

Cherwell District Council

Executive

Minutes of a meeting of the Executive held at 39 Castle Quay, Banbury, OX16 5FD, on 7 April 2026 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 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

Apologies for absence:

Councillor David Hingley, Leader of the Council & Portfolio Holder for Strategic Leadership

Councillor Tom Beckett, Portfolio Holder for Greener Communities

Councillor Rob Pattenden, Portfolio Holder for Healthy and Safe Communities

Also Present:

Councillor David Rogers, Chair, Overview and Scrutiny Committee

Councillor John Broad

Officers:

Ian Boll, Executive Director Place & Regeneration

Stephen Hinds, Executive Director Resources

Kristian Aspinall, Executive Director Neighbourhood Services

Ann Slavin, Cherwell Futures Director

Shiraz Sheikh, Assistant Director Law & Governance and Monitoring Officer

David Peckford, Assistant Director Planning

Nicola Riley, Assistant Director Wellbeing and Housing

Joanne Kaye, Head of Finance and Deputy S151 Officer

Kaimi Ithia, Head of Chief Executive's Office

Natasha Clark, Governance and Elections Manager

Officers Attending Virtually:

Mona Walsh, Assistant Director - Property

Michael Suddens, Head of Biodiversity and Climate Resilience

Mehmoona Ameen, Programme Manager

Richard Smith, Head of Housing

Steve Brown, Programme Manager – Environmental Services

124 **Declarations of Interest**

There were no declarations of interest.

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

There were no petitions or requests to address the meeting.

The Chair welcomed Councillor Rogers, Chair of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee and Deputy Leader of the Cherwell Conservative and Independent Alliance, and Councillor Broad to the meeting.

126 **Minutes**

The minutes of the meeting held on 3 March 2026 were agreed as a correct record and signed by the Chair.

127 **Chair's Announcements**

The Chair noted the tragic event that had resulted in the passing of Councillor Reeves' pet dog and, on behalf of Executive, extended condolences to Councillor Reeves and his family.

128 **Urgent Business**

There were no items of urgent business.

129 **Climate Action Plan 2026-27**

The Head of Biodiversity and Climate Resilience submitted a report to seek the Executive's approval of the Climate Action Plan for 2026-27.

In response to Executive member comments regarding the alignment of the action plan with those of other authorities and embedding in future plans in light of Local Government Reorganisation (LGE), Portfolio Holder for Neighbourhood Services explained that currently different tier of local government were responsible for collection and waste disposal, LGR offered an opportunity to remove this and align. All local authorities CDC was working with in respect of LGR should be operation at peak performance, so would be ready to go at the relevant time.

Resolved

- (1) That the Climate Action Plan (CAP) for the 2026-27 financial year be adopted.

- (2) That it be noted that following the adoption of the Climate Action Plan, Executive will receive an annual update on delivery progress.

Reasons

The Climate Action Plan 2026-27 identifies actions and projects across a range of carbon emissions sources and enabling themes.

For Cherwell District Council, each action identifies the emissions area, the goals they would contribute towards, carbon saving potential and key performance indicators to monitor delivery progress. Council actions focus on carbon emissions from fleet, property, staff activities, procurement and enabling areas including funding, governance and monitoring.

For the district area, each action identifies the emissions area, the goals they would contribute towards and key performance indicators to monitor delivery progress. District actions focus on carbon emissions from transport, households, business, community and enabling areas including planning, evidence bases, communications and engagement.

Alternative options

Option1: Do Nothing: This option is not recommended as the previous action plan covered up to the end of 2025-26 financial year only. A refreshed CAP enables stronger programme management and likelihood of realising new opportunities to deliver the Council's net zero ambitions.

Option 2: Delay Decision: This option is not recommended as this CAP covers the 2026-27 financial year only and a delay will reduce the potential impact and benefit of the plan.

Option 3: Do Not Adopt: This option is not recommended as this CAP supports the delivery of the Council's strategic priorities and covers the 2026-27 financial year only, where a delay will reduce the potential impact and benefit of the plan.

Response to the Planning Advisory Service's Planning Committee Review

The Assistant Director Planning submitted a report to advise the Executive on how the Council is responding to the Planning Advisory Service (PAS) Review of Planning Committee Decision Making.

