporate within RSG at the provisional settlement – creates risks and uncertainty in budget planning to find out in November/December.
- Whilst Districts still exist, it makes sense to have grant targeted to relevant tiers, rather than consolidated.
- The DCN has concerns about consolidating the Discretionary Housing Payments and Household Support Fund into a single grant. There is a risk this will lead to all funding in the grant being allocated to county and unitary councils in the same way as currently happens with the Household Support Fund. DCN's view remains that all grant related to housing should be allocated directly to housing authorities
- The transfer of New Homes Bonus to the core settlement and allocating according to updated assessment of needs and resources, is a fundamental shift in resources from lower tier to upper tier.

Approach to assessing demand (Chapter 4)

- The formulae for individual services does not recognise there are fixed costs in organisations e.g. costs of elections
- Removal of 'fixed costs' from the needs assessment, which assumes a minimum amount of funding required for local authorities to provide services, disproportionately impacts smaller authorities especially when combined with the change in weightings from lower to upper tier.
- The use of Revenue Outturn data for 'control totals' (the scale of national expenditure on service areas) will have a negative impact for district councils share of relative needs, because they will be driven by changes in the pattern of actual expenditure.
- Authorities that have found solutions to live within budget will be penalised and those that have overspent or funded services through reserves will be reward through additional funding, rather than operating within strict budgetary controls.

Approach to assessing demand (Chapter 4)

Foundation Formula overestimates population nationally:

- Density removed – if you have two areas, one with 2 towns and another with 3 but similar total populations, then the area with 2 towns is more likely to need 1.5 times the number of leisure centres etc.
- The new Accessibility adjustment and Remoteness adjustment have relatively small weighting.
- Daytime population of an authority – overestimating the total population – should be net commuters as there must be out commuters and day/night leavers.

Other resource adjustments (Chapter 6)

Collection Rate

- A standard 100% collection rate to be applied – unrealistic in practice.
- The average collection rate is around 95.88%.
- The actual collection rate would reduce the scale of equalisation.

Assumed national council tax

- Some councils will be less than average and should be able to increase to the average to ensure they have the minimum level of revenue funding for their need.
- Parish Precepts must be excluded from the Council Tax calculation
- Councils should not be impacted by prior administration decisions, especially if the administration has changed.
- Councils should have freedom and democratic accountability to change Council Tax to the level of service desired by the administration.

Business Rates Retention (Chapter 7)

- Safety net should be set at 100%
- Loss of pooling benefit from reset will reduce income further and increase risk to district whilst safety net is at 92.5%
- If further resets coincide with revaluations and capital investment is required to release growth, this stops the business case being viable.

Transitional Arrangements (Chapter 9)

- The full reset penalises many councils that have worked hard to promote local growth. It will take out a significant chunk of funding and reliance on transitional protection or reserves.
- Transitional protection is essential but phasing over three years is not sustainable.
- A 0% funding floor should apply to all local authorities
- Councils should not be forced to run down unallocated reserves to cushion the impact of funding reform. It ignores the other risks that Councils face i.e., market risk, interest rate risk, costs of transformation etc.

Sales, Fees and Charges (Chapter 11)

- Local Government should be given the opportunity to sets its own fees and charges and Councillors should be held to account at the ballot box.
- The approach to reforming fees and charges is very timid and slow. Councils should have freedoms to do this now and be trusted to implement fairly. This could make a tangible difference.

Equalities Impacts (Chapter 13)

Page 130

There is particular concern related to councils at or below the 'funding floor' - in that they may be forced to take decisions that may have a detrimental impact on those with a protected characteristic due to having more limited resources available, and therefore no feasible alternative option in some cases.

Business Rates Reset – Cherwell Impact – Local MP Summary May 2025

Background

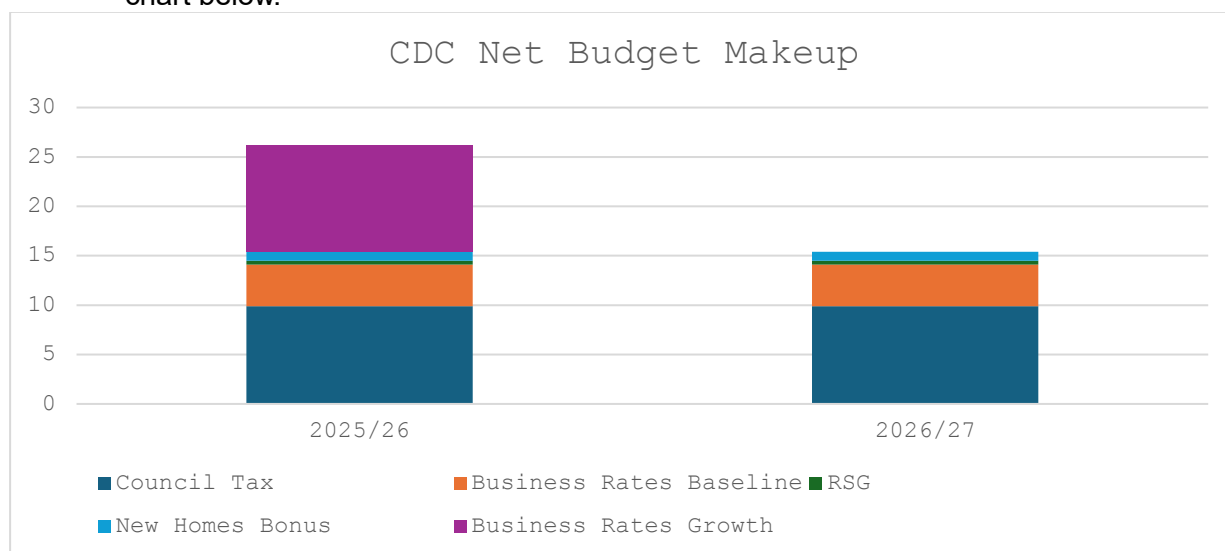
- The business rates retention scheme was introduced in 2013/14 as a direct policy approach to incentivise local authorities to grow their local business rates.
- Local authorities were able to retain a proportion of growth in their area above a baseline assessment.
- Cherwell has been incredibly successful from this scheme and retained c£12m over the baseline position from growth related to business rates.

Business rates reset

- A “business rates reset” will take growth achieved locally and transfer it to the central pot to be redistributed nationally based on the latest government distribution formula.
- There has always been provision in the scheme for a reset; however consultations never reached a conclusion on whether this should be a full reset (i.e. redistribute all growth) or a partial reset (e.g. redistribute some of the growth, or a rolling reset allowing growth relating to a particular year to be retained for a set number of years).

Government’s proposed approach to business rates reset

- The Government has stated that it intends to do a **full business rates reset** from 1 April 2026.
- This will reduce the council’s resources by c£12m in 2026/27 (42% of the Council’s net budget of £26m).
- The Government has indicated that the combined impact of all financial changes introduced from 2026/27 would be phased over a period of 3 years.
- If this were to be applied to the impact of the reset then it would mean annual reductions in funding in each of the next three years of c£4m.
- The Council does not expect to receive much money back from redistribution as Cherwell’s retained growth is significantly above the national average.
- The visual impact of the full reset on the Council’s net budget can be seen in the chart below.



- NB the RSG and New Homes Bonus Funding are also at risk for 2026/27.
- If this is implemented as described then this will put Cherwell in an incredibly challenging financial situation and it will be highly likely that there will be **significant reductions in the level of services provided to its residents**.

Alternative Reset Approaches

- In order to facilitate business rates growth, capital expenditure may be required by Council's which has longer pay back periods.
- Therefore an option could be to allow a "rolling reset"
- This would see Council's retain growth achieved in one year for a period of time (say 10-15 years)
- Following this period the growth could go back into a central pot to be redistributed.
- This would be a happy compromise that
 - avoids cliff edges in funding,
 - allow the redistribution of resources based on need
 - allows certainty of funding to meet fixed capital costs

Leader of the Council
Councillor David Hingley



jonathan.reynolds.mp@parliament.uk

Jonathan Reynolds
 Secretary of State for Business and
 Trade
 House of Commons
 London
 SW1A 0AA

39 Castle Quay
 Banbury
 Oxon
 OX16 5FD

www.cherwell.gov.uk

Please ask for: Cllr David Hingley
 Email: david.hingley@cherwell-dc.gov.uk

Direct Dial: 01295 221555

16th July 2025

Dear Jonathan

The UK's Modern Industrial Strategy

Thank you very much for your letter regarding the above. It is many years since we were on our university's Student Union Executive together and I am delighted to see that you are now leading the UK's economy through this ambitious Industrial Strategy.

Cherwell District Council replied with enthusiasm and in some detail to the Green Paper in Autumn 2024 (please find attached).

In our response, this Council emphasises the key 'Local Leader and Enabler' role it already plays in driving economic growth in north Oxfordshire and beyond.

Located mid-way between London and Birmingham, on the East-West Rail corridor, Cherwell is increasingly home to many spinout enterprises from Oxford University, a wealth of growing businesses and many international inward investors. We are actively involved with key regional partnerships, including the Oxford to Cambridge Partnership and Oxford Growth Commission, to deliver infrastructure, housing and employment that meets the needs of our area and region while contributing to the wider nation.

Indeed, Cherwell is a key economic driving force for the UK, hosting over 7,000 businesses, many of which relate to the eight growth-driving sectors identified in your Strategy. Some of our businesses - such as Fortescue and Oxford Ionics - are explicitly named, and these could be supplemented by many others. I would be extremely pleased to introduce you to any of them.

Siemens Healthineers, for example, is to open its bespoke £250 million UK headquarters near Bicester in 2026. This facility alone will provide 1,300 skilled jobs in the design and manufacture of

superconducting magnets used for MRI patient scans in healthcare facilities globally. It will add a net additional £820m to the Gross Value Added (GVA) of the economy by 2040.

Additional to this development, our new Local Plan will aim to ensure that high technology businesses can expand within a significant cluster of activity. This cluster alone is expected to add £6.3m in business rates annually.

We do, however, have a serious concern. Previously, Cherwell took up the incentive scheme introduced in 2013 to drive growth across the district to become one of the top 10 Local authorities with retained growth above the business rates baseline. However, this emphasis now makes Cherwell one of the authorities at greatest risk of losing significant resources if a full reset of retained business rates growth is implemented. Cherwell estimates that if a full reset were introduced for 2026/27 then it could face a reduction of **£12m**, 42% of our net budget. This is in addition to the loss of **£1.4m** one-off grants (New Homes Bonus and Funding Guarantee) and continuing upward pressures on our services. Even if cuts of this scale were to be phased over three years, the corresponding impact on services would be devastating for our residents and communities.

We therefore wish to co-operate extremely closely with Government to address these concerns, such that our services can continue to be provided, as well as to ensure that Cherwell remains amongst the most important localities in the UK supporting beneficial economic growth for the country.

Within the Industrial Strategy, I was also pleased to see that the importance of 'the foundational economy' is also now highlighted. As a district in central England, strategically located on the national highway network, this council is allocating land through our Local Plan to enable, for example, some of the most efficient and sustainable logistics businesses in the UK. The corresponding industrial units are equally capable of accommodating our world-leading cluster of high technology and advanced engineering as they are for meeting the essential supply chain needs of, for example, science-related companies or essential household needs.

In addition to this, very recently, this Council approved the outline development of a logistics park extending over 65 hectares primarily to meet national supply and distribution needs. Of course, in order fully to realise such development, our local authorities must be properly resourced to prepare for the homes, skills and infrastructure needs of a greatly expanding workforce and populace.

So, in short, with our ambitious Local Plan to 2042 also soon to be submitted for inspection, Cherwell provides huge potential to help deliver Government's ambition. However, we crucially need to ensure the resources and infrastructure are readily in place and this means we need government's understanding and support in addressing the financial challenges ahead.

I would therefore like to invite you to Cherwell to see for yourself the progress we have made so far, to review the further opportunities, and to discuss how we might work with government to address these future challenges.

Yours sincerely



Councillor David Hingley
Leader
Cherwell District Council

cc:

Business and Trade's Regional Economic Growth and Insights team (London, East of England, South East and East Midlands) - Miriam Sachak

Miriam.Sachak@businessandtrade.gov.uk,

This page is intentionally left blank

Leader of the Council
Councillor David Hingley



Rt Hon Angela Rayner
 Secretary of State for
 Housing, Communities and
 Local Government
 House of Commons
 London
 SW1A 0AA

Bodicote House
Bodicote
Banbury
Oxfordshire
OX15 4AA
www.cherwell.gov.uk

Please ask for: Cllr David Hingley
 Email: David.hingley@cherwell-dc.gov.uk

Direct Dial: 01295 221525

22nd July 2024

Dear Secretary of State

Local Government Funding and Business Rates Reset Implications

As the newly elected Leader of Cherwell District Council, I would like to take this opportunity to congratulate you on your appointment. The council looks forward to working with you to drive the positive and lasting changes needed at a local level for achieving success on the national stage, and across all sectors.

I would imagine this is just one of a sea of letters you will receive from local authority leaders expressing their concerns over the financial challenges and uncertainties facing their authorities. Cherwell is no different in that respect, except that its financial cliff edge has, by and large, been as a result of its emphasis on delivering economic growth.

There are however some clear solutions for easing the financial pressure on the sector that would benefit all local authorities in providing long term security and in delivering better outcomes for our communities as well as the country as a whole.

Current Local Government Funding arrangements:

Government grants

In recent years, local government has received significant one-off funding in the form of Funding Guarantee Grant and New Homes Bonus. For Cherwell this financial year, these two grants amount to **£4.8m**, which has contributed significantly to our ability to balance our books. We are hugely grateful for this funding, however the challenge for the sector is

not knowing year to year whether we will receive this support. Given where we are in the year, and that there have been no further announcements about how local government will be funded beyond 2024/25, we are optimistically assuming there will be another “roll forward” of last year’s settlement in December 2024 so that this funding will be available in 2025/26.

As there is however no current certainty of these grant streams continuing in the future, like other local authorities we are assuming this funding will fall out from 2026/27 onwards. Given how lean local authorities have had to become over the years to reflect incremental reductions in central funding, this would have a significant impact on the communities we serve, particularly our most vulnerable residents, with our ability to provide the conditions for economic, health and climate change success, to name a few, becoming severely limited. The collective effect across the sector will be felt nationally, particularly around reducing the burden on the health and wellbeing sectors.

Business Rates Reset

This is another area of great uncertainty for Cherwell and the sector as a whole. A lack of clarity on the timing and form of a business rates reset is having a destabilising effect on local authorities. Cherwell took up the incentive scheme introduced in 2013 by driving growth across the district to become one of the top 10 Local authorities with retained growth above the business rates baseline (according to CIPFA’s Resilience Index). However, our embrace of this scheme makes Cherwell one of the authorities at greatest risk of losing significant resources if a full reset of retained business rates growth is implemented. Again, as there has been no update on the implementation of a business rates reset, Cherwell is assuming there will be no reset in 2025/26, but the possibility of such a development hangs large over the medium term.

Cherwell estimates that if a full reset were introduced for 2026/27 then it could face a reduction of **£10.6m** based on current growth projections, or a **57%** reduction in our net service budgets. This is in addition to the grant losses above and expenditure pressures being placed on our services due to cost-of-living impacts. If cuts of this scale were to be implemented in one go, or phased over a number of years, the corresponding impact on services would be devastating.

In essence, having to assume cuts in funding of this scale makes it impossible to plan sustainable council services for the future.

Potential Business Rates Reset Solution

Instead of introducing a full reset, one option the Government could consider would be to implement a rolling reset. This would see growth from year 1 of the scheme returned centrally to be redistributed across local government based on need. Growth in the next financial year would be retained by the local authority and this approach would continue into future years. This approach would have the dual benefits of:

- Removing the possibility of cliff edges in resources, such that forecasting resources available from business rates would become far more certain – if a local authority continued to grow at the same rates it has historically then it would not lose any business rates resources;
- Growth would begin to be redistributed across the country based on the needs formula adopted by the Government.

A similar suggestion to this was included in the last significant consultation on the Business Rates Retention Scheme, which took place in December 2018.¹ Cherwell's finance officers recently met with civil servants from your Department and this was one of the topics discussed. We would be very happy to continue that conversation.

Combined Funding Uncertainty

Taking into account the potential impact of a full reset of retained business rates growth of £10.6m, and the potential loss of one-off funding announcements of £4.8m, the council currently has uncertainty around funding of **£15.4m** from its net budget of £27.0m in 2024/25.

So, if we were to ask what might be the one thing that could radically improve the financial prospects for Cherwell and the sector as a whole, a significant response would be to commit to funding agreements of at least three years, if not for the life of the Parliament.

My officers and I stand ready to work with the Government on designing fair changes to the business rates scheme which avoid penalising economically focussed authorities such as Cherwell, but which instead work for all local authorities through finding an appropriate balance between reward for business rates growth and business rates redistribution.

Yours sincerely



David Hingley
Leader, Cherwell District Council

¹ [Business Rates Retention Reform Sharing risk and reward, managing volatility and setting up the reformed system](#), Para 2.2.8, December 2018

This page is intentionally left blank

Leader of the Council**Cllr David Hingley**
Cherwell

 DISTRICT COUNCIL
 NORTH OXFORDSHIRE

 The Rt Hon Angela Rayner
 House of Commons
 London
 SW1A 0AA

 39 Castle Quay
 Banbury
 Oxfordshire
 OX16 5FD

www.cherwell.gov.uk

Please ask for: Cllr David Hingley

Direct Dial: 01295 221555

Email: david.hingley@cherwell-dc.gov.uk

Our Ref:

Dear Secretary of State

Fair Funding 2.0 Consultation

As Leader of Cherwell District Council, I am writing to you alongside my council's response to the Fair Funding 2.0 consultation, in order to draw out some of our principal concerns around those proposals and the anticipated business rates reset.

In previous correspondence, I have confirmed to government that this council is keen to work together to drive the positive and lasting changes needed at a local level for achieving success on the national stage, and across all sectors. This position is unchanged, and for a number of years, Cherwell has sought to ensure that this government and those before it have been equally aware of the perilous financial impacts for us of a potential financial "cliff edge" as a result of a business rates reset. Unfortunately, this is now compounded by the potential redirection of resources retained by Cherwell suggested by the Fair Funding review.

The outcome of the Fair Funding 2.0 consultation and future distribution of local government funding, along with associated safeguard protection for local authorities that will lose resources, is consequently of critical concern for us. Independent analysis of the consultation proposals by the Institute for Fiscal Studies¹ indicates that Cherwell would be one of the most impacted authorities without protection, such that losses to Cherwell could exceed 25% of funding. Furthermore, my council's Section 151 Officer has been contacted by MHCLG civil servants, who have confirmed that Cherwell has been identified

¹ <https://ifs.org.uk/publications/fair-funding-review-20-impacts-council-funding-across-england>

as one of the most impacted authorities from the proposals, whose current share of funding is furthest from its proposed new share of funding.

While my Finance Team has submitted our consultation response through the official channels, I have appended this for your information and wanted to take the opportunity to highlight some key considerations for your attention.

Funding Floor

It is very welcome that the Government has recognised that phasing funding changes of the scale proposed over three years is unrealistic for a sector that is under immense pressure. Accordingly, the consultation refers to placing local authorities on a “cash floor of 0%” – meaning that the maximum financial impact that would be felt from the changes is no reduction in cash (a real terms reduction).

However, we have been informed by civil servants that Cherwell may not be eligible for a cash floor of 0% and instead may be impacted by a cash floor of -7% - a real terms reduction of around 10%. This implies that the group of local authorities that are in need of the protection provided by the 0% floor are being expected to take an even larger reduction in funding. Our estimates are that a -7% cash floor would be of the order of £2.1m for Cherwell. Whilst less than the full impact of transitioning over 3 years, this would still be a considerable challenge for the council to address.

Given the impacts this would have on service delivery, I would consequently urge you to consider applying one floor position for all authorities in line with the consultation of a 0% cash floor.

Funding Baseline

In order for the Government to introduce a floor, it needs to have a baseline from which it can determine the floor position. The current proposal for a baseline is for an adjusted 2025/26 Spending Power position, which would include an assessment of retained growth in business rates.

However, authorities that have chosen to pool together retain a further element of business rates, which will be lost as soon as a reset is implemented. It is critical that this element of funding is also included in the baseline so that appropriate floor reductions can be calculated.

In Cherwell we are budgeting on receiving £3.8m from pooling in 2025/26. If this is not included in the baseline position and a -7% floor is applied, then Cherwell will receive a loss of funding as a result of these proposals of around £5.9m from an anticipated base of c£30m. This would amount to a near 20% reduction in funding for Cherwell.

I therefore suggest it is critical that Government collect appropriate data to allow it to make adjustments to the baseline for funding that is currently received as a result of pooling.

I am grateful to you for your attention to these concerns and look forward to hearing your response to the Fair Funding 2.0 consultation, as well as to understanding how you propose to implement the changes in a fair, sustainable way for all authorities. My officers and I stand ready to work with the Government on designing an appropriate approach to identify retained pooling income across business rates pools.

Yours sincerely

A solid black rectangular box used to redact the signature of David Hingley.

David Hingley
Leader, Cherwell District Council

This page is intentionally left blank

The Fair Funding Review 2.0 Consultation Response

Question 1 – What are your views on the updated SFA resulting in zero allocations, and the use of mitigations to avoid zero allocations?

As far as we can tell, no authorities will receive a “zero allocation” from these funding reforms. In principle, though, we would not support any authority having a negative allocation for either SFA or RSG. Negative values imply that council tax income is being transferred from one part of the country to fund services in another. Local taxpayers will be rightly concerned if their local council tax is being used in this way. We would welcome the use of mitigations to avoid zero allocations, particularly for smaller authorities like district councils where even modest funding reductions can have significant service impacts.

Question 2 – Do you agree with how the government proposes to determine the Isles of Scilly’s Settlement Funding Assessment?

Not applicable.

Question 3 – Do you agree with the government’s plans to simplify the grant landscape?

We agree with the principle of simplifying grants and with the ambition to end wasteful competitive bidding and unnecessary admin burdens. However, we have several points to raise about the detail of the approach:

- To be able to make proper use of the greater simplicity and flexibility, councils will need more details of the new arrangements promptly, and in any event, before the provisional finance settlement.
- Any grants provided outside the main settlement should have allocations announced for multiple years. Otherwise, the usefulness and certainty of the multi-year settlement will be undermined.
- Where consolidated grants are created these should be distributed via a new formula and this formula must be consulted on openly and in plenty of time. There should be minimum standards for the process of determining new distributions, with full transparency about how formulas have been developed, and the data/ calculations that have been used to determine allocations. Some of the recent grant allocations (e.g. Extended Producer Responsibility Guarantee in 2025-26) have fallen short of these minimum standards.
- There should be a full schedule and timetable of all existing grants that will be rolled into the consolidated grants or into the main settlement over the next 3 years.

- The consultation is not entirely clear about the treatment of new burdens funding. It appears to indicate that all existing new burden grants will be rolled into the main settlement (RSG) and allocated according to Settlement Funding Assessment – unless there is an exception because the grant has a specific distribution. We would welcome clarification that this is the case. If it is, we are concerned that this approach will lead to some councils not receiving the full amount of reimbursement for the additional costs they necessarily incur as a result of specific government requirements. The entire point of new burdens is to reimburse councils for the specific cost they incur. We cannot see how this principle can be maintained if new burdens funding is distributed according to the main Settlement Funding Assessment. This gets the balance wrong between simplicity and fairness.
- We have concerns about future new burdens, especially in the context of funding for weekly food waste collections. Paragraph 3.2.4 of the consultation indicates that ‘future new burdens will continue to be funded through new Section 31 grants, in line with the New Burdens Doctrine’ rather than rolled into the main settlement. Our view is that funding for food waste collections is a future new burden (it is certainly not an existing new burden) and should be allocated by Section 31 grant with a clear distribution methodology that has been consulted upon. We would welcome clarification that this is the case. If this funding stream is rolled into the settlement at some future point, transitional arrangements should shield councils from any significant cliff edge difference between the allocation methodology used for the specific grant and the distribution using Settlement Funding Assessment.
- MHCLG should publish a full list as soon as possible – and certainly well before the provisional settlement – of all existing new burdens grants and any imminent new burden grants that will be rolled into the main settlement.

Question 4 - Do you agree with the formulae for individual services the government proposes to include?

Disagree.

We agree with the inclusion of separate formulae for Adult Social Care, Children and Young People’s Services, Home To School Transport, Fire and Rescue, and Highways Maintenance. We have provided more detailed comments about these formulae in response to later consultation questions.

We support the inclusion of a separate formula for Temporary Accommodation. This causes a significant cost pressure for many district councils. However, we have reservations about the way the TA formula works. Our initial analysis suggests that over 70% of the TA formula funding will be allocated to London boroughs. This is out of proportion to the share of households in TA (56%) and total expenditure on TA (62%) in London. This results in an under allocation of TA funding to councils outside London.

We estimate that, as a whole, districts could lose 8% of their TA funding from the shift to the new formula. If this is the case, we would urge the government to revisit the methodology for the TA formula.

We oppose rolling in some of the funding streams without proper protections, such as New Homes Bonus, Funding Floor, and Employer's National Insurance Contribution grants.

We have reservations about the methodology used to calculate the weighting of deprivation in the Foundation Formula (see our answer to Question 42). This should be responsive enough to recognise the additional costs of pockets of high deprivation within areas as well as overarching average levels of deprivation in an area.

We disagree with removing the separate formulae Fixed Costs (see our answer to Question 5).

Question 5 – Do you agree with the areas of need the government proposes to no longer include in the assessment through the Foundation Formula?

Disagree.

Some of the deleted Relative Needs Formulae (RNF) were very important to shire district councils.

The Fixed Cost Adjustment (FCA) was particularly important and reflected the basic costs of operation in every authority. The existing FCA ensures the relative costs of employing basic operational staff is recognised as a baseline for all local authorities regardless of size. Analysis conducted during the 2018 consultation indicated that the fixed cost uplift should be retained and should be weighted at least three times higher.

Question 6 – Do you agree with the government's approach to calculating the control total shares for the relative needs formulae?

We strongly support the methodology used to calculate control totals. Control totals should be determined based on actual spending patterns. We support using the most recent data on actual expenditure (i.e. from the latest post-audit RO return). This is the approach that was proposed in the 2018 consultation.

We support splitting the foundation formula control total using the expenditure patterns in shire county areas which have district and county councils. This is the only expenditure data that clearly shows the relative spend of the two types of council.

Question 7 – Do you agree with the Labour Cost Adjustment (LCA) and Rates Cost Adjustment (RCA) equations set out in this chapter?

Agree.

Question 8 – What are your views on the proposed approach to the Area Cost Adjustment?

We support the inclusion of Remoteness Adjustment, and the Accessibility Adjustment within the Labour Cost Adjustment. They recognise the higher unit costs that are incurred by authorities with high levels of sparsity and/or remote from competitive markets.

However, we are concerned about the weighting given to the Accessibility Adjustment and Remoteness Adjustment. Our analysis suggests they do not fully compensate rural authorities for the abolition of the sparsity indicators in the current formula. The ACA elements only provide funding for the additional unit costs in rural areas, whereas the current sparsity indicators provided funding for a wider range of cost pressures, including higher demand for some services in rural areas. In our view, the sparsity and remoteness adjustments should be adapted to cover a wider range of cost pressures. As it stands, the proposed methodology tends to disadvantage rural councils.

More positively, the proposal for the travel time adjustment is an improvement in technical terms. It applies the same methodology to every authority on the same basis, whereas both the sparsity and density measures in the current formula have cut-offs, which creates cliff edges.

