



Cherwell
DISTRICT COUNCIL
NORTH OXFORDSHIRE

Annual Report 2023 – 2024

**Proudly serving the Cherwell
district for 50 years
1974-2024**

Foreword

Your district council is hard at work making north Oxfordshire a great place to live, work and play.

Every year we offer you this snapshot of how key public services are running in your area, and of the progress we're making towards our long term strategic goals for the district. We run services including waste collection, street cleansing services, housing, planning, and enforcement. It's no secret that councils everywhere are operating in challenging financial circumstances, impacted by inflation and the increased cost of living. But we are a prudent and well run council and have maintained a high level of performance for north Oxfordshire residents, while navigating these challenges with a balanced budget.

We are determined to deliver housing to meet the community's needs, and our recent successes include the launch of a tenants' charter, the delivery of grant funding to improve the condition of privately rented homes, and the start of work on site at Town Centre House, which is being refurbished for use as social housing. Cherwell supports environmental sustainability, and the year just gone saw extraordinary success as coffee loving residents embraced a new coffee pod recycling scheme, the business waste service continued to grow, and we won funding to plant new, carbon sequestering woodlands.

Our work to support the district's economy and urban centres reached some crucial milestones in the past year. Our work revitalising Bicester Market Square is underway, and we ran a key survey on the future of Banbury town centre, seeing a massive response from the public. We also had a fantastic response to a survey of local businesses, helping steer our plans for future economic growth.

I am also really pleased that, even against a challenging financial backdrop, the council is sticking to its vision of doing more for you, leading the way with initiatives designed to make Cherwell a district where it's easy to make healthy lifestyle choices.

We have continued to invest in the health and wellbeing of your communities; we cast a wide net with a series of investments and leisure programmes that offers something for people at all stages of life.

For youngsters we delivered scores of new bikes to bike libraries at primary schools in the district. And our Move Together programme is a standout example of best practice, with the highest take-up in the county on this programme which offers tailored exercise programmes to people with long-term health conditions.

Read on for more information about the good work we are doing with your council tax money and to learn more about the real impact our work is having in your area.

Gordon Stewart
Chief Executive Officer

Our Business Plan 2023 – 2024

We are proud to celebrate our 50th year serving the Cherwell district. Established on April 1, 1974, Cherwell District Council was formed by merging four local districts under the Local Government Act 1972.

Our 2023/24 business plan includes the following four priorities:

Housing that meets your needs

Promote affordable, green housing and minimum rental standards. Prevent homelessness with partners. Support vulnerable residents. Prepare the Local Plan.



Supporting environmental sustainability

Achieve carbon net zero by 2030. Promote the green economy. Reduce waste and improve air quality with partners.



An enterprising economy with strong and vibrant local centres

Support business growth. Partner for skills and innovation. Promote district as a visitor destination and attract investment. Ensure business compliance and best practices.



Healthy, resilient, and engaged communities

Encourage active lifestyles and wellbeing. Develop leisure services. Support community and diversity. Address health inequality. Reduce crime and antisocial behaviour.



Our 2023 - 2024 performance

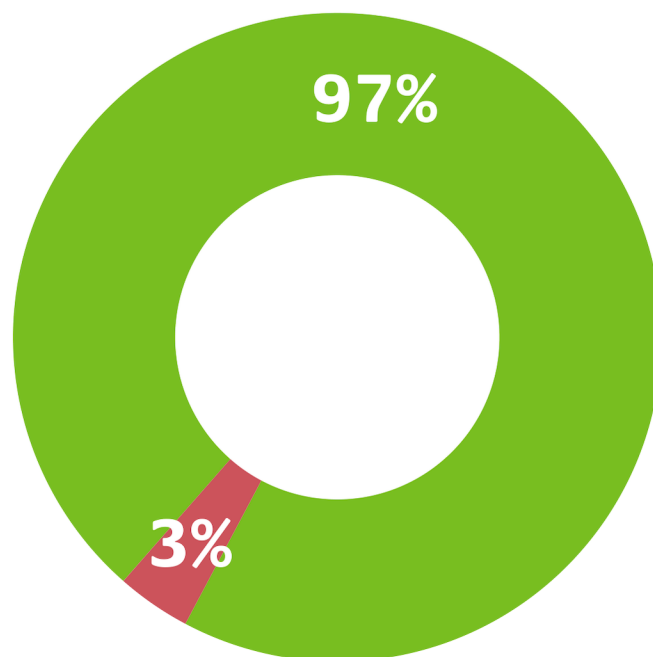
Every year, we look to serve you better. This includes emptying your bins, managing your planning applications, handling housing benefit requests, keeping your communities clean and tidy, and delivering crucial day-to-day services.

This report highlights some notable accomplishments from the past year that are on top of our regular work.

We assess progress based on our four key business plan priorities, measured through 27 performance goals.

In 2023/24, All but one of the 27 Business Plan measures achieved their year-end target or reported within tolerance.

The measure that missed its target for the year was “Net Additional Housing Completions to meet Cherwell Needs”, reporting a final figure of 792, which is 70% of the set target for the year; this result has been heavily affected by the national context, circumstances such as inflation, high building costs, and high interest rates resulting in lower than expected completions.



Housing that meets your needs

Below are some of the past year's achievements for this strategic priority.



Prevented 215 households from becoming homeless.

Secured over £400,000 funding to support low-income residents with housing needs. Current tenants were involved in shaping a new charter and services provided by the landlord.



Our Cherwell Bond Scheme assisted landlords in improving homes for tenant properties with grants, tenant support, property viewings, and a deposit bond equivalent to 10 weeks of rent.

Launched a new strategy to address homelessness and rough sleeping in our district for the next 5 years.