In response to Executive member comments regarding the importance of the continuation of resident and community representation in the planning process, the Assistant Director Planning confirmed that the officer response to the recommendations would not impact on resident and public participation. The Statement of Community Involvement set out the consultation and

engagement processes that would be used in preparing planning policy documents.

Resolved

- (1) That the work in progress in responding to the PAS recommendations and advice be noted.

Reasons

The PAS review of decision-making has put a constructive spotlight on the important work of the Planning Committee and the Development Management service. Significant changes have been made in response to the recommendations of PAS and work is continuing alongside corporate transformation and service improvement. The Council remains at risk of designation in significant part because of the legacy impact of the previous monitoring period. Close monitoring and management of decision making must continue in the interest of emerging from a position of risk and to avoid a similar position in the future. Very close working between officers and Members will be critical in supporting this.

Alternative options

There are no alternatives to the recommendations presented.

131

Corporate Performance and Insight Strategy 2026/27

The Head of Chief Executive's Officer submitted a report which provided an overview of the proposed Corporate Performance and Insight Strategy 2026/27, including proposed key performance indicators and annual delivery plan milestones to be reported across the new financial year.

Resolved

- (1) That the new Corporate Performance & Insight Strategy (Appendix 1 to the report) and the Key Performance Indicators (Appendix 2 to the report) be approved.
- (2) That the Annual Delivery Plan (ADP) Milestones 2026/27 (as approved as part of the Budget) be noted.
- (3) That, having given due consideration, the Overview and Scrutiny Committee's recommendation to incorporate additional performance measures for evaluating the Castle Quay investment, ensuring that social impact, environmental outcomes and growth potential are monitored alongside the existing financial and treasury management indicators be noted.

Reasons

The proposed Corporate Performance and Insight Strategy 2026/27 offers a clear and proportionate framework that strengthens governance, transparency and informed decision-making across the Council, ensuring that performance activity is firmly aligned with corporate priorities and future requirements.

Having addressed the recommendations from the internal audit, the strategy provides a robust foundation for delivering consistent, evidence-based insight in the year ahead.

Endorsing the strategy and associated appendices is therefore recommended, as doing so will safeguard continuity, reinforce statutory and democratic accountability, and mitigate risks linked to delay, particularly in relation to planning cycles, system optimisation and preparation for potential Local Government Reorganisation.

Alternative options

Option 1: To review and approve the proposed Corporate Performance and Insight Strategy 2026/27 with appendices.

Option 2: To do nothing or delay the decision(s). This option is not recommended, as democracy deadlines need to be met and systems need to be prepared with final approved Key Performance Indicators ahead of reporting cycle for the next financial year.

132

Updated Procurement Strategy

The Assistant Director Law & Governance and Monitoring Officer submitted a report which sought approval for the new Procurement Strategy.

Resolved

(1) That the new Procurement Strategy be approved.

Reasons

It is recommended that the Executive approves the development and adoption of a revised Procurement Strategy aligned with the Procurement Act 2023 and emerging priorities for the next two years. A shorter strategy period should be endorsed to allow for regular review and timely updates in response to legislative changes, market developments, and corporate priorities. The updated strategy should strengthen governance, support consistent practice across departments, and embed enhanced Social Value and environmental requirements, ensuring that procurement continues to deliver high-quality outcomes and value for money for our community.

Alternative options

Option 1: Remain with current procurement strategy - Without updated guidance, officers may interpret PA23 reforms differently, leading to

inconsistent approaches, delays, or poor-quality procurement documentation, which can undermine effectiveness and accountability. The existing strategy may not capture new corporate priorities around Social Value, sustainability, climate action, and carbon reduction. This limits the Council's ability to maximise community benefits and deliver on its environmental responsibilities.

Option 2: A longer-term Procurement Strategy would not be a viable option, as it would risk becoming outdated and misaligned with the rapidly changing procurement landscape, particularly in light of the new requirements introduced by the Procurement Act 2023 and the ongoing developments in Social Value, sustainability, and environmental obligations. Legislative, technological, and market conditions are evolving at pace, and a fixed five-year strategy would lack the flexibility needed to respond to these changes effectively. A shorter strategy period ensures the Council can remain agile, regularly update its priorities, and maintain a governance framework that reflects modern best practice, emerging initiatives, and the Council's evolving corporate objectives.