We support the methodology for the Rates Cost Adjustment.

Question 9 – Do you agree or disagree with the inclusion of the Remoteness Adjustment? Do you have any evidence to support or contradict the theory that rural areas face additional costs due to separation from major markets?

We agree there is a strong case for including the Remoteness Adjustment in the ACA. Delivering a service over a wider geography with people further from population centres increases costs. There is also less likely to be a competitive market for procurement in such remote rural locations.

Question 10 – Do you agree with the government’s proposal to set a notional Council Tax level at the national average level, to achieve the objective of full equalisation?

Yes.

However, this means that the Government is assuming that local authorities funding is based on this notional level of council tax being applied. This means that some Local Authorities have a Council Tax that is less than the average amount will automatically have less resources to deliver services and as a result, must make greater cuts.

Authorities with low levels of council tax should be offered the opportunity, should they wish, to be able to increase to the national average level assumed by the Government

so that they have the choice for themselves and their residents to either fund services at minimum level of revenue funding for their need as identified by the Government, or operate at a reduced level of service with residents paying a lower level of council tax in return.

If the Government does not offer this flexibility then a LA with high taxbase and low Council Tax level will be disproportionately impacted by loss of grant in relation to the level of services they are able to provide.

It is also critical that Government states the national Council Tax level it is assuming for all tiers of local government.

Question 11 – Do you agree with the government’s proposal to fully include the impact of mandatory discounts and exemptions in the measure of taxbase?

Agree and exclude the others that are local discretion.

Question 12 – Do you agree with the government’s proposal to use statistical methods to proxy for the impact of Working Age Local Council Tax Support in the measure of taxbase?

Agree in principle, subject to consultation and review of the intended approach. Or the Government could apply what was the old national scheme before CTRS came in as a proxy.

Question 13 – What are your views on the proposed statistical approach to proxy for the impact of Working Age Local Council Tax Support?

Disagree.

We do not support the proposed methodology. There is insufficient evidence provided to substantiate it and no evidence that alternatives have been considered.

We do not support the use of IMD. It is inappropriate for use in this context. Using benefit data should have been explored because this is much more likely to correlate with the demand for Working Age Local Council Tax Support (WALCTS).

We recognise that some measure of deprivation does need to be taken into account because demand for the WALCTS will be higher in authorities with higher levels of deprivation. We would like to see more transparency about the approach that has been used.

Question 14 – Do you agree with the government’s proposal to assume that authorities make no use of their discretionary discount and premium schemes in the measure of taxbase?

Agree. These are discretionary schemes. If they were included within equalisation, it would discourage authorities from applying them.

Question 15 – Do you agree with the government’s proposal to apply a uniform Council Tax collection rate assumption to all authorities?

We agree that a uniform rate should be applied. But the collection rate assumption should be based on the actual collection rate and not on full collection. The objective of the equalisation calculation is to base the adjustment on actual council tax levels (hence the use of the national average Band D).

Local authorities do not collect 100% of council tax. The actual average collection rate of 95.8% should be used.

The justification for using full collection rather than the actual collection rate is “to [ensure] that the incentive for all authorities to reduce tax avoidance remains”. This is misleading. Billing authorities are already incentivised to maximise collection. Using a different collection rate in the resources adjustment will not reduce that incentive – but will artificially remove resources from higher taxbase areas which is unachievable to collect through council tax.

Question 16 – Do you agree with the government’s proposal to split or allocate the resource adjustment in multi-tier areas according to the average share in Council Tax receipts in multi-tier areas?

Agree.

We agree that the right approach is to use average share of council tax. However, we would welcome clarification whether or not the 11.0% share for district councils includes the parish precept. We do not think it should. This income is passed through and cannot be spent by districts. Including it in the district share would overstate income-raising ability.

In Cherwell the combined Council Tax of the district and Parishes is around 11%.

Question 17 – Noting a potential trade-off of an increased levy charged on business rate growth for some local authorities, do you agree that the level of Safety Net protection should increase for 2026-27?

Agree.

Following the baseline reset in 2026-27, district councils will be fully exposed to any variations in business rates and will not have had the opportunity to build up any growth. Districts are much more exposed to risk in the Business Rates Retention System (BRRS). A higher safety net would be very welcome, particularly in the early years following the reset.

We would also welcome a review of the safety net in the context of wider changes in the BRRS, and as part of the discussion around the balance between risk and reward needs.

There is also an argument that the safety net level should be set at 100% to ensure that local authorities are able to receive the minimum level of funding identified within the formula.

The consultation is silent on the treatment of business rates pools. We believe there is a strong case for them to be rolled into SFA and this be included as part of 2025/26 baseline Core Spending Power funding.

Question 18 – Do you agree with the government’s proposal to end the New Homes Bonus in the Settlement from 2026-27 and return the funding currently allocated to the Bonus to the core Settlement, distributed via the updated Settlement Funding Assessment?

Disagree.

The consultation asserts that that there is no evidence that NHB has acted as an incentive for housebuilding. This assertion is itself not supported by adequate evidence. Given the elevation of housebuilding to a national mission, it would be counterproductive if local councils were not incentivised to support the delivery of housing. This sends the wrong signal at a time when councils need as much support as possible with further ambitions for housebuilding.

Building new homes creates additional demand for council services and hence additional cost. Council tax income from these new homes will not by itself cover the additional cost. NHB helps councils cover the cost of new homes. Removing it creates a disincentive for housebuilding.

Our strong view is that NHB should be retained unless and until a replacement is agreed.

Question 19 – What measures could the government use to incentivise local authorities to specifically support affordable and sub-market housing?

100% capital grants from Government for social/affordable homes.

Reinstate NHB - The point of NHB is that it gave additional Council Tax income for new homes. Council Tax income on its own does not cover the costs of additional services required for a property.

We believe some of the measures in this consultation will disincentivise affordable house building. This includes the ending of the New Homes Bonus and the approach of fully equalising council tax. To incentivise housebuilding, especially affordable homes, councils need to have confidence that a proportion of their growth in taxbase will be retained locally over an extended period.

We believe it would be possible and desirable to design a housing incentive scheme specifically targeted at affordable housing. This could include additional flexibility on council tax or business rates income if defined thresholds are met.

Question 20 – Are there any further flexibilities that you think could support local decision-making during the transitional period?

MHCLG should offer a big package of additional freedoms and flexibilities for councils to raise and retain income locally. This should include changes to council tax referendum thresholds as well as new freedoms on fees and charges. This is especially important for district councils given their higher gearing to local income and much lower share of government grant.

The current limit of 2.99% or £5 does not provide district councils with the funding required to maintain their vital services. Last year district councils generated 53% of their revenue funding from council tax yet district councils have consistently been given tighter council tax referendum principles than town and parish councils and Police and Crime Commissioners (PCCs) over a long period.

Increasing the referendum principles to at least 5% or £10 could generate around £100m extra income per year for district council services at no cost to central government. The current £5 limit is only relevant to 20 out of 164 district councils. Even if these additional flexibilities were used in full in 2026/27, it would only cost the average Band D household 22p extra a week. District precepts would remain below PCC precepts in the vast majority of areas.

Additionally, if the government approach is based on national council tax levels, there should be additional flexibility for councils below the average national level to increase council tax up to the average. They should not be held to prior administrations decisions, especially if the administration has changed and the electorate has voted for a different approach.

We believe the government should be much more ambitious in devolving to councils the flexibility to set fees and charges, and to recover the full cost of providing service. Please see our response to Question 31.

The Government is considering introducing a two tier approach to floors. A floor is the maximum change in funding that can take place. Given all of the financial challenges facing local government currently a 0% cash floor should be applied to all; this is still a real terms reduction in overall funding year on year for the Spending Review period.

Capital Receipts Flexibility – revise the legislation as it was previously to be used for transformation related costs including redundancy and Pension Fund Strain.

Pensions – is it essential that actuaries assume that the pension fund is 100% funded for all of its commitments, both current and in the future? Local Government has a funded scheme and feels like it has been penalised for setting money aside; we had a big overall pot and were punished for not being 100% funded and had to up our

contributions – Central Government has an unfunded scheme and doesn't worry about the future – it raises enough cash for the coming year. Across local government there have been significant additional contributions and the funds have caught up far quicker than expected, so does there need to be as much of a concern if a pot isn't forecast to be 100% funded over its lifetime? Maybe the threshold could be reduced whilst ensuring there is sufficient cash available for X (to be determined) years of payouts.

Question 21 – What are the safeguards that would need to go alongside any additional flexibilities?

Generally, none are necessary. Councils are democratically elected bodies, accountable for their decisions at the ballot box. In respect of allowing councils to balance their budgets over a multi-year period, we agree that this should be time-limited and should not exceed three years.

Question 22 – Do you agree or disagree that we should move local authorities to their updated allocations over the multi-year Settlement? Please provide any additional information, including the impact this measure could have on local authorities' financial sustainability and service provision.

Disagree.

We agree that the updated allocations should be phased in. The Government has stated that it intends to do a full business rates reset from 1 April 2026. This will reduce the council's resources by c£12m in 2026/27 (42% of the Council's net budget of £26m). If this were to be applied to the impact of the reset then it would mean annual reductions in funding in each of the next three years of c£4m.

When other grant reductions and pressures are added in this results in the council needing to identify £16m savings over its 5 year MTFS period, with the majority in the first three years. Savings of this scale would pose a considerable challenge to a local authority with a net budget of £26m.

Therefore, our clear view is that the three-year period of the settlement is too short. While there is a case for introducing funding changes within a fixed period, we would strongly prefer that the time period was determined based on the impact on authorities' funding rather than an arbitrary period. For those district councils who are losing, overall funding allocations over the next 3 years will reduce in cash terms. In fact, most of the 41 district councils that will have a below-cash funding floor in 2026-27 will have lower levels of overall resources in 2028-29 than they have in cash terms in 2025-26. This represents very significant real-terms cuts, even with the maximum increase in Band D council tax. It is much less than the increase in spending pressures.

We do not agree it is right or prudent for councils to be expected to run down reserves to plug funding gaps that they did not create. Reserves can only be used once and

should be saved for their intended purpose and risks the council is exposed to. There is also ongoing uncertainty about how the costs associated with transitioning to new unitary councils through local government reorganisation will be financed. This represents an additional financial pressure that may need to be met from reserves.

We strongly believe that in the current financial climate a 0% cash floor (a cash reduction in grant received from Government) is the maximum transition rate that should be applied for local authorities that are likely to lose resources as a result of the revised formula and business rates reset.

Without significant safeguards that continue for years in excess of the current proposed three year transition the likely impact on services provided to the residents of Cherwell will be severe.

Question 23 – Do you agree or disagree that we should use a funding floor to protect as many local authorities’ income as possible at flat cash in each year of the Settlement?

Please provide any additional information, including on:

- **The level of protection or income baseline, considerate of the trade-off with allocating funding according to the updated assessment of need and resources; and**
- **The possible impacts on local authorities’ financial sustainability and service provision.**

Agree.

A 0% minimum funding floor is an essential part of a comprehensive transitional protection regime. We note that this would still mean that councils received a real-terms cut in funding at a time when demand continues to rise.

We understand that we may be in line to receive a below-cash funding floor. Our strong view is that all councils should have the benefit of the same 0% funding floor if they need it. It is not clear how MHCLG has defined and selected the councils that will not be offered the 0% floor. There should be a clear process for selecting some authorities and not others. The selection of some authorities and not others also creates a cliff edge: those marginally above the threshold will have a 0% floor, those marginally below the threshold will have, potentially, a much lower floor. All authorities should be treated consistently and fairly.

If some councils are offered a lower funding floor, our strong preference is for the impact of the lower floor to be phased over the three-year period rather than frontloaded in Year 1. It is unreasonable to expect councils to absorb a significant cash cut – potentially as high as 7% - to their funding next year.

If, contrary to our view, the government does not offer every council the 0% funding floor, it is vital that any council that does not benefit is offered different, equivalent support or flexibilities to manage the impact. This could include greater council tax

flexibility which should be available to any affected council, regardless of whether its council tax is relatively high or low.

Question 24 – Do you agree or disagree with including projections on residential population?

Disagree.

We do not support the use of population projections because they are not sufficiently reliable or accurate.

Sub National Population Projections (SNPPs) are produced using historical data and population component trends that are projected into the future, whereas Mid-Year Estimates (MYEs) are produced using changes to the population components measured during the previous year. Projections are not forecasts and do not attempt to predict the impact of future political and economic changes or local development policies.

In other words, projections are based on historic trends and simply projected forwards. It is for this reason that projections can often be significantly inaccurate. The ONS highlights that "...projections become increasingly uncertain as they go forward into the future, particularly for smaller geographic areas and detailed age and sex breakdowns".

Question 25 – Do you agree or disagree with including projections on Council Tax level?

We disagree that projections of council tax levels (Band D) should be used.

Question 26 – Do you agree or disagree with including projections on Council Tax base?

We disagree that council tax projections should be used.

There are no formal council tax projections or forecast published by ONS or any government department. Projections would be based on previous years' trends, which might not reflect future capacity to grow. It would be unacceptable to use such unreliable projections, which would lock-in allocations over 3 years.

Our view is that neither population nor taxbase should be updated within the 3-year allocations. The quality of the projections is insufficiently robust.

Question 27 - If you agree, what is your preferred method of projecting residential population, Council Tax level and Council Tax base? Please provide any additional information, including any explanation or evidence for your response and any views on technical delivery.

Not applicable.

Question 28 – Do you agree with the proposed above approach to determining allocations for areas which reorganise into a single unitary authority along existing geographic boundaries?

Agree.

Question 29 – Do you agree that, where areas are reorganising into multiple new unitary authorities, they should agree a proposal for the division of existing funding locally, based on any guidance set out by central government?

Please provide any supporting information, including any further information areas would find helpful in guidance.

Agree that the starting point should be the resources provided to the original authorities. Then the new local authorities should agree an appropriate split if there are council boundaries that have been separated. But we think there should be a review factored in to ensure the division means each authority is operating in a broadly equally good (or bad) financial environment.

Government must consider the rate at which efficiency savings can be delivered without undermining existing services. Without this, there is a risk that new councils will start on the wrong foot by having to grapple with cuts to their spending power whilst trying to stabilise new organisations.

Question 30 – Do you agree that the government should work to reduce unnecessary or disproportionate burden created by statutory duties? If you agree, what specific areas of statutory duties impose significant burden without significant value for residents?

Please provide any examples of changes you would like to see to statutory duties, being as specific as possible.

Numerous requirements have been imposed on local government over decades by successive governments. There is scope for many of them to be removed, reduced or simplified. These include

- The regime for Freedom of Information and subject access requests
- Planning appeals
- Excessive reporting requirements for annual accounts
- Whole of Government Accounts
- Bureaucratic procedural requirements in legislation or statutory guidance, of which the numerous requirements to publish notices in local newspapers are only one example

- Transparency Code, SAR's GDPR between the public sector.

The Government needs to remove some of the larger statutory requirements to give local authorities the flexibility to make tough decisions if funding isn't sufficient.

We would also support a fundamental review of central government monitoring and reporting requirements and of unnecessary hurdles to data sharing in the public sector.

Question 31 – Do you agree with the proposed framework outlined at paragraph 11.2.3 for assessing whether a fee should be changed?

Please provide any additional information, for example any additional considerations which would strengthen this proposed assessment framework, and any data which would be used to assess against it.

Disagree.

The framework set out in the consultation is very high-level and is not a substitute for concrete action to devolve fee setting. A hierarchy is not required. Instead, a common approach is needed, which we set out below.

The proposal is far too slow and cautious. We do not agree that the first step should be for government to increase some fees centrally before considering devolution. There is no reason why we cannot proceed directly and quickly to free councils to set all fees and charges for services they provide, including penalties arising from enforcement.

The approach should be that all fees and charges collected by councils should be set locally to ensure they will meet the cost of specific services in full, unless the council decides there is a reason to charge a below-cost fee.

The view that service users need to be 'protected' is understandable, but misplaced. In many cases, service users have discretion to avoid a charge by changing their behaviour. In addition, many charges – such as for obtaining an alcohol licence or building control certificate - are incurred as the result of undertaking a commercial enterprise. If the level of charge does not reflect the cost of the service, other council taxpayers are subsidising something which benefits the individual or company.

It is time to set aside concerns about variation in fees between areas. Council tax varies between areas, as do car parking charges, taxi licensing fees and a range of other fees and charges that councils already set. Private sector companies do not operate universal pricing.

For example, prices for fuel vary from area to area and prices for goods can even vary between the same company's superstore and local stores in the same town. Variation is a consequence of devolution. In our view the Government should prioritise devolution and demonstrate that it has reset the relationship between central and local government by bringing forward an urgent, comprehensive programme to delegate setting of all fees, charges and penalties to councils. This would be subject to a requirement not to exceed full cost recovery.

Having fees set by central government creates a rigid system that is not responsive enough to changing circumstances. Even when levels are reviewed, the process of implementing changes through legislation is often ponderous.

We do not believe that changing the criteria used by central government to set this system would make it nimble in the way a locally led system would be.

Question 32 – The government invites views from respondents on how best to balance the need to maintain fee values and the original policy intent of the fee whilst minimising cost of living impacts for service users.

The Government is looking at this question through the wrong lens. Consistent with our earlier response, service users deserve to pay the full price of services that they use rather than expect to have it subsidised by other council tax payers. The best and simplest solution is to devolve all fee setting to councils, subject only to a requirement not to exceed full cost recovery.

Or if the Government wants to minimise the cost of living impact then allocate additional funding to make this the case rather than require the council tax payer to make the subsidy.

Question 33 – Do you agree that the measures above provide an effective balance between protecting charge payers from excessive increases, while providing authorities with greater control over local revenue raising? Please provide a rationale or your response. We are also interested in any further mechanisms which could be applied to fees that are updated or devolved, that will help strike a balance between those objectives.

We disagree with the measures outlined in paragraph 11.2.5. It is time to reset the relationship between central and local government and see central government withdraw from the minutiae of what the appropriate fee for a particular service or activity should be.

If councils were empowered to set all fees and charges locally but only at the level that covers the cost of a service, it would ensure that those seeking licences, being inspected or using particular services would bear the cost of them. At the same time, limiting fees to the level required for full cost recovery would ensure that service users do not suffer a financial impact above and beyond that which is necessary to deliver a service without burdening council taxpayers who do not use it.

An additional safeguard would be provided by the fact that councils would be accountable to their local electorates at the ballot box for the level of any fees set locally and for any impacts that arise from them.

Question 34 – Do you agree that we should take action to update fees before exploring options to devolve certain fees to local government in the longer term?

Disagree.

As already indicated, we believe that central government reviews of fees are generally unnecessary and unduly lengthy. Local Government has the financial challenges now and needs to be given the freedoms and flexibilities. Responsibility should be devolved to local government immediately. While we recognise that primary legislation would be required, there is an ideal vehicle immediately to hand: the English Devolution and Community Empowerment Bill. If necessary, councils can conduct their own reviews that reflect the specifics of their local circumstances.

If the Devolution bill cannot be used, then pending alternative primary legislation, there would be support for rapid steps by Ministers to review fees upwards where they are set by secondary legislation.

Question 35 – Do you agree or disagree that these are the right relative needs indicators? Are there any other Relative Needs Indicators we should consider? Note that we will not be able to add additional indicators for a 2026-27 update.

No comment

Question 36 – Do you agree or disagree with including population projections in the ASC formula, when published, that have been rebased using Census 2021 data?

We do not support using population projections within the ASC RNFs. It is very hard to project populations at the local authority level and even more challenging for smaller population cohorts. We favour certainty over projections. Population can be updated at the periodic resets and formula reviews, as long as these are sufficiently frequent (no longer than 3 years).

More specifically, the 2026-27 population projections are a long way from the 2021 rebasing and are likely to introduce more variation in population figures. ONS figures show that the further projections are from the base year, the more inaccurate the figures are.

Question 37 – Do you agree or disagree with our proposal to include a Low Income Adjustment (LIA) for the older adults component of the ASC RNF model?

We support the principle that the formula should factor in the ability of residents to self-fund their care or contribute towards it. These are substantial income streams for local authorities. It is reasonable that they are taken into account when assessing the net costs to local authorities.

The methodology used in the Older Adults RNF is untested. We would like to see some alternatives before deciding whether it is right to support it. Council tax bandings will partially reflect the ability of residents to pay for their care but there are many other factors.

Question 38 – Do you agree or disagree that the overall ASC RNF should combine the two component allocation shares using weights derived from the national ASC net current expenditure data on younger and older adults (in this case 2023 to 2024)?

If you disagree, what other weightings would you use? Please provide details for why you would use these weights and what data it would be based on?

No comment

Question 39 – Do you agree that ethnicity should be removed as a variable in the CYPs formula? Please explain your reasoning.

No comment

Question 40 – Do you agree overall that the new formula represents an accurate assessment of need for children and family services? Please share any reflections or suggested changes.

No comment

Question 41 – Do you believe that the components of daytime population inflow should be weighted to reflect their relative impact on demand for services?

Yes. We agree that “commuters and tourists likely use non-social-care services at different levels of intensity than the resident population.”

No evidence has been presented in the consultation about how residents and non-residents should be weighted. We would like to understand the options that MHCLG is considering.

Question 42 – Do you agree with/have any comments on the design of the Foundation Formula?

We support the aim of linking funding more tightly to demand for services and the cost of providing them. we also support the aim of tackling deprivation and inequality.

We agree that levels of deprivation are a factor in determining need. Most of the districts that have suffered the biggest cuts to spending since 2010 are those with

highest levels of deprivation. The most deprived shire districts have lost more than half of their 2010 resources in real terms.

However, we believe the weight given to deprivation should reflect the extra costs it creates for councils. Analysis previously undertaken by MHCLG and published in the 2018 consultation paper found that most of the variation in expenditure for the functions within the Foundation Formula could be explained by population. Adding deprivation increased the explanatory power of the formula, but only marginally (by between 0.4% to 4%). The weighting for deprivation in the proposed foundation formulas is considerably higher than this.

We recognise that the increase in funding will be very welcome to councils in the most deprived areas. But it is not clear to us on what basis the deprivation weighting has been calculated and why it is so different to the level implied in the 2018 analysis.

The formula should recognise the additional costs of pockets of deprivation within areas as well as the overarching average level of deprivation across an area.

Question 43 – Do you agree with/have any comments on the design of the Fire and Rescue Formula?

Not applicable

Question 44 – Do you agree with/have any comments on the design of the formula for Highways Maintenance?

No comment

Question 45 – Do you agree with/have any comments on the design of the formula for Home-to-School-Transport?

No comment

Question 46 – Do you have any views on the potential impacts of the proposals in this consultation on persons who share a protected characteristic?

As local government generally supports those who are the most vulnerable in society, the proposals to divert resources away from some councils as part of the fair funding review is likely to have a disproportionate impact on people with protected characteristics in those areas.

According to the 2019 Index of Multiple Deprivation Cherwell has a number of Lower Super Output Areas in the top 20% and top 30% of deprivation within Banbury and within the top 30% in Bicester, two of its main urban centres. Any significant removal of resources is likely to result in savings required by the council which will

disproportionately impact on those living in these areas. It is generally accepted that high levels of deprivation are a proxy for protected characteristics and as a result, the impact of the Government's proposal, **if the Government diverts resources from CDC**, is highly likely to have a significant impact on protected characteristics within Cherwell.

| This report is public | |
|---|---|
| Finance, Performance and Risk Monitoring Report Quarter 1 2025 – 2026 | |
| Committee | Executive |
| Date of Committee | 2 September 2025 |
| Portfolio Holder presenting the report | Portfolio Holder for Finance, Regeneration and Property, Councillor Lesley McLean & Portfolio Holder for Corporate Services, Councillor Chris Brant |
| Date Portfolio Holder agreed report | 18 August 2025 |
| Report of | Assistant Director of Finance (S151 Officer), Michael Furness & Assistant Director Customer Focus, Shona Ware |

Purpose of report

To report to Executive the council's forecast yearend financial, performance and risk position as of the end of Quarter 1 2025, further detail can be found in the report and its appendices.

1. Recommendations

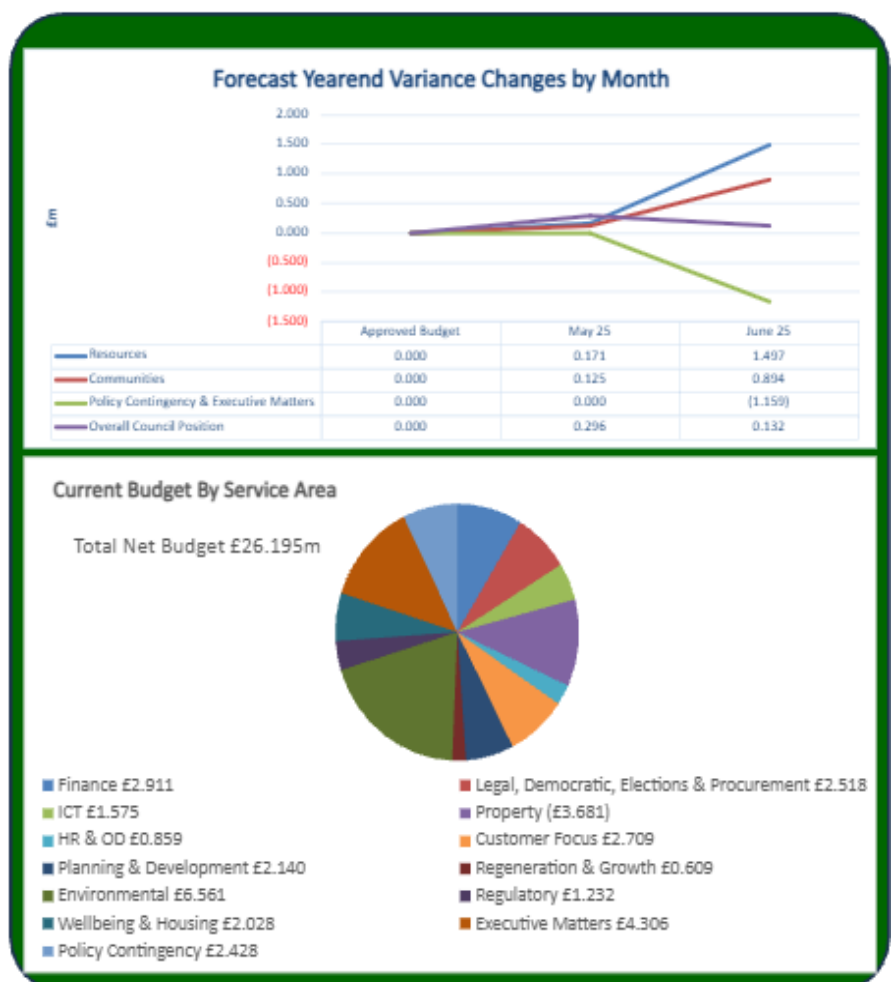
The meeting resolves:

- 1.1 To consider and note the contents of the council's finance, performance and risk management report as at Quarter 1.
- 1.2 To approve the reprofiling of projects in the capital programme as per Appendix 1.
- 1.3 To approve £40k from Policy Contingency for pump priming The Hill.

2. Executive Summary

- 2.1 This report is split into three sections:
 - Finance
 - Performance
 - Risk
- 2.2 The Performance section sets out how the council has performed against its priorities for 2025-26, which are set out in its Outcomes Framework.
- 2.3 The Risk section highlights the current risks within the council's Leadership Risk Register, reflecting the final position for Quarter 1 2025-26.

- 2.4 The Finance section presents the forecast yearend revenue position for the 2025/26 financial year. It is concerning that there are significant forecast overspends identified in the Directorates for which mitigations have not been identified or proposed. The budget is the financial interpretation of the priorities of the council. Therefore, a service forecasting an overspend should always look to identify what mitigations could be put in place to reduce expenditure before expecting other services to look to reduce theirs; expenditure reductions may result in service delivery implications, which would require approval before being implemented.
- 2.5 It is critical for the council, in order to maintain strong levels of budgetary control, that it is recognised that service delivery cannot be maintained at the expense of budget management. Identifying budget mitigations is a fundamental part of budgetary control within the council and it must be applied across all areas. Whilst corporate mitigations have been partially identified for 2025/26, this does not reduce the responsibility of the services to operate within their approved budget. As a result, the council will resume discussion with those services with significant forecast overspends with the Budget Oversight Group so that mitigations can be identified and service implications considered. Where necessary mitigations will be brought before the committee for approval.
- 2.6 The summary position is provided in the dashboard:



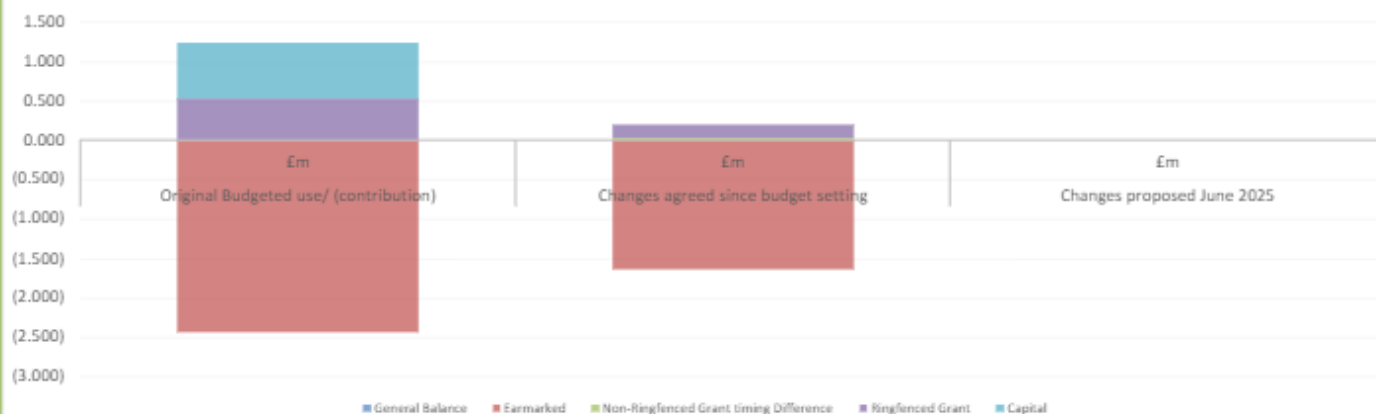
Service Analysis

| Service | Finance | Legal, Democratic, Elections & Procurement | ICT | Property | HR & OD | Customer Focus | Planning & Development | Growth & Economy | Environmental | Regulatory | Wellbeing & Housing | Executive Matters | Policy Contingency | Total |
|---|---------|--|-------|----------|---------|----------------|------------------------|------------------|---------------|------------|---------------------|-------------------|--------------------|--------|
| Budget approved by Council | 2.911 | 2.518 | 1.575 | -3.681 | 0.859 | 2.709 | 2.140 | 0.609 | 6.561 | 1.232 | 2.028 | 4.306 | 2.428 | 26.195 |
| Budget Adjustments approved: | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Current Budget | 2.911 | 2.518 | 1.575 | -3.681 | 0.859 | 2.709 | 2.14 | 0.609 | 6.561 | 1.232 | 2.028 | 4.306 | 2.428 | 26.195 |
| Finance Overspend - Universal credit & fewer court summons delay in overtime policy | 0.115 | | | | 0.024 | | | | | | | | | 0.115 |
| Top slice of grants & IT license costs | | | | | | | | | | | 0.125 | | | 0.125 |
| Environmental - gate fees, agency | | | | | | | | | 0.769 | | | | | 0.769 |
| Property | | | | 1.343 | | | | | | | | | -1.100 | 0.243 |
| IT | | | 0.015 | | | | | | | | | | | 0.015 |
| Additional EPR funding | | | | | | | | | | | | -0.309 | | -0.309 |
| Treasury | | | | | | | | | | | | -0.350 | | -0.350 |
| Dividend | | | | | | | | | | | | -0.500 | | -0.500 |
| Current (Under)/Overspends | 0.115 | 0.000 | 0.015 | 1.343 | 0.024 | 0.000 | 0.000 | 0.000 | 0.769 | 0.000 | 0.125 | -1.159 | -1.100 | 0.132 |

Mitigation Table

| Service | Forecast Overspend | Potential Mitigations | Potential revised Forecast Outturn | Detail on mitigation |
|---|--------------------|-----------------------|------------------------------------|---|
| Finance | 0.115 | | 0.115 | |
| Legal, Democratic, Elections & Procurement | 0.000 | | 0.000 | |
| ICT | 0.015 | | 0.015 | Filling a vacant post part way through the year |
| Property | 1.343 | (0.034) | 1.309 | Windfall Insurance Income for car park damages |
| HR & OD | 0.024 | | 0.024 | |
| Customer Focus | 0.000 | | 0.000 | |
| Resources & Transformation | 1.497 | -0.034 | 1.463 | |
| Planning & Development | 0.000 | | 0.000 | |
| Regeneration & Growth | 0.000 | | 0.000 | |
| Environmental | 0.769 | | 0.769 | |
| Regulatory | 0.000 | | 0.000 | |
| Wellbeing & Housing | 0.125 | | 0.125 | |
| Communities | 0.894 | 0.000 | 0.894 | |
| Total | 2.082 | -0.034 | 2.048 | |
| FUNDING | 0 | 0 | 0 | |
| Potential Revised Forecast (Surplus)/Deficit | | | 2.048 | |

Movement in Reserves



Implications & Impact Assessments

| Implications | | Commentary | | |
|---------------------------|--|--|---------|----------|
| Finance | | <p>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.</p> <p>It is critical for the council, in order to maintain strong levels of budgetary control, that it is recognised that service delivery cannot be maintained at the expense of budget management. Identifying budget mitigations is a fundamental part of budgetary control within the council and it must be applied across all areas. Whilst corporate mitigations have been partially identified for 2025/26, this does not reduce the responsibility of the services to operate within their approved budget. As a result, the council will resume discussion with those services with significant forecast overspends with the Budget Oversight Group so that mitigations can be identified and service implications considered. Where necessary mitigations will be brought before the committee for approval.</p> <p>Joanne Kaye, Head of Finance, 11 Aug 2025</p> | | |
| Legal | | <p>There are no legal implications arising at this stage.</p> <p>The Council has a fiduciary duty to council taxpayers, which means it must consider the prudent use of resources, including control of expenditure, financial prudence in the short and long term and the need to act in good faith in relation to compliance with statutory duties and exercising statutory powers. The Council has a statutory obligation to maintain a balanced budget and the monitoring process enables Executive to remain aware of issues and understand the actions being taken to maintain a balanced budget.</p> <p>The report sets out as at the end of Q1 finance position for the Council as part of its fiduciary duty to implement budgetary controls and monitoring.</p> <p>In relation to some of the KPIs which have been missed or not tracked, it is important for the Council to monitor these from a legal perspective to ensure that we are meeting our statutory obligations in relation to these areas.</p> <p>Denzil Turbervill, Head of Legal, 18 July 2025</p> | | |
| Risk Management | | <p>There are no risk implications arising directly from this report. The report included an update on our Risk Management for Quarter 1 2025-26.</p> <p>Celia Prado-Teeling, Performance & Insight Team Leader, 14 July 2025</p> | | |
| Impact Assessments | | Positive | Neutral | Negative |
| Equality Impact | | | X | |
| | | <p>There are no direct equalities and inclusion implications as a consequence of this report.</p> <p>Celia Prado-Teeling, Performance & Insight Team Leader, 14 July 2025</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 has 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 | This report links to all council's priorities, as it summarises our progress against them till Q1 2025-26. | | | |
| 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 position to ensure it can deliver its corporate priorities and respond effectively to emerging issues.
- 3.2 This monitoring takes place monthly for 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 into a single report given the implications and interdependencies between them, and this is the summary for the end of Quarter 1 2025-26.

4. Details

4.1 Finance Update

4.1.1 As of June, directorates are forecasting an overall year end overspend of £2.391m (12.3% of net budget), a significant increase from the forecast year end position of £0.296m in May. This is driven mainly by pressures in Property (£1.343m) and Environmental Services (£0.769m). The Property overspend reflects a sharp deterioration since May. These pressures are partially offset by stable performance in most other services.

4.1.2 Within Executive Matters there is an underspend on treasury of £0.35m and officers believe it that given the last two years of dividends from Graven Hill it would not be imprudent to forecast a further £0.5m receipt this year. Finally, it is proposed that £1.1m of Market Risk be released from Policy Contingency to offset the remaining forecast directorate overspend until mitigations are put in place. The total forecast deficit, after funding, stands at £0.132m.

4.1.3 The projected outturn for services is summarised below in Table 1 and further detailed explanations for variances can be found in Appendix 2. The graph below shows the Budget compared with the forecast to the end of the financial year.

Graph 1: Budget compared with Forecast

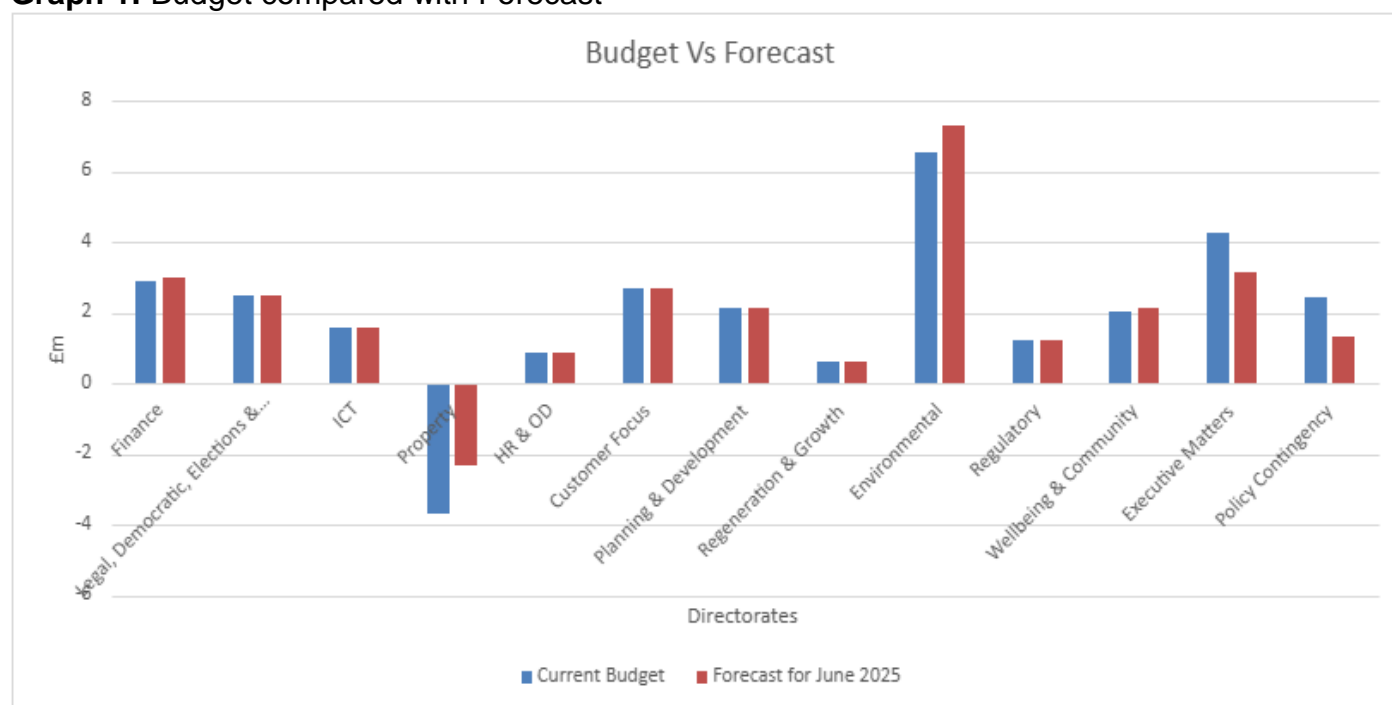


Table 1: Year End Position

| Service | Current Budget £m | June Forecast Outturn £m | June Variance (Under) / Over £m | % Variance to current budget % | May Variance (Under) / Over £m | Change since Previous (better) / worse £m | |
|--|----------------------|--------------------------------|---------------------------------------|--------------------------------------|--------------------------------------|---|--|
| Finance | 2.911 | 3.026 | 0.115 | 4.0% | 0.147 | (0.032) | |
| Legal, Democratic, Elections & Procurement | 2.518 | 2.518 | 0.000 | 0.0% | 0.000 | 0.000 | |
| ICT | 1.575 | 1.590 | 0.015 | 1.0% | 0.000 | 0.015 | |
| Property | (3.681) | (2.338) | 1.343 | 36.5% | 0.000 | 1.343 | |
| HR & OD | 0.859 | 0.883 | 0.024 | 2.8% | 0.024 | 0.000 | |
| Customer Focus | 2.709 | 2.709 | 0.000 | 0.0% | 0.000 | 0.000 | |
| Resources & Transformation | 6.891 | 8.388 | 1.497 | 21.7% | 0.171 | 1.326 | |
| Planning & Development | 2.140 | 2.140 | 0.000 | 0.0% | 0.000 | 0.000 | |
| Regeneration & Growth | 0.609 | 0.609 | 0.000 | 0.0% | 0.000 | 0.000 | |
| Environmental | 6.561 | 7.330 | 0.769 | 11.7% | 0.000 | 0.769 | |
| Regulatory | 1.232 | 1.232 | 0.000 | 0.0% | 0.000 | 0.000 | |
| Wellbeing & Housing | 2.028 | 2.153 | 0.125 | 6.2% | 0.125 | 0.000 | |
| Communities | 12.570 | 13.464 | 0.894 | 7.1% | 0.125 | 0.769 | |
| Subtotal for Directorates | 19.461 | 21.852 | 2.391 | 12.3% | 0.296 | 2.095 | |
| Executive Matters | 4.306 | 3.147 | (1.159) | -26.9% | 0.000 | (1.159) | |
| Policy Contingency | 2.428 | 1.328 | (1.100) | -45.3% | 0.000 | (1.100) | |
| Total | 26.195 | 26.327 | 0.132 | 0.00% | 0.296 | (0.164) | |
| | | | | | | | |
| FUNDING | (26.195) | (26.195) | 0.000 | 0.0% | 0.000 | 0.000 | |
| | | | | | | | |
| Forecast (Surplus)/Deficit | 0.000 | 0.132 | 0.132 | | 0.296 | (0.164) | |

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.

4.1.4 Table 2 below analyses the variances to distinguish between base budget variances and variances resulting from the non-delivery of previously approved savings. The non-delivery of savings has a knock-on impact on the Medium-Term Financial Strategy as failure to deliver on an ongoing basis adds to future pressures.

Table 2: Analysis of Variance – June 2025

| Breakdown of current month forecast | June Forecast Outturn | Base Budget Over/ (Under) | Savings Non-Delivery |
|--|------------------------------|----------------------------------|-----------------------------|
| | £m | £m | £m |
| Resources | 1.497 | 1.451 | 0.046 |
| Communities | 0.894 | 0.894 | 0.000 |
| Subtotal Directorates | 2.391 | 2.345 | 0.046 |
| Executive Matters | (1.159) | (1.159) | 0.000 |
| Policy Contingency | (1.100) | (1.100) | 0.000 |
| Total | 0.132 | 0.086 | 0.046 |
| FUNDING | 0.000 | 0.000 | 0.000 |
| (Surplus)/Deficit | 0.132 | 0.086 | 0.046 |

Savings Non-Delivery as detailed above relates to:

- Removing vacant job posts where possible £0.019m
- Simplifying the job evaluation process by using one scheme instead of two – contract with Zellis not being renewed in November 2025 £0.007m
- Reducing weekday overtime rates to standard pay £0.020m

4.1.5 Table 3 below summarises the major forecast variances for the reporting period. Further details can be found in Appendix 2.

Table 3: Top Major Variances:

| Service | Current Budget | Variance | % Variance |
|---------------------|-----------------------|-----------------|-------------------|
| Property | 3.681 | 1.343 | 36.5% |
| Environmental | 6.561 | 0.769 | 11.7% |
| Wellbeing & Housing | 2.028 | 0.125 | 6.2% |
| Finance | 2.911 | 0.115 | 4.0% |
| Total | 10.242 | 2.112 | |

Reserves

4.1.6 Allocations to and from reserves are made according to the Reserves Policy. There have been no further requests between 31 May and 30 June 2025.

Table 4: Reserves:

| Reserves | Balance 1 April 2025 | Original Budgeted use/ (contribution) | Changes agreed since budget setting | Changes proposed June 2025 | Balance 31 March 2026 |
|----------------------------|----------------------------|---|---|----------------------------------|-----------------------------|
| | £m | £m | £m | £m | £m |
| General Balance | (7.853) | 0.000 | 0.000 | 0.000 | (7.853) |
| Earmarked | (31.264) | (2.444) | (1.635) | 0.000 | (35.343) |
| Non-Ringfenced | (0.033) | 0.000 | 0.033 | 0.000 | 0.000 |
| Grant timing Difference | | | | | |
| Ringfenced Grant | (1.918) | 0.523 | 0.165 | 0.000 | (1.230) |
| Subtotal Revenue | (41.068) | (1.921) | (1.437) | 0.000 | (44.426) |
| Capital* | (7.482) | 0.720 | 0.000 | 0.000 | (6.762) |
| Total | (48.550) | (1.201) | (1.437) | 0.000 | (51.188) |

*According to the Reserves Policy Executive are not required to approve contributions to Capital Reserves.

4.2 Capital

4.2.1 Table 5 below summarises the forecast spend against the full capital programme (i.e. spend across all years of the capital programme).

Table 5: Capital Project Forecast Outturn

| Directorate | Project Total Budget £m | Total Forecast Project Spend £m | Variance to Budget £m |
|----------------------------|-------------------------------|---------------------------------------|--------------------------|
| Resources & Transformation | 14.316 | 14.208 | (0.108) |
| Communities | 33.840 | 27.959 | (5.881) |
| Total | 48.156 | 42.167 | (5.989) |

For further detail on individual schemes please see Appendix 1.

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 6: How the Capital Programme is financed

| Financing | Prior Years' Spend £m | Profiled Spend 2025/26 £m | Profiled Spend Future Years £m | Projected Total £m |
|------------------|--------------------------|---------------------------------|--------------------------------------|-----------------------|
| Borrowing | 4.046 | 4.370 | 7.505 | 15.922 |
| Capital Grants | 2.560 | 5.112 | 10.062 | 17.733 |
| Capital Receipts | 5.213 | 0.062 | 0.000 | 5.275 |
| S106 Receipts | 0.213 | 0.924 | 2.099 | 3.237 |
| | 12.032 | 10.468 | 19.666 | 42.167 |

4.2.2 Table 7 below summarises the capital projects that are being requested to be reprofiled beyond 2025/26. The reprofiling of these projects has been reflected in Appendix 1 and in Tables 5 and 6 above.

Table 7: Requested Capital Budget Reprofiting

| Code | Service | Project | Project Total Budget £m | Reprofiled Beyond 25/26 £m | Removed from Programme | Move to pipeline projects | Virements | Additional Capital Budget | % Change |
|-------|-----------------------|--|-------------------------|----------------------------|------------------------|---------------------------|--------------|---------------------------|----------|
| 40255 | Property | Installation of Photovoltaic at CDC Property | 0.079 | (0.071) | | | | | -89.87% |
| 40263 | Property | Kidlington Leisure New Electrical Main | 0.200 | (0.020) | | | | | -10.00% |
| 40278 | Property | Development of New Land Bicester Depot | 3.975 | (2.541) | | | | | -63.92% |
| 40279 | Property | Spiceball Sports Centre - Solar PV Car Ports | 0.177 | (0.170) | | | | | -96.05% |
| 40280 | Property | Kidlington Sports Centre - Solar PV Car Ports | 0.135 | (0.135) | | | | | -100.00% |
| 40281 | Property | Noth Oxfordshire Academy - Solar Panels | 0.018 | (0.018) | | | | | -100.00% |
| 40282 | Property | Community Centre Solar Panels | 0.106 | (0.106) | | | | | -100.00% |
| 40283 | Property | Thorpe Lane - Solar Panels | 0.034 | (0.034) | | | | | -100.00% |
| 40284 | Property | Thorpe Lane Heater Replacement | 0.028 | (0.024) | | | | | -85.71% |
| 40237 | ICT | Council Website & Digital Service | 0.250 | | (0.122) | | | | -48.80% |
| 40326 | ICT | Digital Futures Programme (Business Cases Required) | 0.217 | | (0.217) | | | | -100.00% |
| 40062 | Regeneration & Growth | East West Railways | 4.350 | | (4.194) | | | | -96.41% |
| 40216 | Environmental | Street Scene Furniture and Fencing project | 0.060 | (0.015) | | | | | -25.00% |
| 40218 | Environmental | Depot Fuel System Renewal | 0.050 | | (0.035) | | | | -70.00% |
| 40222 | Environmental | Burnehyll - Bicester Country Park | 0.246 | (0.061) | | | | | -24.80% |
| 40320 | Environmental | Net Zero Capital Projects (Business Cases Required) | 0.064 | | | (0.064) | | | -100.00% |
| 40321 | Environmental | Landscape Software Upgrade | 0.025 | | (0.025) | | | | -100.00% |
| 40322 | Environmental | Upgrade of Street Cleansing IT System | 0.025 | | (0.008) | | | | -32.00% |
| 40019 | Wellbeing & Housing | Bicester Leisure Centre Extension | 0.122 | | | (0.079) | | | -64.75% |
| 40251 | Wellbeing & Housing | Longford Park Art | 0.045 | (0.045) | | | | | -100.00% |
| 40294 | Wellbeing & Housing | S106 - Ambrosden Community Facility Project | 0.020 | | (0.020) | | | | -100.00% |
| 40295 | Wellbeing & Housing | S106 - Ambrosden Indoor Sport Project | 0.065 | | (0.065) | | | | -100.00% |
| 40296 | Wellbeing & Housing | S106 - Ambrosden Outdoor Sports | 0.130 | | (0.130) | | | | -100.00% |
| 40297 | Wellbeing & Housing | S106 - Ardley & Fewcott Play Area Project | 0.008 | | (0.008) | | | | -100.00% |
| 40300 | Wellbeing & Housing | S106 - Bicester Leisure Centre Extension | 1.154 | | | (1.154) | | | -100.00% |
| 40301 | Wellbeing & Housing | S106 - Graven Hill Outdoor Sport Project | 0.052 | | (0.052) | | | | -100.00% |
| 40307 | Wellbeing & Housing | S106 - Kidlington & Gosford Leisure Centre | 0.020 | | (0.020) | | | | -100.00% |
| 40308 | Wellbeing & Housing | S106 - Milton Road Community Facility & Sports Pitch | 0.479 | (0.471) | | | | | -98.33% |
| 40310 | Wellbeing & Housing | S106 - Spiceball Leisure Centre Improvements | 0.014 | | | | (0.014) | | -100.00% |
| 40311 | Wellbeing & Housing | S106 - The Hill Improvements Project | 0.050 | | (0.050) | | | | -100.00% |
| 40319 | Wellbeing & Housing | Local Authority Housing Fund R2 | 1.641 | | (0.007) | | | | -0.43% |
| 40329 | Wellbeing & Housing | Spiceball Leisure Centre Structural Beams | 0.130 | | | | 0.014 | 0.029 | 33.08% |
| 40336 | Wellbeing & Housing | S106 - Kingsmere Public Art | 0.028 | (0.028) | | | | | -100.00% |
| | | | 13.997 | (3.739) | (4.953) | (1.297) | 0.000 | 0.029 | |

For further detail please see Appendix 1.

4.3 Performance Summary

- 4.4 The council is performing well against its Quarter 1 objectives, which consist of 9 Corporate KPI Measures, 6 Directorate KPI Measures and 23 Annual Delivery Plan actions. Reporting as per the table below for this quarter.

| Plan | Total number of measures | Red (Behind target) | | Amber (Slightly behind target) | | Green (Achieved or within tolerance) | |
|-----------------------------|--------------------------|---------------------|-----------|--------------------------------|------------|--------------------------------------|------------|
| | | No | % | No | % | No | % |
| ADP | 23 | 0 | 0% | 2 | 9% | 21 | 91% |
| Corporate KPIs (Targeted) | 9 | 0 | 0% | 4 | 44% | 5 | 56% |
| Directorate KPIs (Targeted) | 6 | 0 | 0% | 0 | 0% | 6 | 100% |
| Total | 38 | 0 | 0% | 6 | 16% | 32 | 84% |

4.5 Monitoring measures

- 4.6 There are nine measures that the council monitors to be able to identify any emerging trends that might require early intervention from us or partners. There are no targets for these measures as they are dependent on external factors. These measures will be monitored by the Performance team, and the correspondent Director, and will be reported only when there is a significant trend change. There are no areas of concern or significant trend shifts within the Monitoring measures for Quarter 1.

4.8 Performance Exceptions

- 4.9 Of the 23 milestones set for Quarter 1, 21 were achieved or within the agreed tolerance, and two slightly behind target.

Annual Delivery Plan - Exceptions

| Action | Milestone | Status |
|--------------------------------------|---|--------|
| Strengthen community cohesion | Produce Annual EDI General Duty Compliance | Amber |
| Deliver Planning Service Improvement | Establish performance improvement indicators, targets and resources needs | Amber |

- 4.10 Of the nine targeted corporate key performance indicators, five achieved their Q1 target or reported within the agreed tolerance, and the four below reported slightly behind target

Corporate Key Performance Indicators - Exceptions

| Measure | Status |
|--|--------|
| BP1.2.02 No of Homeless Households living in nightly charge (Hotel) Temporary accommodation (TA) | Amber |
| BP1.2.05 % of Homelessness cases successfully prevented rather than relief/main duty being applied | Amber |
| BP1.2.10 % of Major Applications overturned at appeal | Amber |
| BP2.2.03 % Climate Actions Plan delivering to target | Amber |

4.11 All six targeted directorate key performance indicators achieved their targets for the quarter or reported within agreed tolerances. Please note Directorate level KPIs are reported to Committees on an exception basis (only indicators reporting Red and/or Amber).

For full details on all ADP milestones and Corporate KPIS, including commentary, please reference Appendices 5 and 6.

4.12 Performance Highlights

Here is a snapshot of some of the council's key achievements from the first quarter of the year.

- Cherwell District Council's Local Plan Review 2042 is nearing submission to the government, due at the end of July, after a successful consultation and aims to support sustainable development, protect green spaces and heritage, and guide regeneration and infrastructure growth. The Plan will impact local communities by delivering new housing, jobs, and services while aiming to reduce carbon emissions and improve transport.
- Cherwell District Council launched a campaign to help over 1,300 residents accessing unclaimed benefits like free school meals and pension credits, using new data tools and partnerships with Age UK and YouMove to provide support and healthy lifestyle opportunities.
- Construction began on a new PlayZone mini football pitch at Chandos Recreation Ground in Grimsbury, set to open in September. Funded by the Football Foundation and Cherwell District Council, with support from Banbury Town Council, the facility aims to boost access to sport for underrepresented groups and promote community health and inclusion.

4.13 Risk Monitoring

4.14 The Council maintains a Leadership Risk Register, which contains Strategic risks that could be significant in size and duration and could potentially impact on the reputation and performance of the Council as a whole, and in particular, on its ability to deliver on its corporate priorities. The Leadership Risk Register is reviewed quarterly by the Corporate Leadership Team; however, this is a live document that gets updated as and when required.

4.15 Please note risks deemed as high (L01 and L05) and medium (L03, L04, L09, L10, L13, L14, L16 and L17) present higher scores, mostly due to the magnitude of the impact these events could have for the organisation, mitigating actions are in place across them all to reduce the potential severity of the impact, and controls are established to prevent the probability of the risk event happening.

4.16 There were no score changes within the Leadership Risk Register during Quarter 1. The overall position at the time of running this report (29/07/2025) of all Leadership risks is as follows: -

| | | Probability | | | | |
|--------|------------------|-------------|--------------|---------------------|--------------|---------------------|
| | | 1 - Remote | 2 - Unlikely | 3 - Possible | 4 - Probable | 5 - Highly Probable |
| Impact | 5 - Catastrophic | | | L10 | | |
| | 4 - Major | | L08-L11 | L03-L09-L13-L14-L16 | L01-L05 | |

| | | | | | | |
|--|--------------------------|--|-------------|---------|-----|-----|
| | 3 - Moderate | | L06-L07-L12 | L02-L15 | L17 | L04 |
| | 2 - Minor | | | | | |
| | 1 - Insignificant | | | | | |

The full Leadership Risk Register, including controls and mitigating actions, is attached in Appendix 7.

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 End of Year 2026, and a snapshot of our Performance and Risk positions for Quarter 1 2025-26, therefore there are no alternative options to consider.

6. Conclusion and Reasons for Recommendations

- 6.1 The report updates the Committee on the projected year-end financial position of the council for 2025/26, Quarter 1 performance position and updated Leadership Risk Register. Regular reporting is key to good governance and demonstrates that the council is actively managing its financial resources sustainably.

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 Forecast June 2025 |
| Appendix 2 | Detailed Revenue Narrative on Forecast June 2025 |
| Appendix 3 | Virements June 2025 |
| Appendix 4 | Funding June 2025 |
| Appendix 5 | Business Plan KPIs 2025-26 Q1 |
| Appendix 6 | Annual Delivery Action Plan 2025-26 Q1 |

| | |
|--|--|
| Appendix 7 | Leadership Risk Register 2025-26 Q1 |
| Background Papers | N/A |
| Reference Papers | N/A |
| Report Author(s) | Leanne Lock, Strategic Business Partner – Business Partnering & Controls Celia Prado-Teeling, Performance & Insight Team Leader |
| Report Author (s) contact details | Leanne.lock@cherwell-dc.gov.uk , 01295 227098 Celia.Prado-Teeling@cherwell-dc.gov.uk , 01295 221556 |
| Corporate Director Approval (unless Corporate Director or Statutory Officer report) | Stephen Hinds, Corporate Director for Resources & Transformation, 30 July 2025 |

Appendix 1 CHERWELL TOTAL CAPITAL PROJECT EXPENDITURE

| CODE | DESCRIPTION | Previous year(s) spend | Forecast Spend | | | | | Project Total forecast | Project Total Budget | Project Total Variance | Narrative |
|---------------------------------------|---|------------------------|----------------|----------------|----------------|----------------|----------------|------------------------|----------------------|------------------------|--|
| | | | 25/26 Forecast | 26/27 Forecast | 27/28 Forecast | 28/29 Forecast | 29/30 Forecast | | | | |
| 40144 | Castle Quay | 2,814 | 88 | | | | | 2,902 | 2,815 | 87 | |
| 40224 | Fairway Flats Refurbishment | 44 | 321 | | | | | 365 | 365 | (0) | Project going out to tender currently. |
| 40242 | H&S Works to Banbury Shopping Arcade | 35 | 105 | | | | | 140 | 127 | 13 | Project going out to tender currently. |
| 40254 | Thorpe Lane Depot - Renewal of Electrical Incoming Main | 104 | 164 | | | | | 268 | 268 | (0) | Transfer from the network operator about to happen, expecting the project to complete later this year |
| 40255 | Installation of Photovoltaic at CDC Property | 8 | | 71 | | | | 79 | 79 | 0 | Reprofiled to 26/27 due to resource capacity |
| 40263 | Kidlington Leisure New Electrical Main | 180 | | 20 | | | | 200 | 200 | 0 | Reprofiled to 26/27, continuing with stakeholder engagement |
| 40278 | Development of New Land Bicester Depot | 165 | 1,270 | 2,541 | | | | 3,976 | 3,975 | 1 | Planning application in process, some of the spend reprofiled to 26/27 to align with current timelines. |
| 40279 | Spiceball Sports Centre - Solar PV Car Ports | 7 | | 170 | | | | 177 | 177 | 0 | Reprofiled to 26/27 due to resource capacity |
| 40280 | Kidlington Sports Centre - Solar PV Car Ports | 0 | | 135 | | | | 135 | 135 | 0 | Reprofiled to 26/27. Depends on electrical main project 40263 above. |
| 40281 | North Oxfordshire Academy - Solar Panels | 0 | | 18 | | | | 18 | 18 | 0 | Reprofiled to 26/27 due to resource capacity |
| 40282 | Community Centre Solar Panels | 0 | | 106 | | | | 106 | 106 | 0 | Reprofiled to 26/27 |
| 40283 | Thorpe Lane - Solar Panels | 0 | | 34 | | | | 34 | 34 | 0 | Reprofiled to 26/27. Depends on electrical main project 40254 above. |
| 40284 | Thorpe Lane - Heater Replacement (Gas to Electric) | 4 | | 24 | | | | 28 | 28 | 0 | Reprofiled to 26/27. Depends on electrical main project 40254 above. |
| 40316 | CDC Office Relocation to Castle Quay | 5213 | 62 | | | | | 5,275 | 5,146 | 129 | |
| 40327 | Thorpe Place Roofing Works | 16 | 97 | | | | | 113 | 113 | 0 | Extent of works required for the roof has increased following survey. Additional budget to be requested before proceeding. |
| 40342 | Unit 5 & 6 Castle Quay | 0 | 100 | | | | | 100 | 100 | 0 | Budget approved at July Executive. Expected to complete this year. |
| Property | | 8,591 | 2,207 | 3,119 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 13,917 | 13,686 | 231 | |
| 40237 | Council Website & Digital Service | 132 | | | | | | 132 | 250 | (118) | Recommend to remove this from the capital programme as no firm plans at moment to spend. |
| 40326 | Digital Futures Programme (Business Cases Required) | 0 | | | | | | 0 | 217 | (217) | Recommend to remove this from the capital programme as no firm plans at moment to spend. |
| 40334 | Robotic Process Automation Pilot | 105 | 28 | | | | | 133 | 133 | 0 | On track to complete in 2025/26 |
| 40337 | ESRI Software Upgrade | 0 | 25 | | | | | 25 | 30 | (5) | Procurement process ongoing, currently expecting contract to be 5k under budget. |
| ICT | | 238 | 53 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 291 | 630 | (339) | |
| Resources & Transformation | | 8,829 | 2,260 | 3,119 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 14,208 | 14,316 | (108) | |
| 40062 | East West Railways | 156 | | | | | | 156 | 4,350 | (4,194) | Recommend this is removed from the capital programme as no current plans for any further spend. |
| 40286 | Transforming Market Square Bicester | 144 | 816 | 3,335 | | | | 4,295 | 4,295 | (0) | Design stage now complete, project on track subject to approval from Executive of the design. |
| 40287 | UK Shared Prosperity Fund (UK SPF) Year Two Investment Plan Programme | 231 | 76 | | | | | 307 | 306 | 1 | On track to spend in 2025/26 |
| 40288 | UKSPF Rural Fund | 551 | 11 | | | | | 562 | 562 | 0 | On track to spend in 2025/26 |
| Regeneration & Growth | | 1,082 | 903 | 3,335 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 5,320 | 9,513 | (4,193) | |
| 40028 | Vehicle Replacement Programme | Rolling Programme | 1,465 | 1,066 | 1,066 | 1,066 | 1,066 | 5,730 | 5,730 | 0 | On track to spend in 2025/26 |
| 40216 | Street Scene Furniture and Fencing project | 45 | | 15 | | | | 60 | 60 | 0 | Reprofiled to 2026/27 to align with capacity |
| 40218 | Depot Fuel System Renewal | 15 | | | | | | 15 | 50 | (35) | No current plans to spend - so recommend to remove from programme |

| | | | | | | | | | | | |
|----------------------|--|-------------------|--------------|--------------|--------------|--------------|--------------|--------------|--------------|--------------|--|
| 40222 | Burnehyll- Bicester Country Park | 125 | 60 | 31 | 30 | | | 246 | 246 | (0) | Reprofile spend over 3 years to align with capacity |
| 40258 | Kidlington Public Convenience Refurbishment | 0 | 90 | | | | | 90 | 90 | 0 | On track to spend in 2025/26 |
| 40259 | Market Equipment Replacement | 5 | 10 | | | | | 15 | 15 | (0) | |
| 40320 | Net Zero | 0 | | | | | | 0 | 64 | (64) | £561k vired to Public Sector Decarbonisation Scheme 4 in line with grant acceptance executive report taken to Executive in June. Recommend to move the remaining £64k to the pipeline until a project is identified. |
| 40321 | Landscape Software Upgrade | 0 | | | | | | 0 | 25 | (25) | The software will be cloud based and therefore revenue expenditure. Recommend that this is removed from the programme. |
| 40322 | Street Cleansing IT System | 0 | 17 | | | | | 17 | 25 | (8) | Expecting 17k spent in 2025/26, remainder of budget to be given up as related to software costs which will be revenue expenditure due to the software being cloud based. |
| 40331 | Additional Commercial Waste Containers | 29 | 25 | | | | | 54 | 54 | 0 | On track to spend in 2025/26 |
| 40341 | Public Sector Decarbonisation Scheme (PSDS) 4 | 0 | 1,090 | 377 | 193 | | | 1,661 | 1,661 | 0 | Project approved by Executive in June - currently in early stages of project development but expect to spend the grant funded portion by end of financial year. |
| Environmental | | 219 | 2,757 | 1,490 | 1,289 | 1,066 | 1,066 | 7,888 | 8,020 | (132) | |
| 40019 | Bicester Leisure Centre Extension | 43 | | | | | | 43 | 122 | (80) | Move to pipeline projects until S106 funding identified for whole project - not expected until 2029/30 |
| 40083 | Disabled Facilities Grants | Rolling Programme | 1,719 | 1,539 | 1,539 | 1,539 | 1,539 | 7,875 | 7,875 | 0 | Full spend of 25/26 grant allocation anticipated |
| 40251 | Longford Park Art | 0 | | 45 | | | | 45 | 45 | 0 | Reprofile to 26/27 - will not be able to start until development consortium transfers ownership to the council |
| 40294 | S106 - Ambrosden Community Facility Project | 0 | | | | | | 0 | 20 | (20) | Recommend to take out of programme until a project is identified. |
| 40295 | S106 - Ambrosden Indoor Sport Project | 0 | | | | | | 0 | 65 | (65) | Recommend to take out of programme until a project is identified. |
| 40296 | S106 - Ambrosden Outdoor Sports | 0 | | | | | | 0 | 130 | (130) | Recommend to take out of programme until a project is identified. |
| 40297 | S106 - Ardley & Fewcott Play Area Project | 0 | | | | | | 0 | 8 | (8) | Recommend to take out of capital programme as no specific project currently identified. |
| 40300 | S106 - Bicester Leisure Centre Extension | 0 | | | | | | 0 | 1,154 | (1,154) | Move to pipeline projects until S106 funding identified for whole project - not expected until 2029/30 |
| 40301 | S106 - Graven Hill Outdoor Sport Project | 0 | | | | | | 0 | 52 | (52) | Recommend to take out of programme until project is ready for delivery. |
| 40303 | S106 - Hanwell Fields Community Centre Projects | 16 | 344 | | | | | 360 | 360 | 0 | Anticipate spending in 2025/26 - currently awaiting planning permission. |
| 40304 | S106 - Hook Norton Sport And Social Club Project | 0 | 80 | | | | | 80 | 80 | 0 | On track to be used in summer 2025/26 |
| 40305 | S106 - Horley Cricket Club Pavilion Project | 0 | 110 | | | | | 110 | 110 | 0 | On track to complete in 2025/26 |
| 40307 | S106 - Kidlington & Gosford Leisure Centre | 0 | | | | | | 0 | 20 | (20) | Recommend to take out of programme until a project is identified. |
| 40308 | S106 - Milton Road Community Facility and Sports Pitch Project | 8 | | 471 | | | | 479 | 479 | (0) | In talks with parish to agree specification of the facility - not expected to spend until next year so reprofiled to 2026/27. |
| 40310 | S106 - Spiceball Leisure Centre Improvements | 0 | | | | | | 0 | 14 | (14) | 14k budget to be vired to Spiceball Leisure Centre Structural Beams project 40329 below. |
| 40311 | S106 - The Hill Improvements Project | 0 | | | | | | 0 | 50 | (50) | Recommend to take out of programme until a project is identified. |
| 40312 | S106 - Whitelands Farm Sports Ground (Pedestrian crossing and various works) | 127 | 33 | | | | | 160 | 160 | 0 | On track to complete in 2025/26 |
| 40313 | S106 - Woodgreen Leisure Centre Improvements | 23 | 139 | | | | | 161 | 161 | 0 | On track to complete in 2025/26 |
| 40319 | Local Authority Housing Fund R2 | 1634 | | | | | | 1,634 | 1,641 | (7) | Recommend 7k be vired to Town Centre House - 40262 |

| | | | | | | | | | | | |
|--------------------------------|---|---------------|---------------|---------------|--------------|--------------|--------------|---------------|---------------|----------------|--|
| 40323 | NOA 3G Pitch Development | 0 | | 1,600 | | | | 1,600 | 1,600 | 0 | Currently 840k s106 funding has been received. The original capital bid was made on the basis this would be fully funded from S106, however a new capital bid to fund the remainder from borrowing is being proposed as part of the 26/27 budget setting cycle. If this bid is unsuccessful this project will be recommended to be moved to the pipeline until funding is received |
| 40324 | Development of Activity Play Zones | 4 | 158 | | | | | 162 | 162 | (0) | On track to complete in 2025/26 |
| 40325 | Graven Hill Community and Infrastructure Projects | 0 | 80 | | | | | 80 | 80 | 0 | On track to spend on design in 2025/26 |
| 40328 | S106 - Windmill Community & Sports Centre Tennis Courts | 35 | 16 | | | | | 51 | 51 | 0 | On track to complete in 2025/26 |
| 40329 | Spiceball Leisure Centre Structural Beams | 13 | 160 | | | | | 173 | 130 | 43 | Budget at start of year was 117k, but expecting spend of 160k in 2025/26 to complete the work on the beams. 14k to be vired from S106 spiceball leisure centre above. Recommend that an additional 29k of budget be approved to cover the remaining difference, which will be funded from S106 contributions. |
| 40336 | S106 Kingsmere Public Art | 0 | | 28 | | | | 28 | 28 | 0 | Reprofile to 2026/27 while a location is identified for the art. |
| 40338 | LAHF R3 | 0 | 1,400 | | | | | 1,400 | 1,400 | 0 | Grant has been transferred to SOHA to complete delivery of the project. |
| 40339 | S106 - Windmill Centre Kitchen Refurb | 0 | 11 | | | | | 11 | 11 | 0 | Completed |
| 40340 | S106 - Steeple Aston Playground | 0 | 34 | | | | | 34 | 34 | 0 | On track to complete in 2025/26 |
| Wellbeing & Housing | | 1,903 | 4,284 | 3,683 | 1,539 | 1,539 | 1,539 | 14,487 | 16,042 | (1,555) | |
| 40245 | Enable Agile Working | 0 | 15 | | | | | 15 | 15 | 0 | This funding is intended to be used to purchase the IT hardware required to enable the teams in Regulatory Services to use the case management system (Idox Cloud) whilst on-site carrying out inspection work or investigations etc. The release of the app that will support this agile working continues to be delayed but is progressing; the Beta release of the app has taken place and the full version is expected in Q2 of 25/26. |
| 40333 | CCTV Thames Valley Project | 0 | 250 | | | | | 250 | 250 | 0 | Upgrade the public open space CCTV network and cameras to meet the necessary threshold to be included in the OPCC Thames Valley CCTV project. This expenditure is dependant upon the TVCCTV partnership progressing which has been delayed. It is expected that the partnership agreement will be signed in Q2 of 25/26 and the subsequent capital spend will happen before the end of 25/26. |
| Regulatory Services | | 0 | 265 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 265 | 265 | 0 | |
| Communities | | 3,204 | 8,208 | 8,508 | 2,828 | 2,605 | 2,605 | 27,959 | 33,840 | (5,881) | |
| Capital Total | | 12,032 | 10,468 | 11,627 | 2,828 | 2,605 | 2,605 | 42,167 | 48,156 | (5,989) | |

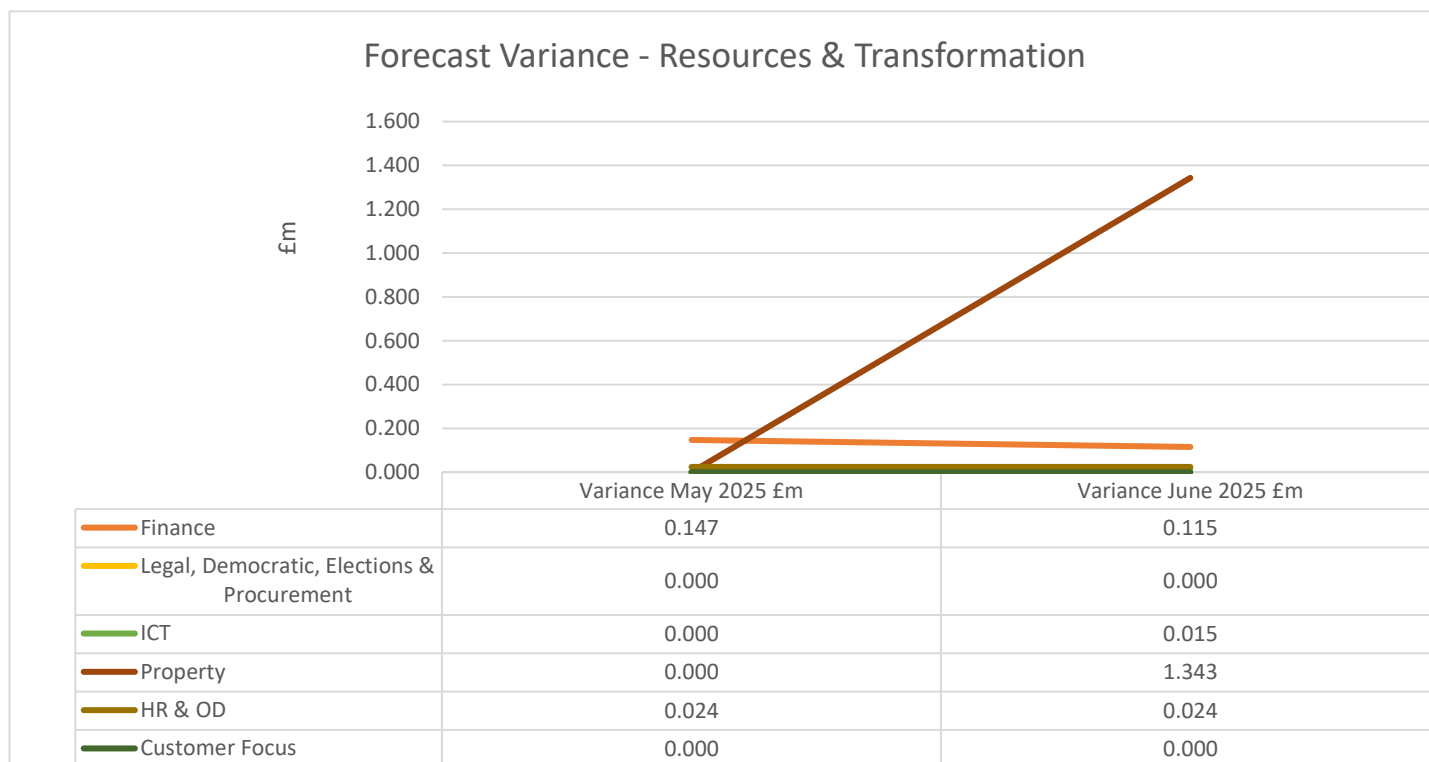
This page is intentionally left blank

Appendix 2 - Report Details – Additional Revenue narrative

Resources & Transformation

Revenue:

Resources & Transformation are forecasting £1.497m overspend against a budget of £6.891m (21.7%).



Finance

Variation
£0.115m Overspend

Overview of Forecast:

The Forecast overspend is primarily due to a forecast overspend in corporate costs relating to bank charges for processing payments electronically. As the council makes more payments electronically these costs increase. The forecast overspend is £0.085m.

The remaining overspend is a net £0.030m made up of lower than budgeted forecast income from Court Costs and Housing Benefit Overpayments, mostly offset by over recovery of grant income.

Variation to May's
Forecast
(£0.032m)

Changes since last month:

Additional recovery of grant income has been achieved to broadly offset the forecast reductions in income in Housing

| | |
|--|--|
| | <p>Benefit Over Payments and Court Costs. This results in a net overspend of £0.030m across the majority of Finance.</p> <p>However, forecast bank charges have increased to an overspend of £0.085m. This is the costs of the whole council doing financial transactions electronically – so as more payments are made by bank transfer and/or card payment, the council incurs additional costs within the Finance budget.</p> |
|--|--|

Legal, Democratic, Elections & Procurement

Variation
£0.000m Overspend

Legal, Democratic, Elections & Procurement are currently reporting on target.

Variation to May's
Forecast
£0.000m

ICT

Variation
£0.015m Overspend
Variation to May's
Forecast
£0.015m

ICT are currently forecasting minor variations across the service.
Mitigations for the overspend through vacancies within the service.

Property

Variation
£1.343m

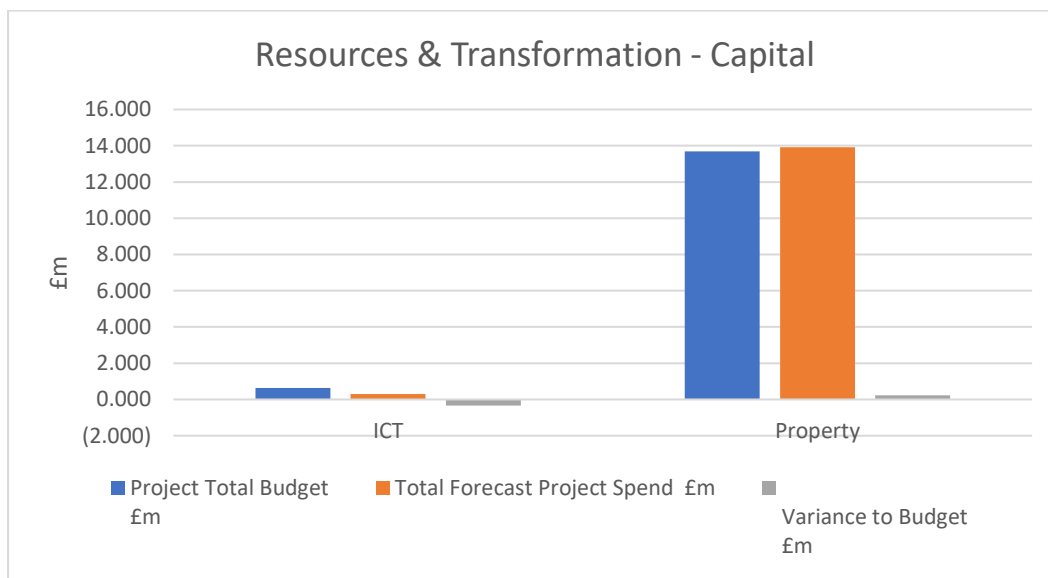
Variation to May's
Forecast
£1.343m

Property are forecast an overspend of £1.343m the main reason for this forecast is :
Property has experienced a shortfall in projected income and higher-than-anticipated costs associated with managing its properties during the current financial period. Income under-recovery is primarily due to slower-than-expected tenant uptake, compounded by broader economic challenges impacting the market and the need to agree competitive lease terms to attract tenants.
Void property costs exceeded budget due to extended vacancy periods and increased operational costs required

| | |
|---|--|
| | <p>to maintain the properties in a safe and marketable condition.</p> <p>We are intensifying marketing efforts to secure new tenants, reviewing cost controls on properties, and updating our financial forecasts regularly to ensure they reflect the most up to date tenancy and property information.</p> <p>These variances are being actively managed and monitored.</p> |
| <p>Variation to May's Forecast £1.343m</p> | <p>Under-Recovery of Income:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Slower-than-expected tenant uptake. • Market challenges affecting the property sector. <p>Mitigations:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Intensified marketing to attract occupiers • Cost control measures across the service. • Regular review of financial forecasts to reflect current position. • Ongoing review of procurement and oversight processes. |
| <p>Customer Focus</p> <p>Variation 0.000m</p> | <p>Customer Focus are forecasting on track.</p> |
| <p>Variation to May's Forecast £0.000m</p> | |
| <hr/> <p>HR & OD</p> | |
| <p>Variations £0.024m Overspend</p> | <p>The forecast for June is an overspend of £0.024m by year-end. The overspend assumes that changes to the current overtime policy will be delayed due to ongoing consultation. Other overspends relate to the need to retain resources in the HR team to carry out HR functions.</p> |
| <p>Variation to May's Forecast £0.000m</p> | |

Capital

| Service | Project Total Budget £m | Total Forecast Project Spend £m | Variance to Budget £m | |
|--------------|-------------------------|---------------------------------|-----------------------|--|
| ICT | 0.630 | 0.291 | (0.339) | |
| Property | 13.686 | 13.917 | 0.231 | |
| Total | 14.316 | 14.208 | (0.108) | |



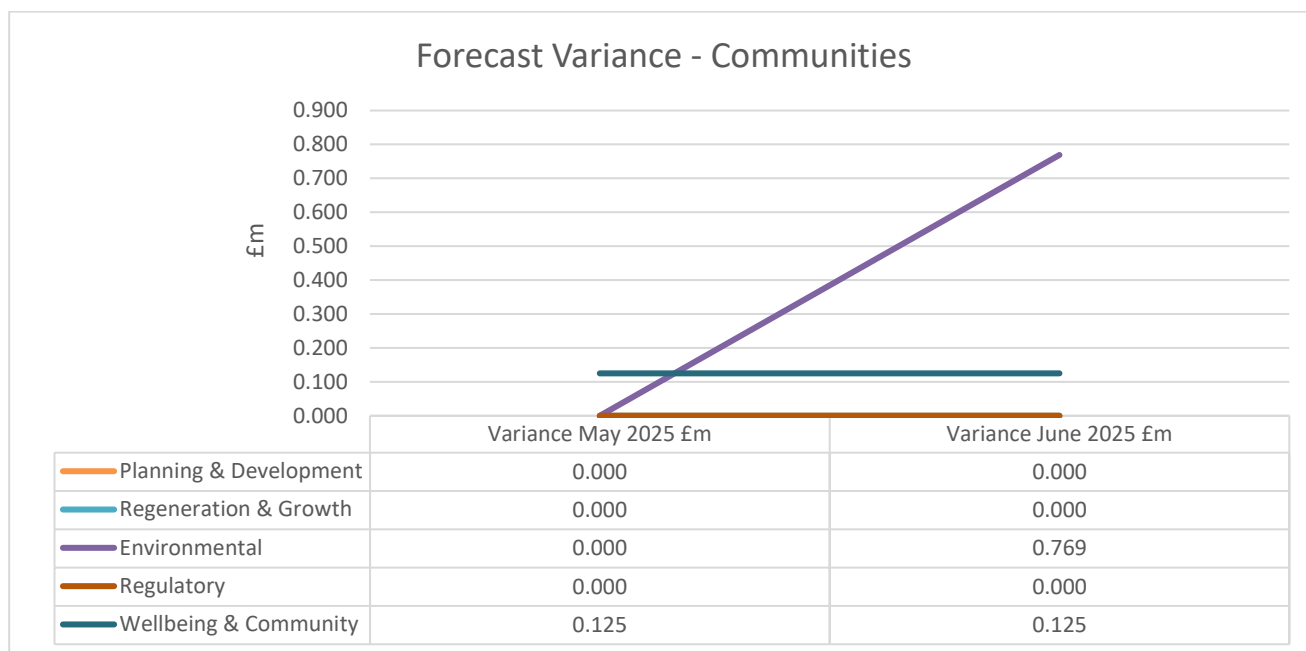
For further information on capital see Appendix 1.

