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Cherwell District Council

Special Council

Minutes of a meeting of a Special Council held at 39 Castle Quay, Banbury,
OX16 5FD, on 10 November 2025 at 6.30 pm

Present:

Councillor Dorothy Walker (Chair)

Councillor Fiaz Ahmed
Councillor Tom Beckett
Councillor Rebecca Biegel
Councillor Gordon Blakeway
Councillor Besmira Brasha
Councillor John Broad
Councillor Phil Chapman
Councillor Mark Cherry
Councillor Becky Clarke MBE
Councillor Gemma Coton
Councillor Dr Isabel Creed
Councillor Andrew Crichton
Councillor Dr Henry Elugwu
Councillor Ian Harwood
Councillor David Hingley
Councillor Frank Ideh
Councillor Simon Lytton
Councillor Kieron Mallon
Councillor Nicholas Mawer
Councillor Fiona Mawson
Councillor Lesley McLean
Councillor Zoe McLernon
Councillor Ian Middleton
Councillor Julian Nedelcu
Councillor Robert Parkinson
Councillor Lynne Parsons
Councillor Rob Pattenden
Councillor Chris Pruden
Councillor Edward Fraser Reeves
Councillor David Rogers
Councillor Alisa Russell
Councillor Les Sibley
Councillor Dr Kerrie Thornhill
Councillor Dom Vaitkus
Councillor Amanda Watkins
Councillor John Willett
Councillor Douglas Webb
Councillor Barry Wood

Apologies for absence:

Councillor Nigel Simpson
Councillor Nick Cotter
Councillor Harry Knight
Councillor Dr Chukwudi Okeke
Councillor Linda Ward

Also Present Virtually:

Councillor Chris Brant
Councillor Grace Conway-Murray
Councillor Donna Ford

Officers:

Gordon Stewart, Chief Executive
Ian Boll, Executive Director Place & Regeneration
Stephen Hinds, Executive Director Resources
Nicola Riley, Interim Executive Director Neighbourhood Services
Michael Furness, Assistant Director Finance & S151 Officer
Shiraz Sheikh, Assistant Director Law & Governance and Monitoring Officer
Aaron Hetherington, Principal Officer - Electoral Services Lead

42 **Declarations of Interest**

There were no declarations of interest.

43 **Communications**

Remembrance Day

The Chair advised that Members and staff were invited to assemble in the Council Chamber on Tuesday 11 November at 10:30am.

Councillor Pattenden would deliver a call to order and introduction.
Community Liaison Team Leader, Michal Gogut, would talk about his involvement in the reservists, including his squadron's role in the Second World War.

At 11am, an air horn would mark the beginning of a two-minute silence. The air horn would sound again at two minutes past eleven. Councillor Pattenden will conclude by reading the Kohima Epitaph.

Cllr Reeves

Following on from Councillor Mallon at our last Council meeting, on behalf of Council, the Chair congratulated to Councillor Reeves and his wife on the recent arrival of their daughter.

Chair's Charity Lunch

The Chair referred to correspondence that had been sent to Members regarding her charity lunch, which was taking place on 30 November. The Chair commented she looked forward to seeing as many Members as possible at the lunch, which would raise funds for her charities, Homeless Oxfordshire and Asylum Welcome.

Meeting Etiquette

The Chair reminded Members that all requests to address the meeting should be through the Chair. Members should remain in their seat during items and, if needed, she would adjourn the meeting to allow for a comfort break at a suitable point.

Members' Pigeon Holes

Members were reminded to check their pigeon hole and take any post.

44 Requests to Address the Meeting

There were no requests to address the meeting.

45 Local Government Reorganisation - Full Proposal

The Executive Director of Resources submitted a report that summarised the council's Full Proposal for Local Government Reform (LGR) in Oxfordshire, which was due to be submitted to the Government on 28 November 2025, subject to Executive approval at the Special Executive 13 November 2025.

The Full Proposal made the case for two unitary councils underpinned by a robust options appraisal and thorough financial analysis. Two unitary councils were proposed to help ensure the future of local government in Oxfordshire was cost effective, simplified and strengthened whilst unlocking further devolution for the county. Council was invited to debate the matters within the report and provide comments to Executive for their consideration.