133

Acceptance of MHCLG Large-Scale Housing Development Grant Funding

The Executive Director Place and Regeneration submitted a report which sought approval of associated budget virement, and to agree programme delivery and governance arrangements in respect of the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government (MHCLG) provision of £500,000 of specific grant funding for non-statutory feasibility work to test the strategic case for large-scale housing development. This included capacity funding, technical studies and financial modelling.

The Chair noted that Councillor Rogers had submitted questions in respect of this item. In response to comments from Councillor Rogers, the Executive Director Place and Regeneration explained that the funding allowed for non-statutory feasibility work to test the strategic case for large-scale housing development and one of the first tasks would be to look at the governance arrangements.

Resolved

- (1) That it be agreed to increase both the Regeneration and Economy income budget in recognition of the grant income and the expenditure budget for associated works.
- (2) That authority for the development of a programme in support of the grant objectives be delegated to the Executive Director for Place and Regeneration, in consultation with the Portfolio Holder for Planning.
- (3) That it be noted that procurement of specialist consultancy support and other external resources required to deliver the programme will be undertaken in accordance with the Council's constitution and

procurement procedures and that further authorisations may be required as individual commissions are scoped.

Reasons

The £500,000 MHCLG preparatory funding provides an important opportunity for the Council to lead the feasibility assessment of Heyford Park as a potential large-scale new settlement. The programme is fully externally funded with no call on Council resources, and the MoU provides a clear framework for delivery, monitoring and evaluation.

The budget virement to recognise the grant income and associated expenditure requires Executive approval. Accepting the grant and establishing the delegation and governance arrangements sought in this report will enable the programme to be delivered efficiently within the required timescales, while ensuring that procurement and other internal governance requirements are met.

Alternative options

Option 1: Do not accept the MHCLG funding.

This would mean the Council would not participate in the feasibility programme for Heyford Park as a potential new settlement. The £500,000 grant would not be drawn down. The Council would lose the opportunity to shape the evidence base and strategic case for one of the largest development sites in the district. Given the scale of the planning application already submitted, there is a strong case for the Council to be actively engaged in understanding the infrastructure implications and delivery options. This option is not recommended.

Option 2: Accept the funding but defer programme commencement until later in the financial year.

This would delay the start of feasibility work, creating a risk of not meeting MHCLG's delivery timetable and the reasonable endeavours requirement to spend in a timely manner. Given the MoU was only signed on 12-13 March 2026, the programme timeline is already compressed. This option is not recommended.

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 provision 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.

135 **Outline Business Case – Digital Planning Improvement Programme**

The Executive Director Place & Regeneration submitted an exempt report which sought agreement of the outline Business Case – Digital Planning Improvement Programme.

Resolved

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

Reasons

As set out in the exempt Minutes.

Alternative options

As set out in the exempt Minutes.

136 **Environmental Services Operational Transformation and Improvement**

The Executive Director Neighbourhood Services submitted an exempt report to seek Executive agreement to progress the Environmental (Operational) Transformation Programme to Full Business Case.

Resolved

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

Reasons

As set out in the exempt Minutes.

Alternative options

As set out in the exempt Minutes.

137 **Outline Business Case: Customer Experience Strategy, Customer Front Door**

The Executive Director Resources submitted an exempt report which sought agreement of the outline business case: Customer Experience Strategy, Customer Front Door.

Resolved

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

Reasons

As set out in the exempt Minutes.

Alternative options

As set out in the exempt Minutes.

138 **Approval to Appoint a Contract for the Provision of a Responsive Repairs and Maintenance Service**

The Assistant Director Wellbeing and Housing submitted an exempt report which sought approval to award a contract for the reactive repair and maintenance of Council owned and managed assets.

Resolved

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

Reasons

As set out in the exempt Minutes.

Alternative options

As set out in the exempt Minutes.

Property Management Contract, Castle Quay Centre, Banbury

The Assistant Director Property submitted an exempt report in respect of the award of contract for the provision of Property Management Services at Castle Quay Shopping Centre and Lock 29, Banbury, following completion of the final stage of the competitive procurement process.

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.

The meeting ended at 8.11 pm

Chair:

Date: