



Council Minute Book

Monday 21 July 2025

Executive

1. Minutes of meeting Monday 2 December 2024 of Executive (Pages 5 - 12)
2. Minutes of meeting Thursday 5 December 2024 of Executive (Pages 13 - 18)
3. Minutes of meeting Monday 6 January 2025 of Executive (Pages 19 - 26)
4. Minutes of meeting Monday 3 February 2025 of Executive (Pages 27 - 34)
5. Minutes of meeting Monday 3 March 2025 of Executive (Pages 35 - 42)
6. Minutes of meeting Wednesday 19 March 2025 of Executive (Pages 43 - 46)
7. Minutes of meeting Monday 7 April 2025 of Executive (Pages 47 - 52)
8. Minutes of meeting Tuesday 10 June 2025 of Executive (Pages 53 - 62)
- Executive Portfolio Holder Decisions (Pages 63 – 64)

Accounts Audit and Risk Committee

9. Minutes of meeting Wednesday 20 November 2024 of Accounts, Audit and Risk Committee (Pages 65 - 72)
10. Minutes of meeting Wednesday 15 January 2025 of Accounts, Audit and Risk Committee (Pages 73 - 78)
11. Minutes of meeting Wednesday 19 March 2025 of Accounts, Audit and Risk Committee (Pages 79 - 86)
12. Minutes of meeting Wednesday 21 May 2025 of Accounts, Audit and Risk Committee (Pages 87 - 88)
13. Minutes of meeting Wednesday 28 May 2025 of Accounts, Audit and Risk Committee (Pages 89 - 96)

Budget Planning Committee

14. Minutes of meeting Tuesday 10 December 2024 of Budget Planning Committee (Pages 97 - 102)

- 15. Minutes of meeting Tuesday 21 January 2025 of Budget Planning Committee (Pages 103 - 106)
- 16. Minutes of meeting Tuesday 4 March 2025 of Budget Planning Committee (Pages 107 - 110)
- 17. Minutes of meeting Wednesday 21 May 2025 of Budget Planning Committee (Pages 111 - 112)

General Licensing Committee

- 18. Minutes of meeting Wednesday 21 May 2025 of General Licensing Committee (Pages 113 - 114)

Licensing Acts Committee

- 19. Minutes of meeting Wednesday 21 May 2025 of Licensing Acts Committee (Pages 115 - 116)

Overview and Scrutiny Committee

- 20. Minutes of meeting Tuesday 26 November 2024 of Overview and Scrutiny Committee (Pages 117 - 122)
- 21. Minutes of meeting Wednesday 4 December 2024 of Overview and Scrutiny Committee (Pages 123 - 126)
- 22. Minutes of meeting Tuesday 28 January 2025 of Overview and Scrutiny Committee (Pages 127 - 134)
- 23. Minutes of meeting Tuesday 11 March 2025 of Overview and Scrutiny Committee (Pages 135 - 140)
- 24. Minutes of meeting Tuesday 18 March 2025 of Overview and Scrutiny Committee (Pages 141 - 148)
- 25. Minutes of meeting Tuesday 3 June 2025 of Overview and Scrutiny Committee (Pages 149 - 152)
- 26. Minutes of meeting Tuesday 17 June 2025 of Overview and Scrutiny Committee (Pages 153 - 156)

Personnel Committee

- 27. Minutes of meeting Wednesday 27 November 2024 of Personnel Committee (Pages 157 - 160)
- 28. Minutes of meeting Wednesday 26 March 2025 of Personnel Committee (Pages 161 - 164)
- 29. Minutes of meeting Wednesday 21 May 2025 of Personnel Committee (Pages 165 - 166)

30. Minutes of meeting Wednesday 25 June 2025 of Personnel Committee (Pages 167 - 170)

Standards Committee

31. Minutes of meeting Wednesday 21 May 2025 of The Standards Committee (Pages 171 - 172)

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Cherwell District Council

Executive

Minutes of a meeting of the Executive held at Bodicote House, Bodicote, Banbury, Oxon OX15 4AA, on 2 December 2024 at 6.30 pm

Present:

Councillor David Hingley (Leader of the Council & Portfolio Holder for Strategic Leadership) (Chairman)
Councillor Lesley McLean (Deputy Leader of the Council and Portfolio Holder for Finance, Property & Regeneration) (Vice-Chairman)
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 Parkinson, Portfolio Holder for Safer Communities
Councillor Rob Pattenden, Portfolio Holder for Healthy Communities

Also Present Virtually:

Councillor Andrew Crichton, Deputy Leader of the Opposition, Labour Group
Councillor Dr Isabel Creed, Chair, Overview and Scrutiny Committee

Officers:

Gordon Stewart, Chief Executive
Ian Boll, Corporate Director Communities
Stephen Hinds, Corporate Director Resources and Transformation
Michael Furness, Assistant Director Finance & S151 Officer
Shiraz Sheikh, Assistant Director Law & Governance and Monitoring Officer
David Peckford, Assistant Director Planning & Development
Jacey Scott, Head of Revenues and Benefits
Natasha Clark, Governance and Elections Manager

Officers Attending Virtually:

Nicola Riley, Assistant Director Housing and Wellbeing
Philippa Tatham, Economic Growth Officer

65

Declarations of Interest

There were no declarations of interest.