Communities

Revenue:

Communities are forecasting a £0.894m overspend against a budget of £12.570m, (7.1%).

The directorate recognises the overspend, in particular the pressure around staff sickness and the potential operational impact to waste collections. The team are working hard over the summer period to identify in year mitigations.



Planning & Development

Variation
£0.000m

Forecast to be on budget at the present time.

Variation to May's
Forecast
£0.000m

There are no changes to the current forecast for the end of year. No over or under spend is currently expected.

Regeneration & Growth

| | |
|----------------------|---|
| Variation £0.000m | Regeneration & Growth are reporting on budget for June. |
|----------------------|---|

| |
|---|
| Variation to May's Forecast £0.000m |
|---|

Environmental

| | |
|----------------------|--|
| Variation £0.769m | The forecasted pressure of £0.769m within Environmental Services is primarily due to staffing pressures and agency costs of £0.424m within Waste and Recycling, this continues to be closely monitored and managed alongside HR. |
|----------------------|--|

Higher than anticipated residual waste tonnage being direct delivered to Transfer station has resulted in an overspend of £0.094m of which £0.038m relates to 2024/25.

Delays to contract start date for new dry recycling processor have increased costs by £0.078m, this is also a result of a fall in commodity prices worldwide resulting in 67% increase in gate fee.

A reduction in garden waste subscriptions due to a predicted 1,400 less uptake compared to 2024/25 resulting in an under recovery of income of £0.076m.

The income received from sale of glass collected is currently reporting a £0.139m overspend compared to budget this is due to a 40% reduction in glass rebates received from the processor, due to a reduction in glass income and PRN's (packaging recovery notes) on the international market.

This is partly offset by non-recruitment to vacant posts of (£0.021m) within Environmental Services Admin, Street Scene and Street Cleansing.

| |
|---|
| Variation to May's Forecast £0.769m |
|---|

The Waste and Recycling service are looking at ways to mitigate this overspend, one being a reduction in food waste vehicles to reduce vehicle and fuel costs.

An increase in advertising for Garden Waste through social media and collection crews stickering and leaving bins without a current subscription.

This will be continued to be monitored and mitigations identified throughout the year including non-recruitment to vacant posts and stopping any noncritical services to offset this overspend.

Regulatory

Variation
£0.000m

Regulatory Services and Community Safety are forecasting a balanced outturn.

Variation to May's
Forecast
£0.000m

Wellbeing & Housing

Variation
£0.125m overspend

The forecast is based on whole year expenses being needed as budgeted and accounts for increased IT license costs and the corporate top slice of grants to support corporate costs.

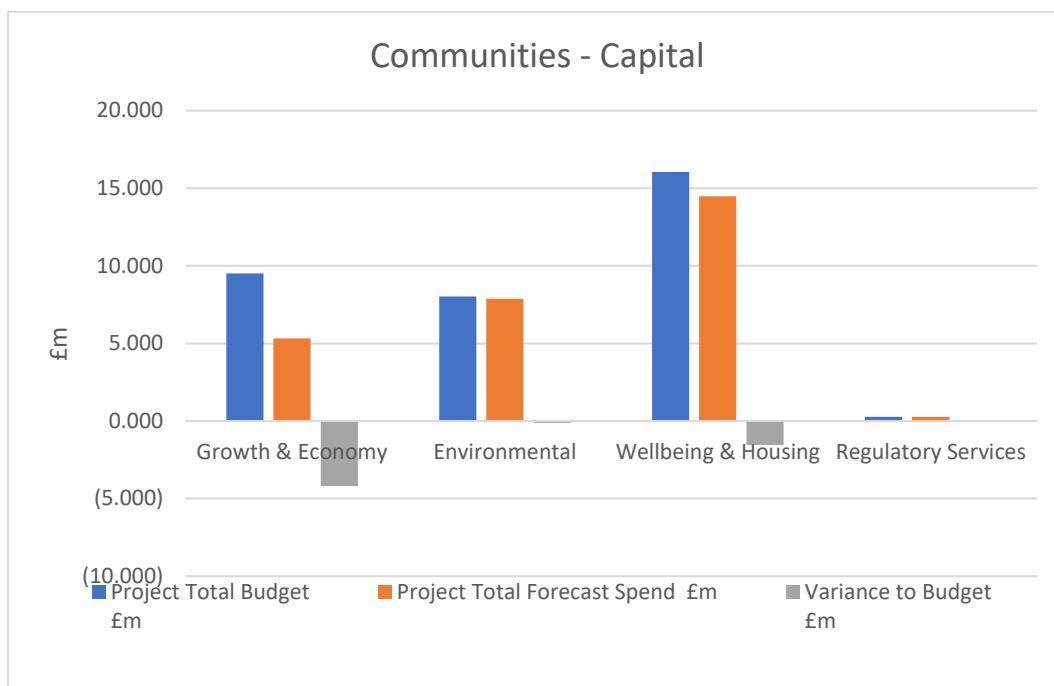
Variation to May's
Forecast
£0.000m

Engagement of external expert legal support to ensure compliance through changes to contract terms.
Over the course of the year, it may be possible to underspend on some provisions within the budget and reduce the forecasted overspend. Much will depend on the demand for temporary accommodation

Capital

| Service | Project Total Budget £m | Project Total Forecast Spend £m | Variance to Budget £m | |
|---------------------|----------------------------------|---|--------------------------------|--|
| Growth & Economy | 9.513 | 5.320 | (4.193) | |
| Environmental | 8.020 | 7.888 | (0.132) | |
| Wellbeing & Housing | 16.042 | 14.487 | (1.555) | |

| | | | | |
|---------------------|---------------|---------------|----------------|--|
| Regulatory Services | 0.265 | 0.265 | 0.000 | |
| Total | 33.840 | 27.959 | (5.881) | |

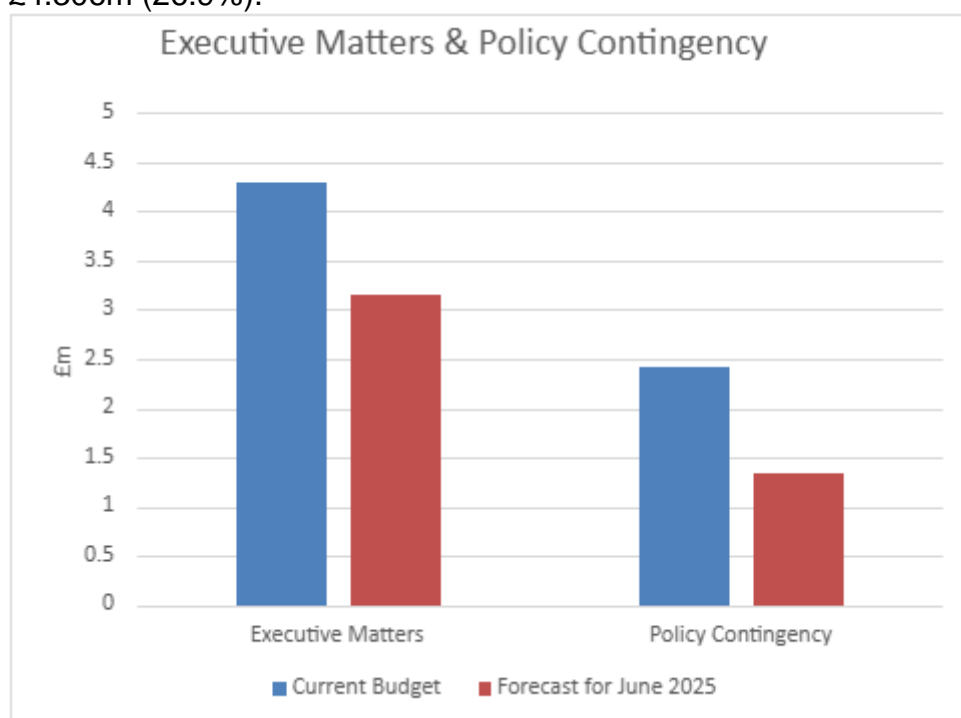


For further information on capital see Appendix 1.

Executive Matters

Revenue:

Executive Matters is reporting an underspend of (£1.159m) against a budget of £4.306m (26.9%).



Executive Matters

| | |
|-----------------------------------|---|
| Variation (£1.159m) Underspend | Executive Matters are forecasting an underspend of (£1.159m) made up of (£0.309m) additional Extended Producer Responsibility funding that is due to be received in July, (£0.500m) dividend expected from Graven Hill and an over recovery of net interest of (£0.350m). |
|-----------------------------------|---|

| |
|---|
| Variation to May's Forecast (£1.159m) |
|---|

Policy Contingency

Policy Contingency is forecasting an underspend of (£1.1m) against a budget of £2.428m, (45.0%)

Policy Contingency

| | |
|------------------------|---|
| Variation (£1.100m) | Policy Contingency includes £1.100m for Market Risk. This has been released (and shown as an underspend) in order to offset overspends in the directorates. |
|------------------------|---|

| |
|---|
| Variation to May's Forecast (£1.100m) |
|---|

This page is intentionally left blank

Appendix 3 - Virement Summary

Virement Movement

This table shows the movement in Net Budget from May 2025 to June 2025.

| Virements - Movement in Net Budget | £m |
|------------------------------------|--------------|
| Directorate Net Budget - June 2025 | 19.461 |
| Directorate Net Budget - May 2025 | 19.461 |
| Movement | 0.000 |

| Breakdown of Movements | £m |
|------------------------|--------------|
| | |
| Total | 0.000 |

This page is intentionally left blank

Appendix 4 - Funding for 2025/26

Specific Funding received since budget was set:

| Dept. | Grant Name | Funding |
|-------------|--|-----------------|
| | | £ |
| DLUHC | Homelessness Prevention Grant | (£0.246) |
| DLUHC | Rough Sleepers Accommodation Programme | (£0.035) |
| DLUHC | Redmond Review Implementation | (£0.024) |
| DLUHC | Local Audit Backstop New Burdens | (£0.046) |
| DLUHC | New Burdens Funding for Accommodation-based Domestic Abuse | (£0.037) |
| DLUHC | UKSPF | (£0.335) |
| DEFRA | Biodiversity Net Gain Grant | (£0.027) |
| DWP | Welfare Reform New Burdens Funding | (£0.035) |
| DWP | Housing Benefit Award Accuracy Initiative | (£0.017) |
| Home Office | Afghan Relocations and Assistance Policy | (£1.299) |
| Home Office | Syrian Resettlement Programme | (£0.023) |
| | | (£2.124) |

Grants included as part of Budget setting:

| Directorate | Grant Name | £m |
|-------------------------------|--|-----------------|
| Communities | Afghan Relocations and Assistance Policy | (0.244) |
| | Asylum Accommodation Dispersal | (0.029) |
| | Homeless Prevention Grant | (0.763) |
| | Syrian Resettlement Scheme | (0.183) |
| | Homes for Ukraine | (0.417) |
| | UK Shared Prosperity Fund | (0.335) |
| | Communities Total | (1.972) |
| Resources | NNDR Cost of Collection Allowance | (0.231) |
| | Rent Allowances | (25.004) |
| | Resources Total | (25.235) |
| Services Sub-total | | (27.207) |
| Corporate | Extended Producer Responsibility | (1.400) |
| | Funding Floor | (3.400) |
| | National Insurance Contribution | (0.258) |
| | Corporate Total | (5.058) |
| Cost of Services total | | (32.265) |
| Funding | Business Rates Retained Scheme | (7.490) |
| | New Homes Bonus | (0.935) |
| | Revenue Support Grant | (0.368) |
| | Funding Total | (8.793) |

| Measure | Portfolio Holder | Director/Lead Officer | Good is | Qtr Actual | Qtr Target | R.A.G |
|--|------------------|--|-------------------|------------|------------|-------|
| BP1.2.02 No. of Homeless Households living in nightly charged (Hotel) Temporary accommodation (TA) | Cllr N Cotter | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Ian Boll Nicola Riley | Smaller Is Better | 27.00 | 25.00 | ● |
| Commentary At the end of Q1 we had 27 households in B&B temporary accommodation. | | | | | | |
| BP1.2.05 % of Homelessness cases successfully prevented rather than relief/main duty being applied | Cllr N Cotter | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Ian Boll Richard Smith | Bigger Is Better | 54.00% | 60.00% | ● |
| Commentary At the end of Q1 we had successfully prevented homelessness in 54 cases of which 19 received a final offer of accommodation via the private rented sector | | | | | | |
| BP1.2.08 % of Major Planning Applications determined to National Indicator | Cllr J Conway | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> David Peckford Ian Boll | Bigger Is Better | 75.0% | 60.0% | ★ |
| Commentary 12 Major Planning Applications were determined during Q1 2025/26, 9 of which were determined within the National Indicator target or agreed timeframe. | | | | | | |
| BP1.2.09 % of Non-Major Planning Applications determined to National Indicator | Cllr J Conway | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> David Peckford Ian Boll | Bigger Is Better | 79.5% | 70.0% | ★ |
| Commentary 263 Non-Major Planning Applications were determined during Q1 2025/26, 209 of them within National Indicator target or agreed timeframe. | | | | | | |

| Measure | Portfolio Holder | Director/Lead Officer | Good is | Qtr Actual | Qtr Target | R.A.G |
|---|------------------|--|-------------------|------------|------------|-------|
| BP1.2.10 % of Major Applications overturned at appeal | Cllr J Conway | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> David Peckford Ian Boll | Smaller Is Better | 16.7% | 10.0% | ● |
| Commentary 2 Major Planning Application decisions were overturned at Appeal by the Planning Inspectorate during Q1 2025/26. 22/03873/F - Land North And Adjacent To Mill Lane, Stratton Audley Installation and operation of a renewable energy generating station comprising ground-mounted photovoltaic solar arrays and battery-based electricity storage containers together with a switchgear container, inverter/transformer units, Site access, internal access tracks, security measures, access gates, other ancillary infrastructure and landscaping and biodiversity enhancements. Officer recommendation – Approval – overturned at Committee 6/6/2024 22/01293/F - Land At Manor View (West of Manor Park),Hampton Poyle, Kidlington Change of use of land for the creation 2 Gypsy/Traveller pitches, comprising the siting of 1 mobile home, 1 touring caravan, and the erection of 1 dayroom per pitch Delegated refusal. | | | | | | |
| BP1.2.11 % of Non-Major Applications overturned at appeal | Cllr J Conway | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> David Peckford Ian Boll | Smaller Is Better | 1.1% | 10.0% | ★ |
| Commentary 3 Non-Major Planning Application decisions were overturned at Appeal by the Planning Inspectorate during Q1 2025/26 | | | | | | |

Leading environmental stewardship and climate action - Corporate KPI's 2025-2026

| Measure | Portfolio Holder | Director/Lead Officer | Good is | Qtr Actual | Qtr Target | R.A.G |
|--|------------------|---|------------------|------------|------------|-------|
| BP2.2.01 % Waste Recycled & Composted | Cllr I Middleton | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Ed Potter Ian Boll | Bigger Is Better | 51.97% | 54.00% | ★ |
| | | | | | | |
| BP2.2.03 % of Climate Action Plan delivering to target | Cllr T Beckett | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Ian Boll Jo Miskin | Bigger Is Better | 59.17% | 66.00% | ● |

Commentary

In Q1, of the 120 Climate Actions, 102 were Ongoing, 11 On-hold, and 7 Completed. RAG ratings showed 71 actions in Green, 39 in Amber, and 10 in Red.

Executive approval was secured for accepting around £1.1 million through a successful PSDS Phase 4 bid to support energy efficiency upgrades in council buildings. We've received a quote from the DNO for an electricity upgrade at Stratfield Brake Sports Ground and are preparing a response, while no upgrades are needed at the other three sites; in parallel, we're engaging stakeholders and exploring the appointment of an external consultant to support project delivery. The Climate Change Programme Board (CCPB) was formally established and held its first meeting, endorsing progression to Phase 2 of the Local Area Energy Plan (LAEP) and confirming CCPB will serve as the governing body for LAEP Phase 2. CCPB agreed for initiating development of a new Climate Strategy followed by an Action Plan post-study completion. CCPB recognised that service areas are responsible for decarbonisation, with the Climate Team acting as an enabler.

Work on LAEP is progressing in partnership with OCC, ARUP, and neighbouring authorities. Phase 1 is set to complete in September, with the baseline report finalised, modelling assumptions agreed, and contributions made to two workshops and a focused investment workshops for CDC scheduled for 5 August. We have contributed to the OCC-led Adaptation Route Map, progressed with Fast Follower on exploring carbon sequestration through nature and marketplace development. We have held multiple workshops supporting local businesses in their decarbonisation journey and participated in the initial mobilisation of the Zero Carbon Oxfordshire Partnerships (ZCOP), now preparing to engage actively as it expands into the Cherwell are. Progress and draft reports were received and reviewed for the district's carbon baseline, CDC's fleet decarbonisation, council footprint, and business and industrial emissions, with feedback shared with consultants for further refinement.

Please note there are no Corporate KPIs under this priority due to be reported during Q1 2025-26

Empowering community leadership - Directorate KPI's 2025-2026

| Measure | Portfolio Holder | Director/Lead Officer | Good is | Qtr Actual | Qtr Target | R.A.G |
|--|------------------|--|------------------|------------|------------|-------|
| BP4.2.04 % of due food hygiene inspections of premises rated A-D completed | Cllr R Parkinson | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Ian Boll Tim Hughes | Bigger Is Better | 95.17% | 95.00% | ★ |
| Commentary Of the inspections not completed within 28days of the due date, 5 were not open or needed an appointment and unavailable. 1 looks to be closed, letter sent 14 days given to respond before closing record. And one was missed and will be completed as soon as possible. | | | | | | |

This page is intentionally left blank

Appendix 6 - Annual Delivery Plan 2025-26

Please note delivery of the actions below could be affected by changes in policy, national and local circumstances, these risks are managed through each service operational risk

| Council plan priority | Goals | Aims | Year 1 actions | Lead/Director | Portfolio Holder | QTR | Milestones Q1-Q4 | RAG | Performance |
|-----------------------|---|---|---|--|------------------|-----|---|-----|---|
| Economic prosperity | Create vibrant economic centres and thriving rural villages | To foster diverse economic centres and villages that support local businesses, attract investment, and enhance community life. | Ongoing engagement with businesses to support their investment plans. Working together with OCC to plan infrastructure for strategic growth | Julia Harrington Ian Boll | Cllr L McLean | Q1 | Agree delivery timescales for Market Square, Bicester. Agree action plans and priorities for Kidlington, Bicester and Banbury | | The Market Square project has been progressing throughout Q1. An estimated programme has been developed in Q1, and is included as an Appendix to the Exec report due to be presented on the 2nd September. The Area Priority Plans have been developed in Q1 for all 3 areas, and presented to the relevant Area Oversight Group (AOG). |
| | | | | | | Q2 | Agree the plan for the 2025/26 Economic Forum Hold annual Business Awards (Sept) | | |
| | | | | | | Q3 | Commission a report on the Future of Cherwell's high streets. Develop and agree an action plan to reflect the findings of Experience Oxfordshire's Economic report on Cherwell | | |
| | | | | | | Q4 | Hold the 2025/26 Economic Forum in order to explore investment opportunities and barriers/challenges to future investment | | |
| | | To promote sustainable economic prosperity through innovation, resilience, and strategic growth. | Continue the diversification of tenancies at Council owned commercial properties including key public/third sector partners | Mona Walsh Stephen Hinds | Cllr L McLean | Q1 | Launch a campaign to attract a diverse range of tenants at commercial sites | | Campaign launched. End Q1 outcome - terms agreed for two new lettings at Castle Quay. Offers received for vacant unit at Pioneer Square being considered and due diligence underway. |
| | | | | | | Q2 | No milestone | | |
| | | | | | | Q3 | No milestone | | |
| | | | | | | Q4 | No milestone | | |
| | | | Maximise the impact of Council-owned and other assets to further enable the regeneration of our Economic Centres | Mona Walsh Julia Harrington Ian Boll | Cllr L McLean | Q1 | Complete asset register and agree future plan for each, with a focus on those that are underutilised or suitable for community transfer. | | Initial document drafted and discussed with Cllr McLean. Actions agreed include action plan and focus on underutilised and assets suitable to transfer or disposal. |
| | | | | | | Q2 | No milestone | | |
| | | | | | | Q3 | Complete options appraisal for Castle Quay Bridge Street area site and agree next steps in collaboration with Banbury AOG Agree assets for disposal and delivery plan | | |
| | | | | | | Q4 | Complete an options appraisal for extending PV and wind energy on council assets in support of climate priority. | | |
| | Build an inclusive and green economy | To build an economy that is both inclusive and environmentally sustainable, ensuring equitable opportunities for all while minimising environmental impact. | Delivering the Year 4 programme of UK Shared Prosperity Funding, to focus on pressures in our communities | Julia Harrington Ian Boll | Cllr L McLean | Q1 | Agree and Launch the 2025/26 UKSPF programme. Produce report on the outcomes achieved for 2024/25 | | The UKSPF programme for 25/26 has been agreed by Cllr McLean as Portfolio Holder decision, with delegation to Ian Boll to amend when required, in discussion with Portfolio Holder. The outcomes report for 24/25 has been completed and approved by MF and sent back to MHCLG. |
| | | | | | | Q2 | Identify implications for Cherwell of Oxfordshire Flood Task Force priorities | | |
| | | | | | | Q3 | Report on area infrastructure gaps/needs (electricity, water, foul) and agree priorities | | |
| | | | | | | Q4 | Produce a report on the outcomes of the final year of the UKSPF programme. | | |
| | | | Support the Marmot Place Partnership for Oxfordshire. | Nicola Riley Ian Boll | Cllr R Pattenden | Q1 | Activity for this Action starts in Quarter 2 | | Five villages in Cherwell have been selected for the Marmot Rural Place initiative based on data-driven insights, and the commissioning process is underway to appoint an organisation to deliver community insight profiles in collaboration with the Wellbeing team. |
| | | | | | | Q2 | Launch Marmot Place Programme with partners | | |
| | | | | | | Q3 | Consult on the Deprivation Remediation Programme for 2026 | | |
| | | | | | | Q4 | No milestone | | |

| | | | | | | | | | |
|----------------------|---|---|---|--------------------------|------------------|--|---|--|--|
| Community Leadership | Strengthen community collaboration and resilience | To work closely with communities and partners to foster shared solutions to building safe, resilient, and empowered communities. | Review of our Local Strategic Partnership to be more effective in delivering co-produced solutions to community issues | Tim Hughes Ian Boll | Cllr R Parkinson | Q1 | Activity for this Action starts in Quarter 2 | | Activity for this Action starts in Quarter 2. |
| | | | | | Q2 | Work with key partners to identify and agree key community issues for the partnership to consider in year. | | | |
| | | | | | Q3 | Work with key partners to identify and agree community-based solution. Review and re-launch the LSP accordingly. | | | |
| | | | | | Q4 | No milestone | | | |
| | | | Develop parish council toolkit to empower communities | Nicola Riley Ian Boll | Cllr L McLean | Q1 | Launch parish toolkit initiative | | Parish liaison meeting considered the first topic for a toolkit should be flooding. The Council will be holding a Parish Flood Workshop in late Summer/early Autumn - Cherwell in conjunction with Oxfordshire County Council. |
| | | | | | | Q2 | Work with parish councils to identify key components required to empower communities and agree next steps | | |
| | | | | | | Q3 | Review and agree Cherwell's Green and Blue Corridors to increase understanding and awareness | | |
| | | | | | | Q4 | Review and implement actions as appropriate from the Oxfordshire Adaptation Route map | | |
| | | | Transfer existing community assets to community organisations to support collaboration and resilience | Nicola Riley Ian Boll | Cllr L McLean | Q1 | Activity for this Action starts in Quarter 2 | | |
| | | | | | | Q2 | Identify and agree potential assets for transferring to community organisations | | |
| | | | | | | Q3 | No milestone | | |
| | | | | | | Q4 | No milestone | | |
| | | | Strengthening community cohesion | Nicola Riley Ian Boll | Cllr C Brant | Q1 | Produce Annual EDI General Duty Compliance Report and agree next steps. | | Work has begun on collation but timescale not achieved for report. |
| | | | | | | Q2 | Agree new EDI Framework and supporting actions | | |
| | | | | | | Q3 | No milestone | | |
| | | | | | | Q4 | No milestone | | |
| | | | | | | | | | |
| | Q1 | Activity for this Action starts in Quarter 2 | | | | | Activity for this Action starts in Quarter 2. | | |
| | Q2 | Develop and agree new Community Safety Partnership Plan | | | | | | | |
| | Q3 | No milestone | | | | | | | |
| | Q4 | Establish baseline metrics for measuring progress towards Community Safety Plan | | | | | | | |
| | Promote health and wellbeing with a focus on inequality | To enhance health, wellbeing, and social cohesion across the district and address inequalities through preventive initiatives and targeted interventions. | Improving access to sports and healthy places by making the most of the external (and developer) funding we receive, improved insight and maintenance of our leisure centres. | Nicola Riley Ian Boll | Cllr R Pattenden | Q1 | To identify Parishes where significant capital projects are planned and support them with their delivery plans to ensure developer contributions deliver improved outcomes for their communities. | | Parishes with s106 allocated for new development of community and sports projects have been consulted with and capital plans have been mapped over the MTFS. |
| | | | | | | Q2 | No milestone | | |
| | | | | | | Q3 | No milestone | | |
| | | | | | | Q4 | Confirm which Capital projects will be progressed in 26/27 and how they will be funded | | |

| | | | | | | | | | |
|---------------------------|--|---|---|-----------------------|------------------|---|--|---|---|
| Environmental Stewardship | Safeguard the environment and promote biodiversity | To implement sustainable policies and practices, protect natural habitats, and support conservation initiatives that enhance ecosystem health and biodiversity while responding to the climate emergency. | Identify pathways for CDC to reach net zero carbon | Jo Miskin Ian Boll | Cllr T Beckett | Q1 | Review consultant's report on the costed pathways to net zero and agree next steps / direction of travel | | Bioregional is expected to share the draft report for this study by the end of this week. w/c 28 July'25. |
| | | | | | Q2 | Produce new draft climate action plan | | | |
| | | | | | Q3 | Consult on draft climate action plan | | | |
| | | | | | Q4 | Agree new climate action plan in light of costed pathway findings | | | |
| | | | Progress decarbonisation of our fleet, including electrifying smaller vehicles and implementation of HVO fuel | Ed Potter Ian Boll | Cllr I Middleton | Q1 | Produce report on decarbonising waste fleet and agree next steps | | Report gone to CLT. |
| | | | | | | Q2 | No milestone | | |
| | | | | | | Q3 | Implement HVO fuel plan | | |
| | | | | | | Q4 | No milestone | | |
| | | Embed the new Simpler Recycling requirements for kerbside collections and promotion of greater recycling. | Ed Potter Ian Boll | Cllr I Middleton | Q1 | Modelling new service delivery options, to include early adoption of kerbside glass recycling | | Service delivery options modelled. Simpler Recycling Project Board met 4 times to evaluate. | |
| | | | | | Q2 | No milestone | | | |
| | | | | | Q3 | Agree new service delivery design | | | |
| | | | | | Q4 | Implement new service | | | |
| | | Continue with progress for the provision of a modern and for purpose depot facilities to support activity to minimise waste | Ed Potter Ian Boll | Cllr I Middleton | Q1 | Activity for this Action starts in Quarter 3 | | Planning application likely to be submitted in Q2 but the amin features of the design have been completed | |
| | | | | | Q2 | No milestone | | | |
| | | | | | Q3 | Approval of outline business case. Submission of Planning Application. | | | |
| | | | | | Q4 | No milestone | | | |

| | | | | | | | | | |
|----------------------------------|--|---|--|----------------------------|------------------|----|---|--|--|
| Quality housing and Place Making | Promote the circular economy of reduce, reuse and recycle to minimise waste | To encourage sustainable consumption, optimise the use of resources, and implement efficient recycling systems that support waste reduction and re-use initiatives. | Reduce waste and food insecurity through community initiatives to reuse and recycle. | Nicola Riley Ian Boll | Cllr R Pattenden | Q1 | Refresh promotion around district's Growing Spaces | | REPF and community food grants have supported eight growing spaces including Cropredy Lock Garden, Sustainable Duns Tew, Horton and Kidlington Parish Councils, as well as edible garden projects at schools including St Leonards, Dashwood, St Joseph's, and West Kidlington. Resources have been updated and shared via the Growing Space leaflet https://www.cherwell.gov.uk/info/3/leisure-and-wellbeing/1089/connect-with-nature/3 |
| | | | | | | Q2 | Review delivery of Y2 actions of Food Action Plan for CDC | | |
| | | | | | | Q3 | No milestone | | |
| | | | | | | Q4 | Establish a schools-food partnership | | |
| | | | Promote environmentally conscious communities | Ed Potter Ian Boll | Cllr I Middleton | Q1 | Agree the litter blitz programme for 2025/26 | | Litter blitz carried in Banbury Town Centre. Rest of the programme to be finalised. |
| | | | | | | Q2 | Develop and agree a Civic Pride campaign to promote cleaner communities and open spaces | | |
| | | | | | | Q3 | No milestone | | |
| | | | | | | Q4 | No milestone | | |
| | Deliver sustainable and strategic development that meets Cherwell's needs now, and in the future | To ensure the right mix of facilities, services and infrastructure for new developments, to create successful, well-designed communities. | Progress the Cherwell Local Plan 2042 | David Peckford Ian Boll | Cllr J Conway | Q1 | Activity for this Action starts in Quarter 2 | | |
| | | | | | | Q2 | Submit Local Plan for Examination | | The draft Local Plan was approved by the Council's Executive on 3 July. On 21 July it will be presented to the Council. Upon approval, it will be submitted to the Secretary of State for independent examination including public hearings. |
| | | | | | | Q3 | No milestone | | |
| | | | | | | Q4 | No milestone | | |
| | | | Establish a new Programme for a Review of Conservation Area Appraisals | David Peckford Ian Boll | Cllr J Conway | Q1 | Confirm new three-year programme of Conservation Area reviews and appraisals | | Programme established - Year 1 - Bloxham, Grimsbury, Hanwell; Year 2 - Hook Norton, Chesterton, Hampton Gay - Shipton on Cherwell -Thrupp; Year 3 - Islip, Bodicote, Begbroke, Fritwell. Bloxham is at an advanced stage and Grimsbury is on-going. |
| | | | | | | Q2 | No milestone | | |
| | | | | | | Q3 | No milestone | | |
| | | | | | | Q4 | Complete year 1 of Conversation Area programme | | |
| | | | Monitor and manage housing land supply | David Peckford Ian Boll | Cllr J Conway | Q1 | Complete and agree Housing Delivery Action Plan | | The Housing Delivery Action Plan was approved by the Council's Executive on 10 June 2025. The Executive also resolved that it be kept under review having regard to comments received, and to make any necessary changes in consultation with the Portfolio Holder for Planning and Development Management. Officers were also instructed to present a comprehensive review of the five year housing land supply position to the Executive, should there be evidence of a significant change. |
| | | | | | | Q2 | Implement Housing Delivery Action Plan | | |
| | | | | | | Q3 | Implement Housing Delivery Action Plan | | |
| | | | | | | Q4 | Review the progress of the Housing Delivery Action Plan | | |
| | | | Reducing the percentage of 'major' planning application decisions overturned at appeal | David Peckford Ian Boll | Cllr J Conway | Q1 | Complete and agree major applications action plan | | An action plan for the management of strategic planning applications was prepared in Q1 and presented to the Accounts, Audit and Risk Committee on 28 May 2025. |
| | | | | | | Q2 | Implement Major Applications Action Plan | | |
| | | | | | | Q3 | Implement Major Applications Action Plan | | |
| | | | | | | Q4 | Review the progress of the Major Applications Action Plan | | |
| | | | Streamline process for the preparation of 'section 106' legal agreements and associated land transfers which support planning permissions. | David Peckford Ian Boll | Cllr J Conway | Q1 | Complete internal s106 process review and agree improvement action plan | | A review of the Council's internal processes for 'section 106' legal agreements was completed by the start of Q1. |
| | | | | | | Q2 | Implement actions from s106 process review | | |
| | | | | | | Q3 | Implement actions from s106 process review | | |
| | | | | | | Q4 | Review the progress of the s106 improvement action plan | | |
| | | | Deliver Planning Service Improvement | David Peckford Ian Boll | Cllr J Conway | Q1 | Establish performance improvement indicators, targets & resource needs | | A review of the Council's development management (Planning Committee) decision making processes has been undertaken and included a peer review on 29 May 2025. The final report is awaited and will be published. The recommendations will inform improvement targets together with the defined actions for the management of strategic planning applications and from the section 106 review (see above). A consolidated plan is to be prepared and resourcing needs are being reviewed. |
| | | | | | | Q2 | Define & implement improvements | | |
| | | | | | | Q3 | Implement improvements | | |
| | | | | | | Q4 | Implement improvements & review progress | | |

| | | | | | | | | | |
|---------|--|--|---|------------------------------|---------------|----|---|--|---|
| Page 20 | | | Introduce national Building Safety Levy | David Peckford Ian Boll | Cllr J Conway | Q1 | Preparation for introduction of the Building Safety Levy | | On 24 March 2025, the Government advised that implementation of the levy had been delayed to Autumn 2026. This will now be a year 2 action. |
| | | | | | | Q2 | Establish systems for the introduction of the Building Safety Levy | | |
| | | | | | | Q3 | Introduce the Building Safety Levy | | |
| | | | | | | Q4 | Monitor and Manage the operation of the Building Safety Levy | | |
| | | | Establish and progress with Partners the Area Oversight Groups for Banbury, Bicester and Kidlington | Julia Harrington Ian Boll | Cllr L McLean | Q1 | Implementation of Area Oversight Groups for Banbury, Bicester and Kidlington | | The 3 Area Oversight Groups have been implemented. |
| | | | | | | Q2 | Identify and report on infrastructure delivery issues (water, electricity, foul, etc), develop and agree action plan | | |
| | | | | | | Q3 | No milestone | | |
| | | | | | | Q4 | No milestone | | |
| | Achieve more high-quality, secure, and affordable housing that caters for the diverse needs of our residents | To help all residents access safe places they can make/call their home, including housing that is affordable through direct ownership, private rental and social rent housing. | Reduce pressure on temporary accommodation capacity in the District through delivery of our Housing Strategy | Nicola Riley Ian Boll | Cllr N Cotter | Q1 | Commence delivery of new LAHF schemes for temporary accommodation and resettlement, and S106 scheme to provide additional temporary accommodation provision | | Grant agreements in place with SOHA. They have begun to identify properties and progress purchase. All properties are on target to deliver in year. |
| | | | | | | Q2 | Review procurement of temporary accommodation and nightly charged options to ensure we make the best use of our resources, whilst providing suitable standards of temporary accommodation | | |
| | | | | | | Q3 | No milestone | | |
| | | | | | | Q4 | Complete annual review of housing strategy action plan to identify any improvements needed | | |
| | | | Host a registered providers forum to improve tenant outcomes | Nicola Riley Ian Boll | Cllr N Cotter | Q1 | Conduct satisfaction survey of CDC tenants | | Completed. Survey took place during May and June 2025 with the shared ownership and rented tenants. |
| | | | | | | Q2 | No milestone | | |
| | | | | | | Q3 | Establish new monitoring framework for Registered Provider activity and performance and agree objectives and line up for forum | | |
| | | | | | | Q4 | Hold registered providers forum to discuss challenges in meeting obligations | | |
| | | | Ensure Graven Hill Village Development Company submits Planning Application for Phase 2 at Graven Hill (for completion of the site) | Stephen Hinds | Cllr L McLean | Q1 | Ensure Graven Hill Village Development Company submits Planning Application for next phase of development at Graven Hill to LPA | | The application for planning permission (25/01768/HYBRID) was received as a valid application by the LPA. |
| | | | | | | Q2 | No milestone | | |
| | | | | | | Q3 | No milestone | | |
| | | | | | | Q4 | No milestone | | |

Appendix 7 – Leadership Risk Register as at 29/07/2025

| Level of risk | How the risk should be managed |
|-------------------------|--|
| High Risk (16-25) | Requires active management to manage down and maintain the exposure at an acceptable level. Escalate upwards. |
| Medium Risk (10 -15) | Contingency Plans - a robust contingency plan may suffice together with early warning mechanisms to detect any deviation from the profile. |
| Low Risk (1 – 9) | Good Housekeeping - may require some risk mitigation to reduce the likelihood if this can be done cost effectively, but good housekeeping to ensure that the impact remains low should be adequate. Re-assess frequently to ensure conditions remain the same. |

| Risk Scorecard – Residual Risks | | | | | | |
|---------------------------------|-------------------|-------------|--------------|---------------------|--------------|---------------------|
| | | Probability | | | | |
| | | 1 - Remote | 2 - Unlikely | 3 - Possible | 4 - Probable | 5 - Highly Probable |
| Impact | 5 - Catastrophic | | | L10 | | |
| | 4 - Major | | L08-L11 | L03-L09-L13-L14-L16 | L01-L05 | |
| | 3 - Moderate | | L06-L07-L12 | L02-L15 | L17 | L04 |
| | 2 - Minor | | | | | |
| | 1 - Insignificant | | | | | |

| Risk Definition | |
|-----------------|--|
| Leadership | Strategic risks that are significant in size and duration, and will impact on the reputation and performance of the Council as a whole, and in particular, on its ability to deliver on its corporate priorities |
| Operational | Risks to systems or processes that underpin the organisation’s governance, operation and ability to deliver services |

| Name and Description of risk | Potential impact | Inherent (gross) risk level (before Controls) | | | Controls | Control assessment | Lead Member | Risk owner | Risk manager | Residual risk level (after existing controls) | | | Direction of travel | Mitigating actions (to address control issues) | Comments | Last updated |
|---|---|---|--------|--------|---|---|---------------------|-----------------|--------------|---|--------|--------|---------------------|--|---|-----------------------------|
| | | Probability | Impact | Rating | | Fully effective Partially effective Not effective | | | | Probability | Impact | Rating | | | | |
| L01 - Financial resilience – Failure to plan for and/or react to external financial impacts, new policy and increased service demand. Poor investment and asset management decisions. | Reduced medium and long term financial viability | 4 | 4 | 16 | Medium Term Revenue Plan updated and reported regularly to members. | Fully | Councillor L.McLean | Michael Furness | Joanne Kaye | 4 | 4 | 16 | ↔ | This continuous process will include reviewing budget monitoring, active budget management, and reflection of economic and Local Government sector trends in the MTFS. Wherever possible, policy decisions impacting on the MTFS will be taken as soon as possible, rather than waiting until the February Council meeting which sets the annual budget. This will allow officers to be ready to implement, or have implemented, policy decisions which will maximise positive impacts on the budget. | Full risk review carried out, controls and mitigating actions updated | Risk reviewed on 02/05/2025 |
| | Reduction in services to customers | | | | Planning for balanced medium term and dynamic ability to prioritise resources. | Fully | | | | | | | | The budget for 2025/26 was agreed with savings proposals identified to contribute to addressing forecast reductions in funding. Close monitoring of the delivery of the savings programme will take place throughout 2025/26 with mitigations required if slippage is identified. The budget and transformation process for 2026/27 will begin in May 2025 and will involve a robust review of current budgets, how those link to activity supporting the corporate priorities, and services level options to allow for prioritisation of resources. | | |
| | Increased volatility and inability to manage and respond to changes in funding levels | | | | Finance team made up of highly professional, competent, qualified staff. | Partially | | | | | | | | Integration and continued development of Performance, Finance and Risk reporting. | | |
| | Reduced financial returns (or losses) on investments/assets such as in subsidiaries. | | | | Good networks established locally, regionally and nationally to ensure officer are aware of developments across the sector which could impact on the council. | Fully | | | | | | | | Internal Audits being undertaken for core financial activity and capital as well as service activity. | | |
| | Inability to deliver financial efficiencies. | | | | Strong shareholder function and relationships with subsidiaries to manage investment risk. | Fully | | | | | | | | Introduction and implementation of an Asset Management Strategy. | | |
| | Exposure to commercial pressures in relation to regeneration projects. | | | | To be prudent, financial returns from the subsidiaries are not included in the MTFS until they are reasonably assured to materialise. | Partially | | | | | | | | Capital & Investment Strategy agreed annually. | | |
| | Poor customer service and satisfaction. | | | | National guidance interpreting legislation available and used regularly. | Fully | | | | | | | | Posts are filled by appropriately qualified individuals. | | |
| | Increased complexity in governance arrangements. | | | | Progress regeneration plans in a coordinated manner. Participate in Oxfordshire Treasurers' Association's work streams. | Fully | | | | | | | | Regular involvement and engagement with colleagues across the county and nationally. The potential for local government reorganisation (develotion/unitarisation) has been noted but as yet the potential impact on the council is unknown. Officers will continue to monitor the disussions at local and national levels. | | |
| | Lack of officer capacity to meet service demand. | | | | Review of best practice guidance from bodies such as CIPFA, LGA, SDCT, DCN and NAO. | Fully | | | | | | | | Regular member training and support. | | |
| | Lack of financial awareness and understanding throughout the council. | | | | Treasury management and capital & Investment strategies in place and updated at least annually. Regular financial and performance monitoring in place. | Fully | | | | | | | | Regular utilisation of advisors as appropriate. | | |
| | Increased inflation in the costs of capital schemes. | | | | Independent third party advisers in place. Regular bulletins and advice received from advisers. Property portfolio income monitored through financial management arrangements on a regular basis. | Fully | | | | | | | | Summarise and distribute announcements to CLT and members. | | |
| | Increased inflation in revenue costs. | | | | Asset Management Strategy in place and embedded. | Fully | | | | | | | | Timely and good quality budget management reports, particularly property income and capital. | | |
| | | | | | Transformation Programme in place to deliver efficiencies, prioritise resources, link to strategic priorities and increased income in the future. | Partially | | | | | | | | Work is underway to maximise the impact of the available space in Banbury town centre. | | |

| Name and Description of risk | Potential impact | Inherent (gross) risk level (before Controls) | | | Controls | Control assessment | Lead Member | Risk owner | Risk manager | Residual risk level (after existing controls) | | | Direction of travel | Mitigating actions (to address control issues) | Comments | Last updated |
|---|--|---|--------|--------|--|---|----------------------|---------------|----------------|---|--------|--------|---------------------|---|--|-----------------------------|
| | | Probability | Impact | Rating | | Fully effective Partially effective Not effective | | | | Probability | Impact | Rating | | | | |
| L02 - Statutory functions – Failure to meet statutory obligations and policy and legislative changes are not anticipated or planned for. | Legal challenge | 3 | 4 | 12 | Embedded system of legislation and policy tracking In place, with clear accountabilities, reviewed regularly by Directors. | Partially | Councillor Brant | Stephen Hinds | Shiraz Sheikh | 3 | 3 | 9 | ↔ | Ensure Committee forward plans are reviewed regularly by senior officers. | No changes in latest review | Risk reviewed on 28/07/2025 |
| | Loss of opportunity to influence national policy / legislation | | | | Clear accountability for responding to consultations with defined process to ensure Member engagement | Fully | | | | | | | | Ensure Internal Audit plan focusses on key leadership risks. | | |
| | Financial penalties | | | | National guidance interpreting legislation available and used regularly | Fully | | | | | | | | Senior Officers are aware of key policy/legislative changes taking into consideration all of the Council's functions and duties arising as a result. | | |
| | Reduced service to customers | | | | Risks and issues associated with Statutory functions incorporated into Directorate Risk Registers and regularly reviewed. | Fully | | | | | | | | External support secured for key corporate projects including Growth Deal and IT Transformation Programme. | | |
| | Inability to deliver council's plans | | | | Clear accountability for horizon scanning, risk identification / categorisation / escalation and policy interpretation in place | Partially | | | | | | | | Learning and development opportunities identified and promoted by the Chief Executive and Directors. Staff briefings on rules and procedures by MO | | |
| | Exposure to commercial pressures | | | | Robust Committee forward plans to allow member oversight of policy issues and risk management, including Scrutiny and Audit | Fully | | | | | | | | | | |
| | Reduced resilience and business continuity | | | | Internal Audit Plan risk based to provide necessary assurances | Fully | | | | | | | | Review Directorate/Service risk registers. | | |
| | Reduced staff morale, increased workload and uncertainty may lead to loss of good people | | | | Strong networks established locally, regionally and nationally to ensure influence on policy issues. In addition two Directors hold leading national roles | Fully | | | | | | | | Ensure Committee forward plans are reviewed regularly by senior officers. | | |
| | | | | | Senior Members aware and briefed regularly in 1:1s by Directors | Fully | | | | | | | | Ensure Internal Audit plan focusses on key leadership risks. | | |
| | | | | | Arrangements in place to source appropriate interim resource if needed | Partially | | | | | | | | Establish corporate repository and accountability for policy/legislative changes taking into consideration all of the Council's functions. | | |
| | | | | | Ongoing programme of internal communication | Fully | | | | | | | | Project Management Methodology to be established with appropriate oversight. Programme Office with the appropriate capabilities to monitor deliver projects. | | |
| | | | | | Programme Boards in place to oversee key corporate projects and ensure resources are allocated as required. | Partially | | | | | | | | | | |
| | | | | | Extended Leadership Team (ELT) Meetings established to oversee and provide assurance on key organisational matters including resourcing. | Fully | | | | | | | | | | |
| | | | | | | | | | | | | | | Review Directorate/Service risk registers. | | |
| L03 - CDC Local Plan - Failure to have an up to date Local Plan could result in poor planning decisions such as development in inappropriate locations. It could also make it more difficult to demonstrate an adequate supply of land for housing which could lead to more planning by appeal and decisions that are contrary to the Council's wishes. The Plan requires approval by Council to be submitted for Examination. | Poor planning decisions leading to inappropriate growth in inappropriate place. | 4 | 4 | 16 | The statutory Local Development Scheme (LDS) is actively managed and reviewed, built into Service Plan, and integral to staff appraisals of all those significantly involved in Plan preparation and review | Partially | Councillor J. Conway | Ian Boll | David Peckford | 3 | 4 | 12 | ↔ | Annual (Authority) Monitoring Reports presented to the Executive on plan making and policy effectiveness. | The draft submission Local Plan (Reg.22) was approved by the Council's Executive on 1 July 2025. An updated Local Development Scheme was also approved. The Local Plan is scheduled to be presented to Council on 21 July. Upon approval, the Plan would be submitted to the Planning Inspectorate for independent Examination. | Risk reviewed on 11/07/25 |
| | Failure to have up to date policies that meet the District's requirements. | | | | Team capacity and capability kept under continual review with gaps and pressures identified and managed at the earliest opportunity. | Partially | | | | | | | | An updated LDS presented to the Executive when there is a significant change in the circumstances for the Local Plan timetable. | | |
| | Negative impact on the council's ability to deliver its strategic objectives, including for minimising carbon emissions. | | | | | | | | | | | | | Programme built into Directorate level objectives (e.g. via Service Plans) and staff appraisals; on-going preparation of the Local Plan is a service priority. | | |
| | A higher number of planning appeals with associated increased costs | | | | | | | | | | | | | Project management of the Local Plan process continues. | | |
| | Reputational damage with our local communities through not having up to date policies to meet needs and protect the environment | | | | On-going review of planning appeal decisions to assess robustness and relevance of Local Plan policies | Partially | | | | | | | | Regular Corporate Director, Portfolio Holder and Members Advisory Group briefings | | |
| | Reputational damage with investor community of Cherwell as a good place to do business created by uncertainty/lack of policy clarity. | | | | Regular Councillor briefings to ensure all timescale requirements are understood. Ensuring that staff and consultancy resourcing is maintained | Partially | | | | | | | | Continuance of internal Members' Advisory Group meetings. | | |
| | Failure to submit Plan for Examination would mean that the Council would need to prepare a Local Plan under a new plan-making system on which further Gov't guidance is awaited. This would significantly delay having a new, up-to-date Plan. | | | | Political consensus - building | Partially | | | | | | | | Political consensus building through Chief Executive briefings and the Local Plan's Members Advisory Group. | | |
| L04 - Five Year Housing Land Supply - Failure to maintain a five year housing land supply provides more opportunity for unplanned housing developments to receive planning permission | More housing development in locations not preferred by the Council and in potentially less sustainable locations with more environmental impact. | 4 | 4 | 16 | A new Local Plan provides the opportunity to review the allocation of land for housing. Planning decisions are taken in the context of the five year housing land supply position and are a means by which additional housing can be approved for delivery within a five year period. Housing land supply is reviewed on at least an annual basis. An action plan can be prepared to identify measures to help facilitate the delivery of approved housing. The rate of housing delivery is ultimately a matter for the developer. | Partially | Councillor J. Conway | Ian Boll | David Peckford | 5 | 3 | 15 | ↔ | Regular monitoring and review Preparation & adoption of a new Local Plan Regular Briefings for the Chair of Planning Committee and the Portfolio Holder. Member awareness of the implications of not having a five year land supply Preparation of an Action Plan | The 2024 Annual Monitoring Report was approved by the Council's Executive in February 2025 and included a review of the district's housing land supply position. It was resolved to prepare a Housing Delivery Action Plan (HDAP). An HDAP was considered by the Overview & Scrutiny Committee on 3 June and approved by the Executive on 10 June. | Risk reviewed 11/07/25 |

| Name and Description of risk | Potential impact | Inherent (gross) risk level (before Controls) | | | Controls | Control assessment | Lead Member | Risk owner | Risk manager | Residual risk level (after existing controls) | | | Direction of travel | Mitigating actions (to address control issues) | Comments | Last updated |
|--|---|---|--------|--------|--|---|-------------------------|------------|----------------|---|--------|--------|---------------------|--|---|-----------------------------|
| | | Probability | Impact | Rating | | Fully effective Partially effective Not effective | | | | Probability | Impact | Rating | | | | |
| L05 - Planning Applications for Major Development - The need to reduce the percentage of planning decisions for major development overturned at appeal | Over the period April 2022 to March 2024, and allowing for appeal decisions to December 2024, 10.4% of decisions on major applications were overturned at appeal (12 out of 115 decisions). Consequently, the Council has been under ministerial review for potential designation for the quality of its decisions on applications for major development. | 5 | 4 | 20 | A review of the Council's decision making processes by the Planning Advisory Service. Entering into an improvement plan to address issues identified in the review. Ensuring full, timely and successful implementation of the improvement plan. | Fully | Councillor J. Conway | Ian Boll | David Peckford | 4 | 4 | 16 | ↔ | Discussion with the Planning Advisory Service about the review of decision-making Corporate oversight | On 29 May 2025 a review of the Council's decision making processes for major developments was undertaken by the Planning Advisory Service (PAS). A draft report was received. The final report of it's findings is awaited. Officers will continue to pursue a reduction in the number of decisions on major developments overturned at appeal through improvement work. | Risk reviewed 11/07/25 |
| L06 - Business Continuity - Failure to ensure that critical services can be maintained in the event of a short or long term incident impacting on the delivery of the Council's operation | Inability to deliver critical services to customers/residents Financial loss/ increased costs Loss of important data Inability to recover sufficiently to restore non-critical services before they become critical Loss of reputation Reduced service delivery capacity in medium term due to recovery activity | 4 | 4 | 16 | Business continuity strategy, statement of intent and framework in place and all arrangements overseen by a Business Continuity Steering Group Services prioritised and ICT recovery plans reflect those priorities and the requirements of critical services ICT disaster recovery arrangements in place with data centre and cloud services reducing likelihood of ICT loss and data loss Incident management team identified in Business Continuity Framework All services undertake annual business impact assessments and updates of business continuity plans Cross-council Business Continuity Steering Group meets regularly to identify Business Continuity improvements needed | Fully Fully Fully Fully Partially Partially | Councillor R. Parkinson | Ian Boll | Tim Hughes | 2 | 3 | 6 | ↔ | BCSG meeting routinely and corporate refresh across all areas completed. BC programme is in place and timescales for review/update/test are being followed. BC Impact Assessments and BCPs being updated and reviewed by Emergency Planning Team with supporting document management system having been implemented. Business Continuity Statement of Intent and Framework reviewed and updated to align with new incident management framework Cross-council BC Steering Group meets regularly to identify BC improvements needed; BC Steering Group engagement is being achieved across all service areas. Plans tested and annual cycle clearly sets out the test/review/improve process and expectations | Full risk review carried out. Mitigating actions updated. | Risk reviewed on 29/07/2025 |
| L07 - Emergency Planning (EP) - Failure to ensure that the local authority has plans in place to respond appropriately to a civil emergency fulfilling its duty as a category one responder | Inability of council to respond effectively to an emergency Unnecessary hardship to residents and/or communities Risk to human welfare and the environment Legal challenge Potential financial loss through compensation claims Ineffective Cat 1 partnership relationships Reputational damage | 4 | 4 | 16 | Incident Management Framework in place and key contact lists updated monthly. Emergency Planning Lead Officer defined with responsibility to review, test and exercise plan and to establish, monitor and ensure all elements are covered Expert advice and support provided by Oxfordshire County Council's Emergency Planning Team under partnership arrangements. Council Duty Directors attend training relating to role prior to joining duty director rota and have refresh training annually CEx and Corporate Directors have received Strategic Co-ordinating Group (SCG) Training. Multi agency emergency exercises conducted to ensure readiness Active participation in Local Resilience Forum (LRF) activities On-call rota being maintained and updated to reflect recent staffing changes | Fully Fully Fully Fully Partially Fully Fully | Councillor R. Parkinson | Ian Boll | Tim Hughes | 2 | 3 | 6 | ↔ | IMF reviewed and updated. Training schedule in place and being delivered including training for new ADs/CEX and refresh for existing duty directors. Emergency plan contacts list updated monthly and reissued to all duty directors periodically. Available on ELT Teams channel. Supporting officers for incident response reviewed and identified across some areas, to ensure they are reviewed and updated across all service areas. | OCC Joint resilience Team arrangments to be continued into 25/26 | Risk reviewed on 25/07/2025 |

| Name and Description of risk | Potential impact | Inherent (gross) risk level (before Controls) | | | Controls | Control assessment | Lead Member | Risk owner | Risk manager | Residual risk level (after existing controls) | | | Direction of travel | Mitigating actions (to address control issues) | Comments | Last updated |
|---|---|---|--------|--------|--|---|-------------------------|---------------|-----------------|---|--------|--------|---------------------|---|--|-----------------------------|
| | | Probability | Impact | Rating | | Fully effective Partially effective Not effective | | | | Probability | Impact | Rating | | | | |
| L08 - Safeguarding the Vulnerable – Operational and partnership actions- Failure to work effectively with partners to identify and protect vulnerable people in the district and disrupt exploitation leaving vulnerable people at risk or subject to exploitation. | Increased harm and distress caused to vulnerable individuals and their families. | 4 | 4 | 16 | Continue in linking in with Oxfordshire partnerships protocol review to ensure outcomes relevant to CDC are understood and implemented as necessary | Partially | Councillor R. Parkinson | Ian Boll | Tim Hughes | 2 | 4 | 8 | ↔ | Continue in linking in with Safer Oxfordshire partnership and contributing towards partnership activity to ensure safeguarding responsibilities are met. | Full risk review carried out. Risk controls updated | Risk reviewed on 25/07/2025 |
| | Council subject to external reviews | Exploitation concerns and actions discussed routinely at Joint Agency Tasking and Co-ordination meetings on a monthly basis | Fully | | Exploitation concerns and actions discussed routinely at Joint Agency Tasking and Co-ordination meetings on a monthly basis | | | | | | | | | | | |
| | Criminal investigations potentially compromised | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| | Potential financial liability if council deemed to be negligent. | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| | Reputational damage to the council. | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| L09 - Health and safety Failure to ensure effective arrangements are in place for Health and Safety. | Unsafe services leading to fatality, serious injury & ill health to employees, service users or members of the public | 5 | 4 | 20 | Corporate H&S governance arrangements and policies are regularly reviewed and updated by the Corporate H&S Team and monitored by the H&S Assurance Board. | Fully | Councillor C. Brant | Claire Cox | Ruth Wooldridge | 3 | 4 | 12 | ↔ | Corporate H&S Auditing and Inspection programme on track. Reports issued to managers and actions tracked for completion. Work ongoing with 2 audits per calendar month. | Full risk review carried out. Risk reviewed and mitigation actions updated. | Risk reviewed on 26/06/2025 |
| | Criminal prosecution for failings Breach of legislation and potential for enforcement action. | Directors and service leads are responsible for ensuring H&S arrangements are in place within their areas or responsibility. Managers are responsible for ensuring operational health and safety risks are assessed and effective control measures implemented. | Fully | | Work still in progress with service areas around the corporate H&S register, which will be managed and monitored with a focus on the depots as our highest risk areas. | These are ongoing risks which cannot be removed only reduce the likelihood of these happening. | | | | | | | | | | |
| | Financial impact (compensation or improvement actions) | Consultation with employee representatives via employer and union consultative committees (Unison) | Fully | | Relevant and required policies and procedures are regularly reviewed. | The final Veritau report was presented to AARC on 15 Janaury 2025. Work is now progressing on the audit actions which we hope to have concluded the actions that we own by the Autumn 2025. | | | | | | | | | | |
| | Reputational Impact | Corporate H&S Training provided via corporate learning and development programme. Training for operational risks may be organised by services. | Fully | | Working with service areas to ensure that suitable risk assessments are in place. | | | | | | | | | | | |
| | | H&S performance monitored by accident and incident reports and corporate H&S auditing and inspection programme. | Fully | | Working with service areas and providing training to staff where necessary. | | | | | | | | | | | |
| | | H&S information is disseminated via internal communications and updates to ELT and other relevant meetings. | Fully | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| L10 - Cyber Security -If there is insufficient security with regards to the data held and IT systems used by the councils and insufficient protection against malicious attacks on council's systems then there is a risk of: a data breach, or a loss of service. | Financial loss / fine | 4 | 5 | 20 | Intrusion prevention and detection monitoring and regular actions are implemented from the resulting reports | Fully | Councillor C.Brant | Stephen Hinds | David Spilsbury | 3 | 5 | 15 | ↔ | All staff reminded to be vigilant to unexpected emails due to the heightened risk of cyber-attack due to escalating worldwide tensions and at critical periods such as the run up to Elections. | Full risk review carried out. Impacts, controls and mitigating actions updated | Risk reviewed on 28/07/25 |
| | Prosecution – penalties imposed | Additional 3rd party monitoring in place using a SIEM tool and 24/7 monitoring via a SOC | Fully | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| | Individuals could be placed at risk of harm | A zero trust VPN model. | Fully | | Cyber Security advice and guidance regularly highlighted to all staff. | | | | | | | | | | | |
| | Reduced capability to deliver services | Schedule of regular security patching | Fully | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| | Unlawful disclosure of sensitive information | Vulnerability scanning | Fully | | Cyber Security is mandatory e-learning for all staff to be completed annually and is part of new starters induction training. Additionally regular Mimecast videos sent to all users for bitesize regular training | | | | | | | | | | | |
| | Inability to share services or work with partners | Malware protection and detection | Fully | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| | Loss of reputation | File and data encryption on computer devices | Fully | | External Health Check undertaken each year and Cabinet Office PSN compliance reviewed and certified each year to ensure the infrastructure is secure to connect to the PSN. | | | | | | | | | | | |
| | | Managing access permissions and privileged users controls. | Fully | | Internal Audits complete regular cyber audits. | | | | | | | | | | | |
| | | Effective information management and security training and awareness programme for staff | Fully | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| | | Password and Multi Factor Authentication security controls in place. | Fully | | Cyber Security lead has specific responsibility for Cyber Security, and we have engaged a specialist partner to advise on industry best practices and standards. | | | | | | | | | | | |
| | | Robust information and data related incident management procedures in place | Fully | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| | | Appropriate robust contractual arrangements in place with all third parties that supply systems or data processing services | Fully | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| | | Appropriate plans in place to ensure ongoing PSN compliance | Fully | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| | | Preventative measures in place to mitigate insider threat, including physical and system security | Fully | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| | | Advice received from NCSC on specific activity alerts, the increased threat of globalised ransomware and malware attacks | Fully | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Mimecast awareness training and comprehensive defence system deployed to improve email security | Fully | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |

| Name and Description of risk | Potential impact | Inherent (gross) risk level (before Controls) | | | Controls | Control assessment | Lead Member | Risk owner | Risk manager | Residual risk level (after existing controls) | | | Direction of travel | Mitigating actions (to address control issues) | Comments | Last updated |
|---|--|---|--------|--------|--|---|-------------------------|----------------|---------------|---|--------|--------|---------------------|--|--|-----------------------------|
| | | Probability | Impact | Rating | | Fully effective Partially effective Not effective | | | | Probability | Impact | Rating | | | | |
| L11 - Safeguarding the vulnerable - Internal procedures- Failure to work effectively with partners to identify and protect vulnerable people in the district and disrupt exploitation leaving vulnerable people at risk or subject to exploitation. | Increased harm and distress caused to vulnerable individuals and their families | 4 | 4 | 16 | Safeguarding lead in place and clear lines of responsibility established | Fully | Councillor R. Pattenden | Ian Boll | Nicola Riley | 2 | 4 | 8 | ↔ | Action plan acted upon and shared with Overview and scrutiny committee once a year | No changes | Risk reviewed 01/07/2025 |
| | Council subject to external reviews | | | | Safeguarding Policy and procedures in place | Fully | | | | | | | | Comprehensive on line training available for all staff and members | | |
| | Criminal investigations potentially compromised | | | | Information on the intranet on how to escalate a concern | Fully | | | | | | | | Continue to attend safeguarding board sub groups as necessary to maintain high levels of awareness within the system and compliance with latest practice | | |
| | Potential financial liability if council deemed to be negligent | | | | Mandatory training and awareness raising sessions are now in place for all staff. | Fully | | | | | | | | Corporate monitoring of all referrals | | |
| | Reputational damage to the council | | | | Safer recruitment practices and DBS checks for staff with direct contact | Fully | | | | | | | | Ensure web pages remain up to date | | |
| | | | | | | | | | | | | | | Monitoring of implementation of corporate policies and procedures to ensure fully embedded | | |
| | | | | | Data sharing agreement with other partners | Fully | | | | | | | | Regular internal cross departmental meetings to discuss safeguarding practice | | |
| | | | | | Attendance at Safeguarding Boards | Fully | | | | | | | | | | |
| | | | | | Annual Section 11 return compiled and submitted as required by legislation. | Fully | | | | | | | | Member training completions shared twice a year | | |
| | | | | | | | | | | | | | | SAR's and Lessons Learned reports circulated to improve practice and knowledge. | | |
| | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| L12 - Sustainability of Council owned companies and delivery of planned financial and other objectives - Failure of council owned companies to achieve their intended outcomes or fail to meet financial objectives | Unclear governance leading to lack of clarity and oversight in terms of financial and business outcomes | 3 | 5 | 15 | Annual business planning in place for all companies to include understanding of the link between the Council's strategic objectives being delivered and financial impact for the council. A regular Shareholder Representative meeting takes place, a Shareholder Liaison Meeting including the S.151 Officer and Monitoring Officer takes place on a quarterly basis and a Shareholder Committee meeting on a quarterly basis. A governance review is being undertaken and initial recommendations have been approved by the Shareholder Committee. | Fully | Councillor D. Hingley | Gordon Stewart | Stephen Hinds | 2 | 3 | 6 | ↔ | A Shareholder Representative was appointed and regular governance arrangements are in place. | New chair appointed in 2025, with recruitment for 2 new NEDS undertaken in July. Governance framework also approved for SHC in June. | Risk reviewed on 28/07/2025 |
| | Failure of council owned companies to achieve their intended outcomes or fail to meet financial objectives | | | | Regular meetings are in place between the Council's S.151 Officer and the relevant company Finance Directors. Financial planning for the companies undertaken that will then be included within our own Medium Term Financial Strategy. Financial risks are routinely reported by the Shareholder Representative to the Shareholder Committee. | Fully | | | | | | | | Resilience and support being developed across business to support and enhance knowledge around council companies. | | |
| | Lack of understanding at officer and member level about the different roles of responsibilities required when managing council owned companies | | | | Clear governance arrangements are in place. | Partially | | | | | | | | Skills and experience being enhanced to deliver and support development, challenge and oversight. | | |
| | | | | | Sound monitoring in place of both business and financial aspects of the companies and the impact on overall council performance through the Shareholder Representative meetings and through the reporting to the Corporate Leadership Team monthly. | Fully | | | | | | | | Work with one company to ensure long term support arrangements are put in place. | | |
| | | | | | Training in place for those undertaking Director roles relating to the companies. | Partially | | | | | | | | | | |
| | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| L13 - Financial sustainability of third-party suppliers and contractors | The financial failure of a third party supplier and contractors results in the inability or reduced ability to deliver a service to customers or provide goods needed. A reduced supply market could also result in increased costs due to the council's' loss of competitive advantage. | 3 | 4 | 12 | Ensure contract management in place review and anticipate problems within key service suppliers and partners | Partially | Councillor C Brant | Shiraz Sheikh | Darren Jacobs | 3 | 4 | 12 | ↔ | Creditsafe UK tool purchased to allow Procurement to carry out supplier credit checks when required. | No changes | Risk reviewed on 28/07/2025 |
| | | | | | Business continuity planning arrangements in place in regards to key suppliers | Partially | | | | | | | | Service areas to ensure supplier suitability checks have been carried out prior to award of contract and hold meetings as required with suppliers to review higher risk areas and ensure risks are being managed. Reminders to be sent to all who have Procurement/Contract Management responsibility to regularly meet with key suppliers and partners to gain early understanding of any issues arising. | | |
| | | | | | Ensuring that proactive review and monitoring is in place for key suppliers to ensure we are able to anticipate any potential service failures | Partially | | | | | | | | | | |
| | Reduced resilience and business continuity | | | | Intelligence unit set up procurement Hub to monitor supplier and contractor market | Fully | | | | | | | | Services areas to keep the key suppliers under regular check including running financial checks. | | |
| | Increased complaints and/or customer dissatisfaction | | | | Analysis of third party spend undertaken to identify and risk assess key suppliers/contractors | Fully | | | | | | | | | | |
| | Increased costs and/or financial exposure to the Council due to having to cover costs or provide service due to failure of third party supplier of contractor | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |

| Name and Description of risk | Potential impact | Inherent (gross) risk level (before Controls) | | | Controls | Control assessment | Lead Member | Risk owner | Risk manager | Residual risk level (after existing controls) | | | Direction of travel | Mitigating actions (to address control issues) | Comments | Last updated |
|---|---|---|--------|--------|--|---|-----------------------|----------------|------------------|---|--------|--------|---------------------|---|---|--------------------------------------|
| | | Probability | Impact | Rating | | Fully effective Partially effective Not effective | | | | Probability | Impact | Rating | | | | |
| L14 - Corporate Governance - Failure of corporate governance leads to negative impact on service delivery or the implementation of major projects providing value to customers. | Threat to service delivery and performance if good management practices and controls are not adhered to. | 4 | 4 | 16 | Clear and robust control framework including: constitution, scheme of delegation, ethical walls policy etc. | Fully | Councillor C. Brant | Stephen Hinds | Shiraz Sheikh | 3 | 4 | 12 | ↔ | External Audit - external audit issue an opinion on the accounts and the Council's arrangements for securing Value for Money. The Council's Annual Governance Statement and Code of Corporate Governance. At least annually, a review of effectiveness of governance framework including the system of internal control and AGS is published. The work is informed by the Corporate Governance and Oversight Group. CLT & ELT has responsibility of maintenance of the governance environment. Tranfer of historic public open space land - renegotiation with the land oweber, developers, internal property and planning teams to to facilitate due diligence to enable transfers to take place. | Full risk review carried out - potential impacts updated | Risk reviewed on 10/07/2025 |
| | | | | | Member Scrutiny - OSC function, Council Executive, AARC and Standards Committees | Fully | | | | | | | | | | |
| | Risk of ultra vires activity or lack of legal compliance | | | | Clear accountability and resource for corporate governance (including the shareholder role). | Fully | | | | | | | | | | |
| | Risk of fraud or corruption | | | | Integrated budget, performance and risk reporting framework. | Fully | | | | | | | | | | |
| | Risk to financial sustainability if lack of governance results in poor investment decisions or budgetary control. | | | | Corporate programme office and project management framework. Includes project and programme governance. | Partially | | | | | | | | | | |
| | Failure of corporate governance in terms of major projects, budgets or council owned companies impacts upon financial sustainability of the council. | | | | Internal audit programme aligned to leadership risk register. | Fully | | | | | | | | | | |
| | Inability to support Council's democratic functions / obligations (e.g. return to physical public meetings and public access to meetings). | | | | Training and development resource targeted to address priority issues; examples include GDPR, safeguarding etc. | Partially | | | | | | | | | | |
| | | | | | HR policy framework. | Partially | | | | | | | | | | |
| | | | | | Annual governance statement process connects more fully and earlier with ELT and CLT. | Fully | | | | | | | | | | |
| L15 - Monitoring and management of Major Infrastructure Projects and Programmes - Failure to properly manage and monitor the various residual Oxfordshire Housing and Growth Deal infrastructure projects. | Failure to actively manage the various Infrastructure Projects and Programmes, particularly in relation to those being delivered by Oxfordshire County Council, could lead to delays or failure to deliver timely obligations, which could lead to HM Government holding back some or all of its funding, or requiring repayment. | 4 | 5 | 20 | Need to establish appropriate officer and stakeholder governance structures to support effective programme delivery. | Partially | Councillor L. McLean | Ian Boll | Julia Harrington | 3 | 3 | 9 | ↔ | Regular infrastructure & project meetings are held between officers at Oxfordshire County and Cherwell District Councils in order to monitor progress. Projects also included within Area Oversight Priority Plans for monitoring at AOGs held quarterly for each area. | No changes | Risk reviewed on 13/05/2025 |
| | | | | | Need to institute regular and effective dialogue with developers. | Partially | | | | | | | | Regular and effective dialogue with developers via Area Developer Forums and Area Oversight Groups held on a quarterly basis. | | |
| | Delivery of Infrastructure projects fail to accelerate housing delivery as commercial pressures impact house builders projects. | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| L16- Workforce Strategy The lack of effective workforce strategies could impact on our ability to deliver Council priorities and services. | Limit our ability to recruit, retain and develop staff | 3 | 4 | 12 | Analysis of workforce data and on-going monitoring of issues. | Partially | Councillor C. Brant | Stephen Hinds | Claire Cox | 3 | 4 | 12 | ↔ | There are indications that specific service areas continue to experience recruitment difficulties for professional roles. HR is working with the relevant directors to consider alternative resourcing methods. | Full risk review carried out. Mitigating actions updated. We are collecting recruitment data to better identify areas where recruitment is proving challenging so that a review and actions can be carried out at the earliest opportunity. | Risk reviewed and updated 09/07/2025 |
| | Impact on our ability to deliver high quality services | | | | Key staff in post to address risks (e.g. strategic HR business partners) | Fully | | | | | | | | Development of a people strategy to include succession planning, and to underpin the organisation strategy | | |
| | Overreliance on temporary staff | | | | Weekly Vacancy Management process in place | Fully | | | | | | | | Development of relevant workforce plans. | | |
| | | | | | | | | | | | | | | Development of specific recruitment and retention strategies. It is planned for CDC to develop a framework that suits the needs of all services ensuring that the Council has access to a much wider pool of staffing agencies at competitive rates. | | |
| | Additional training and development costs | | | | Ongoing service redesign will set out long term service requirements | Partially | | | | | | | | The new IT system has been implemented to improve our workforce data and continues to be develop to improve our ability to interrogate and access key data (ongoing) in order to inform workforce strategies. | | |
| L17 - Local Government Reorganisation Potential impact that the Local Government Reorganisation implementation might across the council, including services we provide to our residents. | Impact on potential short term decision making due to future uncertainty | 4 | 4 | 16 | Representation of all political parties is ensured, including through dialogue with PGL | | Councillor D. Hingley | Gordon Stewart | Stephen Hinds | 4 | 3 | 12 | ↔ | Implement proposals from our Transformation Plan to ensure improved efficiencies and improving our resilience | Case for Change, PID and TOM in developed. Numerous workstreams in place for building the our LGR CIC which are reported to our project board and leaders on a fortnightly basis. | Risk reviewed on 28/07/2025 |
| | Inability to recruit key personnel to achieve priorities during the transition period | | | | Legal implications and actions to be identified and executed | | | | | | | | | | | |
| | Inability to transform services to achieve required financial savings/ VFM due to uncertainty of future design requirements & timescales | | | | Communication plan to be put in place | | | | | | | | | | | |
| | Services not being fully ready on vesting day | | | | Local/District specific impact to be identified, assessed and managed/escalated | | | | | | | | | | | |
| | Risk to the continuity of services | | | | Active engagement at officer & Council Leader levels with authorities across Oxfordshire & wider as appropriate. | | | | | | | | | | | |
| | Insufficient resources to implement LGR / business case with impact on BAU work. | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| | Staff morale and resilience may be low | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| | Risk that assumed savings from reorganisation will not be realised or will be significantly delayed. | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| | Failure of back-office systems | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| | That decision making will be unclear and confused | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| | Lack of clarity of vision and priorities | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |

This page is intentionally left blank

| This report is public | |
|---|--|
| Budget Process 2026/2027 | |
| Committee | Executive |
| Date of Committee | 2 September 2025 |
| Portfolio Holder presenting the report | Portfolio Holder for Finance, Property and Regeneration, Councillor Lesley McLean, |
| Date Portfolio Holder agreed report | 12 August 2025 |
| Report of | Assistant Director Finance (S151 Officer), Michael Furness |

Purpose of report

To inform the Executive of the proposed approach to the 2026/27 Budget Process and provides context and background information on the existing Medium-Term Financial Strategy and information on latest government announcements relevant to the Strategy.

1.0 Recommendations

The meeting resolves:

- 1.1 To approve the Budget Process for 2026/27.
- 1.2 To approve the base assumptions to be used for the 2026/27 budget.
- 1.3 To approve a five-year period for the Medium-Term Financial Strategy to 2030/31 and five-year period for the Capital Programme to 2030/31.

2.0 Introduction

- 2.1 This report is the first in the series on the Budget process for the forthcoming year. It forms context and background information and is part of the process which will culminate in Council setting a budget for 2026/27; a medium-term financial strategy to 2030/31, the capital programme to 2030/31 and a Corporate Plan in February 2026.
- 2.2 The Corporate Plan will set out the council's vision and strategic priorities, aims and activities over a five-year period. It will be underpinned annually through the production of an Annual Delivery Plan, which will set out clearly the key objectives and deliverables for the year ahead. This will ensure there is a clear direction for the Council on an annual basis to support the delivery of its overarching vision and strategic priorities.

- 2.3 The Corporate Plan will inform the Medium-Term Financial Strategy, a key policy framework of the Council, through ensuring that the annual budget and Annual Delivery Plans are aligned. Therefore, Annual Delivery Plans will form part of the annual planning cycle and approval process for the Council.
- 2.4 The Medium-Term Financial Strategy (MTFS) to 2029/30, agreed by Council in February 2025, identified savings of £4.997m to be delivered in 2026/27. The MTFS also reflects expected growth for demographic and other additional directorate spending needs and inflationary costs plus impacts of agreed savings and other income growth.
- 2.5 Information on latest government announcements and their impact, as well as an overview of new and emerging pressures which will need addressing through the Budget process for 2026/27, are set out in the report.
- 2.6 There is uncertainty in government funding for 2026/27 and beyond; however, the government have committed to providing a 3-year settlement. The Council does not expect to have received the Provisional Financial Settlement until late November. In addition, formal announcements are awaited with regards to the introduction of a new Fairer Funding Formula, alongside a Business Rates Reset, and in what form transitional relief will be provided. The government have consulted on phased relief and the use of funding floors. The planning assumption in the MTFS as at February 2025 is for the Fairer Funding formula and a reset of business rates to be phased over three years, beginning in 2026/27. This will remain until the government provide a policy statement in October. This level of uncertainty remains high; however, in reviewing and updating the MTFS prudent assumptions will be made based on the latest information available.

Implications & Impact Assessments

| Implications | Commentary |
|------------------------|--|
| Finance | There are no immediate financial implications associated with agreeing a budget process. Joanne Kaye, Head of Finance, 30 July 2025 |
| Legal | The Council legally has to set a balanced budget each year. Ensuring there is a robust process in place will help it to achieve that. Denzil Turbervill, Head of Legal, 6 August 2025 |
| Risk Management | The Council faces significant risks given the scale of the financial challenge for 2025/26 and 2026/27. Having a robust process in place to develop budget proposals and the associated Corporate Plan will help to mitigate these. These risks are managed as part of the operational and leadership risk register. Celia Prado-Teeling, Performance Team Leader, 31 July 2025 |

| Impact Assessments | Positive | Neutral | Negative | Commentary |
|--|-----------------|----------------|-----------------|--|
| Equality Impact | | X | | There are no Equality, Diversity and Inclusion implications arising as a direct consequence of this report. However, as per our equalities framework, all proposals are developed in line with the Equality Act 2010. Celia Prado-Teeling, Performance Team Leader, 31 July 2025 |
| 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 | | There are no sustainability implications arising directly from this report to initiate the budget process. However, the implications of proposals arising from the process will need to be reviewed to consider whether they have sustainability impacts. As the Council looks to reduce its spend it would be hoped that this would also lead to a reduction in carbon impact as well. Jo Miskin, Climate Action Manager, 31 July 2025 |
| Climate & Environmental Impact | | | | N/A |
| ICT & Digital Impact | | | | N/A |
| Data Impact | | | | N/A |
| Procurement & subsidy | | | | N/A |
| Council Priorities | All | | | |
| Human Resources | N/A | | | |
| Property | N/A | | | |

| | |
|--------------------------------------|-------------------------|
| Consultation & Engagement | See section 4.23 – 4.27 |
|--------------------------------------|-------------------------|

Supporting Information

3.0 Background

- 3.1 This initial report sets the context and the timetable for the Budget process. It sets out the assumptions on which the existing MTFS agreed in February 2025 is based, information arising from government and other announcements plus new and emerging financial issues for 2026/27 and beyond which impact on the existing MTFS.
- 3.2 The following appendices are attached to this report:
- Appendix 1: Previously agreed Savings and Income Opportunities 2025/26 – 2029/30
 - Appendix 2: Previously agreed Service Investments 2025/26 – 2029/30
 - Appendix 3: Budget Planning timetable for 2026/27
- 3.3 It is proposed that the MTFS continues to cover a five-year time frame given the financial challenges the Council is facing and is therefore extended by one year to cover 2030/31. It is also proposed that the Capital Programme also cover the same five-year period to 2030/31 as the MTFS.

4.0 Details

Assumptions in the approved Medium-Term Financial Strategy

Additional Spending & Savings

- 4.1 The 2025/26 – 2029/30 MTFS agreed by Council in February 2025 identified the requirement for additional annual savings of £4.997m in 2026/27 to offset funding reductions and to meet additional expenditure needs – this is in addition to the £0.0463m savings already planned for 2026/27. Delivery of savings identified in February 2025 for implementation in 2025/26 of £1.232m are being monitored through the monthly reporting to Executive throughout the financial year. To the extent that savings anticipated in 2025/26 are not delivered on an ongoing basis this will increase the level of savings required in 2026/27. The Council is working to minimise any ongoing savings non-delivery in 2025/26.
- 4.2 The existing MTFS has provided for inflation on pay, contracts, and fees and charges within the budget. It assumes that there will be 2.5 percent pay award over the MTFS period. Contract inflation had been provided for at 2 percent in all years of the MTFS. Fees and charges have been reviewed and increased by a minimum of 2 percent for 2026/27 (where the fee is set by the council) to reflect cost recovery and are then assumed to increase by 2 percent annually for the remainder of the MTFS period.

- 4.3 Details of the savings and service investments assumed in the existing MTFS, approved by Council in February 2025, for 2025/26 to 2029/30 are set out in Appendix 1 and 2.

Funding

- 4.4 The MTFS for 2025/26 approved by Council in February 2025, is set out in Table 1 below. This represents the scenario where the business rates reset is introduced in 2026/27, but the impact is phased over three years rather than the entire impact being felt in 2026/27 in line with the recent consultation from the Government.
- 4.5 There remains much uncertainty regarding this position over the medium term with the expected funding reforms. However, estimates were based on the most recent information available from the Government. The forecast effects of these changes are the equivalent to a 36 percent reduction in net funding. This is a result of:
- The assumption that the business rates baseline is reset in 2026/27, phased over three years, and average growth of 1.3 percent thereafter (the council has grown business rates significantly in recent years and this baseline reset results in the council losing the benefit of this retained growth)
 - the phasing out of New Homes Bonus, with a one-off payment in relation to growth in 2024/25 payable in 2025/26; the Government has previously said it will consult on a replacement NHB scheme, but it is unclear what the financial benefit will be for the council at this stage. Therefore, to be prudent the Council is assumed that NHB at 2025/26 levels is phased out over three years in line with the business rates reset assumptions.
 - Time limited grants announced by the Government for the 2025/26 financial year, e.g. Funding Floor, are expected to be received in 2025/26. The prudent assumption here is also to assume a phased reduction over three years in line with Government consultation proposal around transitional arrangements.
 - The cessation of core Revenue Support Grant (RSG), Council Tax increases of £5 per annum with on average 1.2 percent annual growth of the Council Tax base from 2025/26.
 - Other than the assumption above, no assumptions have been made that the council will receive any additional transitional finance support.
 - Taken together, the fallout of New Homes Bonus and time-limited grant funding identified above is assumed to approximate the annual 3.2% real terms reduction in funding that will be required on average by non-protected services as well as any implications from the Fair Funding Review.
- 4.6 The existing MTFS approved in February 2025 indicates that, with all of the assumptions around national funding changes, Cherwell will have a gap between its net budget requirement and its funding of £4.997m in 2026/27.
- 4.7 Details of the MTFS approved in February 2025 are set out in Table 1 below.

Table 1: MTFS as approved February 2025

| MTFS Movements | 2025/26 £m | 2026/27 £m | 2027/28 £m | 2028/29 £m | 2029/30 £m | Total £m |
|--------------------------------|-----------------|---------------|---------------|---------------|----------------|-----------------|
| Base budget b/f | 26.987 | 0.000 | 0.000 | 0.000 | 0.000 | 26.987 |
| Investments | 0.587 | (0.188) | (0.093) | 0.001 | 0.001 | 0.308 |
| Efficiencies & Income | (1.232) | (0.463) | (0.161) | (0.100) | (0.111) | (2.067) |
| Capital Impact | 0.106 | 0.037 | 0.208 | 0.165 | 0.210 | 0.726 |
| Corporate changes | (0.992) | (0.060) | 0.051 | 0.176 | 0.108 | (0.597) |
| Inflation | 0.986 | 0.816 | 0.835 | 0.800 | 0.800 | 4.237 |
| Use of reserves | (0.494) | (1.396) | 0.000 | 0.000 | 0.000 | (1.890) |
| Transfer from Reserves | 0.170 | 1.163 | 0.050 | 0.000 | 0.000 | 1.383 |
| Transfer to Reserves | 1.893 | (0.892) | 0.000 | 0.000 | 0.000 | 1.001 |
| Additional government grants | (1.817) | 2.867 | 0.967 | 0.966 | 0.000 | 2.983 |
| Net Budget Requirement | 26.194 | 2.004 | 1.857 | 2.008 | 1.008 | 33.071 |
| Revenue Support Grant | (0.368) | 0.368 | 0.000 | 0.000 | 0.000 | 0.000 |
| Council Tax | (9.903) | (0.041) | (0.440) | (0.452) | 0.000 | (10.836) |
| Business Rates | (14.988) | 2.354 | 3.433 | 3.458 | (0.071) | (5.814) |
| New Homes Bonus | (0.935) | 0.312 | 0.312 | 0.311 | 0.000 | 0.000 |
| Total Income | (26.194) | 2.993 | 3.305 | 3.317 | (0.071) | (16.650) |
| Funding Gap / (Surplus) | 0.000 | 4.997 | 5.162 | 5.325 | 0.937 | 16.421 |

Earmarked Reserves and General Balances

- 4.8 When the Council set its budget in February 2025, earmarked reserves (reserves held for a specific purpose) were forecast to be £31.3m as at the end of 2025/26. The latest forecast estimates that general balances will remain around £8m at the end of 2025/26. As with general balances, the level of earmarked reserves is reviewed each year as part of the Budget process. A risk assessment to determine the level of appropriate balances will also be undertaken as part of the Budget process.

Revised assumptions in the updated Medium Term Financial Strategy

- 4.9 The MTFS approved in February 2025, has now been reviewed and prudent assumptions made based on the latest information available and using scenarios and a sensitivity analysis to form a view.

Fair Funding Review

- 4.10 In June 2025, the government published a consultation paper on its proposed changes in local government funding, the Fair Funding Review 2.0. Our funding advisors, PIXEL Financial Management, have modelled the impact of the proposals on individual authorities, but there are still elements where uncertainties remain. There are still data updates make and changes in response to the consultation paper.

- 4.11 There are two types of damping within the Fair Funding Review 2.0 proposals. The first is to phase in changes over 3 years. The second is for a 0% (cash flat) funding floor.
- 4.12 Those authorities with the largest losses from the proposals, and who will be furthest from their target funding, will have a floor that is less than 0%. The government have proposed their funding floor would be between -5% and -7% in 2026-27, and 0% in the following two years.
- 4.13 Based on the latest version of the PIXEL model, the revised planning assumptions within the MTFS are:
- The full reset of business rates related income moves to 2026/27 and phased over three years.
 - New Homes Bonus will be abolished in 2026/27, and the funding from NHB will be rolled into Revenue Support Grant from 2026/27.
 - Time limited grants paid in 2025/26 including Minimum Funding Guarantee and the Employers NIC grant will also be rolled into Revenue Support Grant from 2026/27.
 - Funding from the Homelessness Prevention Grant relating to temporary accommodation will be rolled into the annual Revenue Support Grant from 2026/27.
 - Additional transitional support is due in 2027/28 and 2028/29 when resource losses are -7% lower than the funding floor.
- 4.14 Details of the MTFS movements due to the Fair Funding Review proposals are set out in Table 2 below.

Table 2: MTFS Movements – Fair Funding Review 2.0 proposals

| MTFS Movements | 2026/27 £m | 2027/28 £m | 2028/29 £m | 2029/30 £m | 2030/31 £m | Total £m |
|-------------------------|----------------|----------------|----------------|---------------|----------------|----------------|
| Fair Funding Transition | | | | | | |
| Reverse MTFS profile | 7.369 | (3.685) | (3.684) | 0.000 | 0.000 | 0.000 |
| New MTFS profile | (8.608) | (0.300) | (0.408) | 3.624 | (0.165) | (5.857) |
| Net movement | (1.239) | (3.985) | (4.092) | 3.624 | (0.165) | (5.857) |

Government Announcements

- 4.15 Since Council approved the 2025/26 budget, MTFS and Capital Programme, the government has issued a consultation on the business rates reset (April) and a consultation on Fairer Funding (July) as described above.

Further Medium-Term Uncertainty

- 4.16 Despite the government committing to a three-year settlement, there is uncertainty in government funding for 2026/27 and beyond. The Council does not expect to have received the Provisional Financial Settlement until November.

- 4.17 As there is so much uncertainty around future local government funding, in particular from 2026/27 onwards, the MTFS will continue to be updated based on the latest information available.

Savings Proposals and Income Opportunities

- 4.18 Given the challenging situation relating to funding and the high levels of uncertainty, the Council will undertake to identify savings options to address the MTFS gap should it materialise.
- 4.19 In line with the MTFS approved in February 2025 the Council will:
- Adopt a transformational approach to service delivery to shape the thinking for the future design of the Council.
 - Review the Council's service level priorities and alignment of resources to maximise delivery of priorities within the resources available.
 - Maximise income opportunities.
 - Continue to lobby policy makers.
- 4.20 Savings proposals and income opportunities will take the form of both expenditure reduction and increases in income. These will take into account the impacts identified in the MTFS approved in February 2025. Assumptions will be revisited and revised as information becomes clearer, but it is important to note that the actual implications will not be known until very late in the Budget process.
- 4.21 The Budget process will consider the impact that savings proposals may have on the strategic priorities of:
- Economic prosperity
 - Community leadership
 - Environmental stewardship
 - Quality housing and place making
- 4.22 The strategy for identifying savings will be based on the plan to address the MTFS gap which was approved by Council in February 2025. The Council will look to identify what savings can be provided by services and how they impact on priorities. In addition, the Council will undertake a cross-cutting review of the Council's strategic delivery themes identified in the Corporate Plan. The council is enhancing the planning process by developing a baseline for service provision, which will allow the council to identify the implications of differing service level options in the future.

Consultation and Engagement

- 4.23 Residents and service users expect to be consulted about council spending and council tax levels. There are no prescriptive guidelines on how and when councils should consult. Some councils prefer to consult early and explore the principles by which the council could approach balancing its budget i.e. on the 'shape of the budget', whereas others prefer to consult later and consult on the 'substance' of the budget when more formed proposals have been developed. Some council's do both and some do neither.
- 4.24 The common law duty to consult applies to budget consultation as residents' and service users' views and feedback could legitimately be expected to inform the council's budget setting process. There are also legal duties to consult residents

and services users on the detail of specific service change proposals and particularly cuts, and these are judged on a case-by-case basis.

- 4.25 Under section 65 of the Local Government Finance Act 1992, billing authorities must 'consult persons or bodies appearing to be representative of persons subject to non-domestic rates under section 43 and 45 of the 1998 Act about the rateable value (hereditaments) of properties.' We will engage businesses in our autumn consultation set out below.

Formal consultation

- 4.26 A public consultation will be published at the end of November on the 'substance' of the budget, to give the wider population and stakeholders (including businesses to meet our statutory duty) the opportunity to feedback on the council's 'formed' budget proposals. It does not, however, replace the need to specifically consult on service change proposals relating to significant service changes and where there is a legal requirement to do so.
- 4.27 Our approach will be digital first, using Cherwell District Council's consultation platform, Citizens Space Cherwell. In line with our commitment to Equality, Diversity and Inclusion, paper copies of both the booklet and questionnaire will also be available and customer services will be fully briefed to support residents if they need to request materials in alternative formats A communications promotional plan will support this exercise.

Budget and Business Planning Timetable

- 4.28 An online public consultation on CDC's budget proposals will commence when the information is published at the end of November 2025, with Budget Planning Committee (BPC) considering the budget pressures, savings and Fees & Charges proposals on 9 December 2025. Comments from BPC, along with other responses, will feed into the final formulation of proposals. As in previous years, we will look to invite all members to BPC, so they have the opportunity to comment on the proposals, subject to the Committee Chair's approval for this approach.
- 4.29 Capital proposals will also be considered by Budget Planning Committee on 9 December 2025. The Capital & Investment Strategy which incorporates the Treasury Management Strategy will be considered at the meeting in January 2026.
- 4.30 At this time, there are no firm dates when we can expect the provisional local government finance settlement, though it is anticipated that it could be received in late November, slightly earlier than previous years. This will confirm the general Government funding available to the Council for 2026/27 – 2028/29 and the Council Tax referendum limit to be applied.
- 4.31 The Executive will take into consideration the comments from the BPC in December 2025 and comments from the public consultation alongside the funding available announced as part of the provisional settlement, at its meeting on 3 February 2026 in setting out its proposed budget to Council.
- 4.32 The Council meeting to agree the 2026/27 revenue budget, MTFS and capital programme will take place on 23 February 2026.

4.33 A timetable for the Budget process is attached at Appendix 3.

5.0 Alternative Options and Reasons for Rejection

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

6.0 Conclusion and Reasons for Recommendations

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

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 | Previously agreed Service Efficiencies and Income Proposals 2025/26 – 2029/30 |
| Appendix 2 | Previously agreed Service Investments 2025/26 – 2029/30 |
| Appendix 3 | Budget Timetable for the 2026/27 Process |
| Background Papers | None |
| Reference Papers | Council 24 February 2025: Budget Setting for 2025/26 and the Medium-Term Financial Strategy up to 2029/30 |
| Report Author | Lynsey Parkinson, Strategic Finance Business Partner |
| Report Author contact details | lynsey.parkinson@cherwell-dc.gov.uk 01295 221739 |
| Corporate Director Approval (unless Corporate Director or Statutory Officer report) | N/A – report of statutory officer, S151 Officer |

Appendix 1 - Previously agreed Service Efficiencies & Income Proposals

Figures are shown as an incremental, year on year change to the budget

| Communities | | | | | | | | | | |
|-------------|-------------------------|------------------------|--|--|--------------|--------------|--------------|--------------|--------------|-----------------|
| Reference | Existing, New or Income | Service | Title | Description | 2025/26 (£m) | 2026/27 (£m) | 2027/28 (£m) | 2028/29 (£m) | 2029/30 (£m) | Total MTFS (£m) |
| SBCON221 | Existing | Building Control | Building Control fees | Increase Building Control fees | (0.001) | (0.001) | (0.001) | (0.001) | (0.001) | (0.005) |
| SMUSE221 | Existing | Banbury Museum | Reduction in Banbury Museum grant | Reduce the grant funding to the Banbury Museum Trust - delayed by 1 year to 2025/26 | (0.025) | (0.050) | - | - | - | (0.075) |
| SMUSE231 | Existing | Banbury Museum | Gradual reduction in support to Banbury Museum | We are proposing a gradual reduction in the funding we give to Banbury Museum - delayed by 1 year to 2025/26 | (0.020) | (0.025) | - | - | - | (0.045) |
| SBICR231 | Existing | Bicester Regeneration | Gradual reduction in grant to Bicester Vision | We currently contribute £15k towards the work on Bicester Vision, which is the only contribution we make to organisations leading similar projects across the district. By tapering this contribution off over three years as a saving we can ensure we are treating these organisations equally and provide resilience for Bicester Vision to adapt its funding streams | (0.005) | - | - | - | - | (0.005) |
| SECON233 | Existing | Economic Growth | Cutting grant to Experience Oxfordshire | Continuation of phased reduction of grant to Experience Oxfordshire | (0.005) | - | - | - | - | (0.005) |
| SADGE241 | Existing | Growth & Economy | Recharge staff time to projects | A proportion of staff time will be recharged, for the relevant financial year, to externally funded projects | 0.017 | - | - | - | - | 0.017 |
| SDMAN242 | Existing | Development Management | National agreed increase in planning fees | National agreed increase in planning fees | (0.001) | (0.001) | (0.001) | (0.001) | (0.001) | (0.005) |
| SECON241 | Existing | Economic Growth | One Year delay of Economic Prosperity Strategy | The proposal is to delay the Economic Prosperity Strategy for one year | 0.041 | - | - | - | - | 0.041 |
| SECON242 | Existing | Economic Growth | Officer time recharged to projects | Selected and proportionate recharging of revenue costs to one off grants (Bicester Garden Town Capacity fund and UKSPF) | 0.127 | - | - | - | - | 0.127 |
| EEV22503 | New | Environmental | Development Monitoring | Charging developers for extra monitoring and defect checks | (0.006) | - | - | - | - | (0.006) |
| DHW2503 | New | Housing & Wellbeing | Leisure Contracts | Reducing costs in our leisure contracts | (0.350) | - | - | - | - | (0.350) |
| EHW2501 | New | Housing & Wellbeing | Youth Activator Mileage | Using electric pool cars to save on mileage expenses and reduce carbon emissions | (0.006) | - | - | - | - | (0.006) |
| DHW2502 | New | Housing & Wellbeing | Holiday Programme | Transferring the 5 to 11 year olds' holiday programme to our leisure provider | (0.006) | - | - | - | - | (0.006) |
| ERG2504 | New | Regulatory | Health Protection and Compliance | Removing vacant job posts where possible | (0.025) | - | - | - | - | (0.025) |
| IPD2501 | Income | Planning & Development | Land Drainage | Increase Land Drainage Recovery Costs | (0.008) | - | - | - | - | (0.008) |
| IPD2502 | Income | Planning & Development | Street Naming Fees | Street Naming Fee Increase | (0.009) | - | - | - | - | (0.009) |
| IPD2504 | Income | Planning & Development | Planning Pre-applications | Review of Pre-application Service | (0.044) | - | - | - | - | (0.044) |
| IPD2505 | Income | Planning & Development | Planning Performance Agreements | Planning Performance Agreements | (0.050) | - | - | - | - | (0.050) |
| IREG2501 | Income | Regulatory | Primary Authority Scheme | Primary Authority Scheme Increase | (0.004) | - | - | - | - | (0.004) |
| | Income | Environmental | Garden Waste | Garden Waste Subscription fee increase from £49 to £59 | - | (0.207) | - | - | - | (0.207) |
| | | | | Total | (0.380) | (0.284) | (0.002) | (0.002) | (0.002) | (0.670) |

Appendix 1 - Previously agreed Service Efficiencies & Income Proposals

Figures are shown as an incremental, year on year change to the budget

| Resources | | | | | | | | | | |
|-----------------|-------------------------|----------------------|---|--|----------------|----------------|----------------|----------------|----------------|-----------------|
| Reference | Existing, New or Income | Service | Title | Description | 2025/26 (£m) | 2026/27 (£m) | 2027/28 (£m) | 2028/29 (£m) | 2029/30 (£m) | Total MTF5 (£m) |
| SELEC221 | Existing | Elections | Parish Election Charges | Review of recharges to Parishes for CDC running Parish Elections | - | (0.002) | (0.001) | - | - | (0.003) |
| SINVP221 | Existing | Property | Commercial Rents | Change in rental income from commercial council properties through contractual lease reviews | 0.020 | (0.035) | - | - | - | (0.015) |
| SCARP222 | Existing | Car Parking | Car park fees | Increase annual car parking charge of no more than 10p per hour | (0.100) | (0.100) | (0.100) | (0.100) | (0.100) | (0.500) |
| SFCOS231 | Existing | Finance | Ensure services funded through external grants reflect the costs of support services required | Through adopting a new approach to allocating any grants we receive towards services we can deliver savings on existing and future grants by ensuring they take into account all the costs of providing the services | (0.080) | - | - | - | - | (0.080) |
| SPERF231 | Existing | Performance | Performance System Contract | Our performance system contract needs to be renewed every other year | (0.010) | 0.010 | (0.010) | 0.010 | - | 0.000 |
| EFI2503 | New | Finance | Vacant Post | Removing vacant job posts where possible | (0.140) | - | - | - | - | (0.140) |
| EDI2502 | New | Digital & Innovation | Laptops as Corporate Assets | Centralising our computer budgets and making our equipment replacement programme more efficient | (0.010) | - | - | - | - | (0.010) |
| EHR2503 | New | Human Resources | Review JE system | Simplifying the job evaluation process by using one scheme instead of two | (0.010) | - | - | - | - | (0.010) |
| EHR2504 | New | Human Resources | Removal of Apprenticeship | Removing vacant job posts where possible | (0.019) | - | - | - | - | (0.019) |
| EHR2507 | New | Human Resources | Overtime Review | Reducing weekday overtime rates to standard pay | (0.081) | - | - | - | - | (0.081) |
| ELG2501 | New | Law & Governance | Electronic Sealing and Signing | Introducing a secure electronic document signing and sealing system to save time and money | (0.004) | (0.003) | - | - | - | (0.007) |
| EPROP2504 | New | Property | Facilities Management | Finding efficiencies within facilities management | (0.018) | (0.040) | (0.040) | - | - | (0.098) |
| EPROP2506 | New | Property | Community Assets | Clarifying tenant's responsibilities to avoid extra work and costs | (0.005) | - | - | - | - | (0.005) |
| EHW2504 | New | Property | Maintenance Contractor Framework | Exploring a shared contractor framework covering property, wellbeing and housing repairs to reduce costs | (0.005) | - | - | - | - | (0.005) |
| ICF2501 | Income | Customer Focus | Land Charges | Increase of new Land Charges to supplement an income which declines | (0.005) | - | - | - | - | (0.005) |
| IPROP2501,2,3,6 | Income | Property | Leasehold Management | Leasehold Management | (0.050) | - | - | - | - | (0.050) |
| | | | | Total | (0.517) | (0.170) | (0.151) | (0.090) | (0.100) | (1.028) |

| Exec Matters | | | | | | | | | | |
|-----------------|-------------------------|--------------|----------------------|--|----------------|----------------|----------------|----------------|----------------|-----------------|
| Reference | Existing, New or Income | Service | Title | Description | 2025/26 (£m) | 2026/27 (£m) | 2027/28 (£m) | 2028/29 (£m) | 2029/30 (£m) | Total MTF5 (£m) |
| EFI2501 EFI2504 | New | Exec Matters | Balance Sheet Review | After reviewing our balance sheet, using available resources to help lower borrowing costs | (0.335) | (0.009) | (0.008) | (0.008) | (0.009) | (0.369) |
| | | | | Total | (0.335) | (0.009) | (0.008) | (0.008) | (0.009) | (0.369) |
| | | | | Total Existing Efficiencies | (0.042) | (0.204) | (0.113) | (0.092) | (0.102) | (0.553) |
| | | | | Total New Efficiencies | (1.020) | (0.052) | (0.048) | (0.008) | (0.009) | (1.137) |
| | | | | Total Income | (0.170) | (0.207) | - | - | - | (0.377) |
| | | | | Total Savings | (1.232) | (0.463) | (0.161) | (0.100) | (0.111) | (2.067) |

Appendix 2 - Previously agreed Service Investments

Figures are shown as an incremental, year on year change to the budget

| Communities | | | | | | | | | | |
|-------------|--|--------------------------|---|---|--------------|----------------|----------------|--------------|--------------|-----------------|
| Reference | Existing, Savings Non-Delivery, or New | Service | Title | Description | 2025/26 (£m) | 2026/27 (£m) | 2027/28 (£m) | 2028/29 (£m) | 2029/30 (£m) | Total MTFs (£m) |
| SBCON221 | Savings Non-delivery | Building Control | Building Control fees | Increase Building Control fees | 0.001 | 0.001 | 0.001 | 0.001 | 0.001 | 0.005 |
| PWAST231 | Existing | Waste & Recycling | Additional crew and vehicle for growth of the district | Housing growth in the district is rising rapidly, which means a new waste crew is required approximately every 3 years. As this is entirely dependent on the level of housing growth we cannot predict exactly when this need will arise. We anticipate needing an additional crew in 2026/27 and we have identified an additional vehicle through the vehicle replacement programme. | - | 0.170 | - | - | - | 0.170 |
| PEMPL231 | Existing | Emergency Planning | Inflationary costs in relation to the Council's Emergency Planning responsibilities | Cherwell District Council is supported by Oxfordshire County Council to prepare for and respond to emergency incidents that may arise in the district. Cherwell District Council pays for this support through a service level agreement with the County Council which includes provision for the rise in staffing costs | 0.001 | 0.001 | 0.001 | - | - | 0.003 |
| PPPOL241 | Existing | Planning Policy | Local Plan | Increasing the budget to reflect the true costs of Local Plan Examinations - to be offset by use of other reserves | (0.125) | - | - | - | - | (0.125) |
| PAFFH242 | Existing | Affordable Housing | Change in income | Revised profile of income due to the building being vacant whilst roof is repaired | (0.066) | - | - | - | - | (0.066) |
| MOTION | Existing | Planning Policy | Kidlington & Yarnton Vision 2050 | To develop a holistic strategy for Kidlington's Infrastructure | (0.020) | - | (0.095) | - | - | (0.115) |
| MOTION | Existing | Environmental Strategies | Solar Energy Strategy | To commission a robust, research-based strategy for solar electricity production in Cherwell, in order to achieve the optimum balance of power generation by solar farms, by roof panels on new commercial and residential developments, and, crucially, their retrofitting on existing public, business and domestic buildings. | (0.020) | - | - | - | - | (0.020) |
| DEV22501 | New | Environmental | Tree Inspections | Tree inspections required more frequently to minimise risks to the public in line with legislation | 0.035 | - | - | - | - | 0.035 |
| DHW2502 | New | Housing & Wellbeing | Temporary Accommodation | Demand for temporary accommodation rising throughout this year and expected to continue into 2025/26. Placements create financial pressure. | 0.250 | - | - | - | - | 0.250 |
| DPD2503 | New | Planning & Development | Community Infrastructure Levy | One off implementation costs of CIL is required | 0.079 | (0.080) | - | - | - | (0.001) |
| DPD2504 | New | Planning & Development | Conservation Areas | To support a new programme of Conservation Area Appraisals | - | 0.020 | - | - | - | 0.020 |
| DRG2501 | New | Regulatory | Environmental Enforcement/Dog Service | The costs for the collection and kennelling of stray dogs has increased | 0.024 | - | - | - | - | 0.024 |
| Council | New | Wellbeing & Housing | Heating Hardship Fund | To support pensioners who are struggling during the cost-of-living crisis | 0.100 | (0.100) | - | - | - | - |
| Council | New | Wellbeing & Housing | Homelessness Support | Additional homelessness prevention support | 0.065 | (0.065) | - | - | - | - |
| Council | New | Planning & Development | Land Drainage Officer | To provide additional flood support | 0.051 | - | - | - | - | 0.051 |
| | | | | Total | 0.375 | (0.053) | (0.093) | 0.001 | 0.001 | 0.231 |

| Resources | | | | | | | | | | |
|-----------|--|------------------|--|---|-----------------|-----------------|-----------------|-----------------|-----------------|--------------------|
| Reference | Existing, Savings Non-Delivery, or New | Service | Title | Description | 2025/26 (£m) | 2026/27 (£m) | 2027/28 (£m) | 2028/29 (£m) | 2029/30 (£m) | Total MTF5 (£m) |
| SAV2193 | Existing | Property | Commercial Rent | Forecast change in rental incomes for Council owned properties | 0.012 | - | - | - | - | 0.012 |
| PPREV241 | Existing | Property | Asset Management Plan Condition Surveys | As part of the creation of the Council's property asset management plan condition surveys of all of the corporate and commercial property stock. To be offset by use of property reserve. | (0.075) | - | - | - | - | (0.075) |
| | Savings non-delivery | Finance | Grant Top Slicing | The Pan Regional Partnership which contributes the majority of this target grant top slice to contribute to overheads is expected to end in 24/25 | 0.075 | - | - | - | - | 0.075 |
| DFI2501 | New | Finance | Financial System Upgrade | The Unit4 financial management system requires an upgrade as the version we are currently using will cease to be supported | 0.050 | (0.050) | - | - | - | 0.000 |
| DHR2501 | New | Human Resources | Graduate Trainees x 2 | One off funding for graduate training positions | 0.075 | (0.075) | - | - | - | 0.000 |
| DLG2501 | New | Law & Governance | Committee Management System (CMS) Hosting Arrangements | Enable cloud hosting environment | 0.024 | (0.010) | - | - | - | 0.014 |
| DLG2504 | New | Law & Governance | Increase in Legal Services Budget | One additional Solicitor | 0.051 | - | - | - | - | 0.051 |
| | | | | Total | 0.212 | (0.135) | - | - | - | 0.077 |
| | | | | Total Existing Investments | (0.293) | 0.171 | (0.094) | - | - | (0.216) |
| | | | | Total New Investments | 0.804 | (0.360) | - | - | - | 0.444 |
| | | | | Total Savings Non-Delivery | 0.076 | 0.001 | 0.001 | 0.001 | 0.001 | 0.080 |
| | | | | Total | 0.587 | (0.188) | (0.093) | 0.001 | 0.001 | 0.308 |

Budget Process High Level Timetable

| Action | Date |
|--|--------------------|
| Budget and Business Planning Process Report considered by Executive | 2 September 2025 |
| Budget Consultation Published | End November 2025 |
| Budget Proposals considered by Budget Planning Committee | 9 December 2025 |
| Council Tax Reduction Scheme considered by Council | 15 December 2025 |
| Provisional Local Government Finance Settlement | Late-November 2025 |
| Council Tax Base considered by Executive | 6 January 2026 |
| Draft Treasury Management and Capital & Investment Strategies considered by Accounts, Audit and Risk Committee | 14 January 2026 |
| Draft Capital & Investment Strategies considered by Budget Planning Committee | 20 January 2026 |
| Proposed Budget from Executive | 3 February 2026 |
| Council to agree 2026/27 Budget | 23 February 2026 |

This page is intentionally left blank