Delivered 266 affordable homes, 38% more than last year

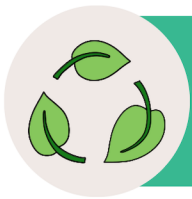
Improved 138 homes through enforcement to ensure homeowners and landlords provide safe places for people to live.



Processed new housing benefit claims in 16 days, two days quicker than our target average for the year.

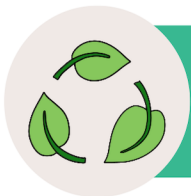
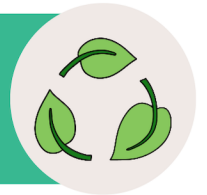
Supporting environmental sustainability

Below are some of the past year's achievements for this strategic priority.



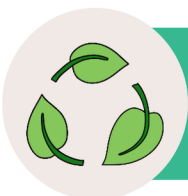
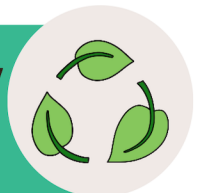
Achieved our objective to reach 15% of electric vehicles in our fleet by the end of 2023/24.

Our crews emptied 8.5 million containers, collecting a total of 60,652 tonnes of waste, 4% more than last year, whilst consuming 2% less fuel than last year



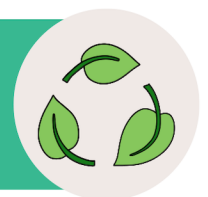
Recycled 53% of waste collected, 10% more than England's average.

Secured government funding to increase tree-cover in the district by creating a tiny forest at Longford Park and a community orchard at Burnehyll Community Woodland.



Our new coffee pod recycling scheme recycled 1,048,397 pods (16.4 tonnes)

Proposed a new Climate Action Plan for Cherwell to achieve carbon net zero by 2030 and support the district's carbon reduction goals.



An enterprising economy with strong and vibrant local centres

Below are some of the past year's achievements for this strategic priority.



Our Banbury Vision 2050 survey to shape the future of Banbury town centre, registered an unprecedented 2,729 responses from our residents, business owners and visitors.

Plans launched to revitalise Bicester Market Square with £4.25m funding from the council's capital budget and a government grant for infrastructure.



Over 750 district businesses took part in the survey. 37% reported improved performance in the past year, with the same percentage expecting this trend to continue in 2024.

The Business Needs Survey results will guide projects for the 2024-25 UK Shared Prosperity Fund and Rural England Prosperity Fund, emphasising business support, decarbonisation, and green skills training.



Launched a consultation to seek residents feedback on our Local Plan Review 2040 first draft.

Healthy, resilient, and engaged communities

Below are some of the past year's achievements for this strategic priority.



Our Move Together programme benefited over 1,800 participants improving their physical and mental health.

Donated £10,600 to Alexandra House of Joy, to help the facility to keep offering support for adults with severe learning disabilities.



Assisted residents by upgrading the least energy-efficient homes to alleviate cost-of-living pressures, combat fuel poverty, and lower energy expenses.

Attracted 4,180 residents to our You Move programme to enjoy free and reduced-price physical activities.



Developed Everyone's Wellbeing Strategy for a healthier and happier Cherwell 2024-2028

Implemented Cost-of-Living Action plan with grant schemes for food groups, expanded Warm spaces network, updated "Who can Help?" booklet, and distributed it through partner organisations.



Encouraged 3,187 children to become more active through our Youth Activators program.

Welcomed 1,395,640 visitors to our leisure centres, 3% more than the forecasted for the year.



How we spend your money



The council reported a balanced financial position for 2023/2024, after proposed transfers to reserves of £4.461m

Where did our funding come from?

Government grants	Council Tax	Business rates	New Homes Bonus
£0.307m	£9.306m	£17.910m	£1.625

Totalling £29.148m in funding for last year.

We monitor our ongoing budget position to enable the Executive to make timely decisions on any required changes. Through this robust process, we have demonstrated that we are fiscally responsible and, with this strong end-of-year financial position, have put us in a good place for the year to come.

Where did we spend our funding?

Here is where we spent our funding and what services each directorate covers:

Chief Executive Directorate	Resources	Communities	Executive Matters
Human Resources Organisational Development Wellbeing & Housing Customer Focus	Finance Legal & Democratic Digital & IT Property	Planning & Development Growth & Economy Environmental & Regulatory Service	Includes corporate costs and income, including pension and interest payments
£5.462m	£5.818m	£9.938m	£3.469m

Proposed transfers to reserves of £4.461m

Customer service excellence

Providing quality customer service for all our residents is another priority.



In 2023/24 our Customer Services officers answered:
76,435 Phone calls
68,744 Emails

Our officers achieved 92% of customer satisfaction with the service received.



Help us to help you

We are committed to delivering the best service possible and ensuring our services are accessible to all. Doing things online is much cheaper and means we can spend more on providing essential services, so wherever possible, please make use of our 24/7 online services, which can be found at: [cherwell.gov.uk](https://www.cherwell.gov.uk)

Here, you can access a range of services and can Pay, Apply, Report and Book

If you cannot use our online services, email customer.service@cherwell-dc.gov.uk or call 01295 227001.

Alternatively, please write to us at Cherwell District Council, Bodicote House, Bodicote, Banbury, Oxfordshire OX15 4AA.

You can find your ward councillor at [cherwell.gov.uk/findmycouncillor](https://www.cherwell.gov.uk/findmycouncillor)

Follow us on social media



[@CherwellDistrictCouncil](https://www.facebook.com/CherwellDistrictCouncil)



[@Cherwellcouncil](https://twitter.com/Cherwellcouncil)



[@cherwelldistrictcouncil](https://www.instagram.com/cherwelldistrictcouncil)