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

There were no petitions or requests to address the meeting.

The Chairman welcomed Councillor Crichton, Deputy Leader of the Opposition, Labour Group, and Councillor Creed, Chair of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee, to the meeting and invited them to indicate if they wished to speak on any item.

67 **Minutes**

The minutes of the meeting held on 4 November 2024 were agreed as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

68 **Chairman's Announcements**

The Chairman advised that he and the Deputy Leader had visited Castle Quay earlier that day to see the fitting out of the new council offices. It had been an interesting visit and they were pleased to see everything was on track.

69 **Urgent Business**

There were no items of urgent business.

70 **Public Realm Strategy Frameworks**

The Assistant Director Growth and Economy submitted a report to seek approval of the Public Realm Strategy Frameworks for Banbury, Bicester and Kidlington by Executive for inclusion within the evidence base for the Local Plan and as guidance for the Area Oversight Groups.

In introducing the report, the Portfolio Holder for Finance, Property and Regeneration explained that the Frameworks were presented as high level policy documents. The Frameworks' suggested public realm interventions were therefore aspirational at this stage and did not have funding allocated to them, with the exception of the three projects which were currently being developed for (i) Bicester Market Place; (ii) Bicester Bure Place and (iii) Kidlington High Street.

Resolved

- (1) That the inclusion of the Public Realm Strategy Frameworks for Banbury, Bicester and Kidlington as part of the evidence base for the Local Plan and as guidance for the Area Oversight Groups be approved.

- (2) That delegated authority for the Assistant Director for Growth and Economy, in consultation with the Portfolio Holder for Finance, Property and Regeneration, to arrange the final presentation of the Frameworks and make any necessary minor amendments to it, including any typographic or formatting errors prior to publication, be agreed.

Reasons

The Public Realm Strategy Frameworks for Banbury, Bicester and Kidlington (urban centres) identify the constraints and opportunities facing Cherwell's three urban centres and propose a number of key public realm interventions for each urban centre.

Executive's approval of the Strategy Frameworks will enable the Frameworks to sit as guidance within the evidence base for the draft Local Plan 2042 and act as guidance for the Area Oversight Groups, with the Frameworks' suggested interventions for public realm improvements to be considered for inclusion in the development of the future Area Plans for Banbury; Bicester; and the Four Parishes area (Kidlington, Water Eaton, Begbroke and Yarnton).

Alternative options

Option 1: The Council could decide not to approve the Frameworks for use as guidance. If this option is chosen, the Frameworks would not be approved as Executive guidance and added to the evidence base for the Local Plan Review, nor would the Frameworks be used as guidance by the Area Oversight Groups.

71

Proposed Cherwell Local Plan 2042

The Assistant Director Planning and Development submitted a report to seek approval of the Proposed Cherwell Local Plan 2042 for the purpose of inviting representations.

The Chairman advised that the Overview and Scrutiny Committee (OSC) had considered the proposed Cherwell Local Plan 2042 at their extraordinary meeting on 12 November and scheduled meeting on 26 November. The Committee had adjourned their consideration of the proposed Cherwell Local Plan 2042 to 6pm on Wednesday 4 December. As it was extremely important for Executive to have all comments from OSC prior to their own deliberations, the Chairman proposed that Executive consideration of the proposed Cherwell Local Plan 2042 be adjourned to 1pm on Thursday 5 December. The proposal was duly seconded by Councillor Conway and, on being put to the vote, agreed unanimously.

Resolved

- (1) That consideration of this item be adjourned to 1pm on Thursday 5 December 2024, due to adjournment of Overview & Scrutiny

Committee (OSC) to 6pm on Wednesday 4 December 2024 to enable Executive to consider comments from OSC.

72 **Local Development Scheme**

The Assistant Director Planning and Development submitted a report to seek approval of an updated Local Development Scheme (LDS) to produce the Council's key planning policy documents.

The Chairman advised that as the meeting had adjourned consideration of the proposed Cherwell Local Plan 2042, as the Local Development Scheme was linked to this item, he proposed that Executive consideration of the Local Development Scheme also be adjourned to 1pm on Thursday 5 December. The proposal was duly seconded by Councillor Conway and, on being put to the vote, agreed unanimously.