In introducing the report, the Leader advised Council that the report and the proposal had been brought to the Special Council meeting to allow all Members of the Council the opportunity to consider and comment before the decision was taken at the Special Executive.

In considering the report, Members commented that it was vital that the new structure, when in place, empowered parish councils, whose role would become increasingly important with a larger upper tier council. Members must also be supported to better serve parish councils and residents, ensuring local voices remained central to decision-making.

Members commented that a two-unitary authority model would help keep services more local, supporting the most deprived communities, and enabling a more holistic approach to housing. Local communities expected the council to focus on and operate within their area; as a result, the two-unitary authority model was considered the most appropriate option.

Members raised concerns about whether the proposed governance model would ensure fair distribution of resources, protect rural communities, and prevent further overdevelopment resulting from Oxford's unmet housing needs.

It was highlighted that partnership working remained a key priority, and consideration must be given to the existing Oxford City Housing Revenue Account.

Members noted that the Secretary of State could implement the proposal with or without modification and queried the implications if the Secretary of State decided to take no action, and how would this affect the future of the proposal?

Members raised concerns regarding ribbon development, the influence of developer-led plans versus councillor-led local plans, and the potential for central government control over planning and council operations, especially in relation to the future of the green belt.

Members raised concerns that with the inclusion of Oxford City the future unitary would be dominated by Oxford City, which would result in market towns being disadvantaged and concerns over housing growth being dominated by the City.

Members thanked the Executive and officers for the significant amount of work undertaken in developing the two unitary proposal.

Resolved

- (1) That the Executive report of 13 November 2025 be noted and comments be provided for Executive to consider as set out in the Annex to the Minutes (as set out in the Minute Book).
- (2) That it be noted that Executive is asked to approve the Full Proposal for Local Government Reorganisation across Oxfordshire at its meeting on 13 November, and in doing so, endorse Option 2: A two-unitary model comprising: One unitary authority covering the boundaries of Cherwell District Council, West Oxfordshire District Council, and Oxford City Council, with the working title 'Oxford & Shires'; and a second unitary authority covering South Oxfordshire District Council, Vale of White Horse District Council, and West Berkshire Council, with the working title 'Ridgeway'.

The meeting ended at 7.33 pm

Chair:

Date:

Supplement to Special Executive Report – 13 November 2025

Special Council noted the report of 13 November 2025 and made comments for Executive consideration.

It was noted that:

- Having given due consideration, Members expressed support for Option 2 as the preferred way forward.
- Members noted their thanks to the Executive and officers for the significant amount of work undertaken in developing this proposal.
- Members commented that it is vital that the new structure, when in place, empowers parish councils, whose role will become increasingly important as the council grows. Members must also be supported to better serve parish councils and residents, ensuring local voices remain central to decision-making.
- Members commented that local communities expect a council that operates within and prioritises their area; therefore, the two-unitary authority model is regarded as the most suitable approach.
- Members commented that a two-unitary authority model would help keep services more local, supports the most deprived communities, and enables a more holistic approach to housing.
- Members commented that partnership working remains a key priority, and consideration must be given to the existing Oxford City Housing Revenue Account.
- Members raised concerns about whether the proposed governance model would ensure fair distribution of resources, protect rural communities, and prevent further overdevelopment resulting from Oxford's unmet housing needs.
- Members noted that the Secretary of State may implement the proposal with or without modification. What are the implications if the Secretary of State decides to take no action, and how would this affect the future of the proposal?
- Members raised concerns regarding ribbon development, the influence of developer-led plans versus councillor-led local plans, and the potential for central government control over planning and council operations, especially in relation to the future of the green belt.
- Members raised concerns that market towns will be disadvantaged through inclusion of Oxford City and concerns over housing growth from inclusion of Oxford City and therefore raising further concerns that council will be dominated by the City.

Shiraz Sheikh

Assistant Director of Law and Governance and Monitoring Officer