Resolved

- (1) That consideration of the Local Development Scheme (LDS) be adjourned to 1pm on Thursday 5 December 2024, due to the adjournment of Executive consideration of the proposed Cherwell Local Plan 2042, as the LDS was linked to the proposed Cherwell Local Plan 2042.

73 **Infrastructure Funding Statement 2023-24**

The Assistant Director Planning and Development submitted a report to seek approval of the Council's Infrastructure Funding Statement 2023-24 for publication by 31 December 2024.

Resolved

- (1) That the Infrastructure Funding Statement 2023-2024 be approved for publication by 31 December 2024 subject to any final changes considered to be necessary by the Assistant Director – Planning and Development to secure accuracy in consultation with the Portfolio Holder for Planning and Development Management.

Reasons

The publication of an Infrastructure Funding Statement (IFS) is a statutory requirement that provides transparency and accessibility to information about developer contributions secured by the Council through Section 106 Agreements.

The report has been produced in collaboration with Financial Services and the information contained within it is considered to represent the most robust data available at this time.

Alternative options

Option 1: Not to bring forward and Infrastructure Funding Statement. This is not a lawful option and would leave the Council in breach of its statutory duty.

Option 2: Seek review of the key statistics and proposed Infrastructure Funding Statement. Officers consider that this is not required as the information is the most accurate and available at this time.

74

Temporary Accommodation Provision

The Assistant Director Wellbeing and Housing submitted a report to propose the utilisation of 15 rooms at Whately Hall, Banbury for use as temporary accommodation, continuing the current provision.

Resolved

- (1) That the extension of the continuous booking of 15 rooms at the Whately Hall for use as temporary accommodation until the end of the financial year be approved.

Reasons

Extending the agreement with the Whately Hall would assist the Council in meeting the temporary accommodation responsibilities it has to homeless households until other options outlined within the report become available. Households are currently placed in the accommodation, so extending would give some certainty to those households in the short term regarding the location of their placement.

Alternative options

Option 1: To end the arrangement with the Whately Hall and end block bookings

This is an option. It would however not lead to an overall reduction in hotel placements. It would also mean that the households currently placed in the 15 rooms would require immediate rehousing in establishments that are not identified and would have to be sourced within the commercial hotel market. It would also not allow time for other options to become available. This is rejected.

Option 2: To end the arrangement with the Whately Hall and explore alternative options for a block booking.

The Council has explored making a block booking with commercial hotels within the last 3 months. The offer at the Whately Hall is considered favourably for the reasons outlined in the report. A wider procurement exercise could take place to ensure that the Council is certain it is receiving best value. Due to the fact that residents are placed at the hotel currently and due to the other factors outlined in the report, this is rejected at this point, but

will be reviewed again within the next 3 months following a review of demand and supply or temporary accommodation.

It is anticipated that Town Centre House will be available from February 2025, based on current demand levels being maintained, it is not anticipated that the provision at Whately Hall will be required when Town Centre House is available.

Option 3: End the arrangement with the Whately Hall and do nothing. If the Council did nothing, 15 households would require immediate rehoming in alternative temporary accommodation. This is highly likely to be another hotel. Many of these households would be housed in other hotels within Cherwell, but depending on availability, some may have to be housed out of the area. The issues with this approach for the Council and the households within temporary accommodation are outlined within the background of the report.

75 **Council Tax Reduction Scheme 2025/26**

The Assistant Director Finance (Section 151 Officer) submitted a report to enable members to consider the proposed banded scheme for Council Tax Reduction (CTR) for 2025/26.

Resolved

- (1) That the report, and financial implications for the Council be noted.
- (2) That the comments of Budget Planning Committee, which endorsed and recommended and unchanged Scheme, be noted.
- (3) That Full Council be recommended to agree to retain the current scheme for 2025/2026.

Reasons

The current scheme is understood by customers and has enabled them to budget for their council tax payments. One of the main advantages of the banded scheme is that it reduces the number of changes that the customer will experience enabling more effective personal budgeting.

Budget Planning Committee considered the proposed CTRS scheme for 2025/26 at its meeting 16 July 2024 it resolved that the Executive be recommended to agree that the current scheme (adjusted for inflationary purposes) be retained for 2025/26.

Alternative options

Option 1: The alternative option is to undertake a review of the current CTRS scheme but the rational for not taking this course of action is that the current scheme is understood by customers and has enabled them to budget for their

council tax payments. The current scheme has also been recommended by the Budget Planning Committee.

76 **Finance Monitoring Report October 2024**

The Assistant Director Finance (Section 151 Officer) submitted a report which updated Executive on the council's forecast financial position as at the end of the October 2024.

Resolved

- (1) That the council's financial management report as at the end of October 2024 be noted.
- (2) That the movements in reserves requested as set out in the annex top the Minutes (as set out in the Minute Book) be approved.
- (3) That the reprofiling of capital projects beyond 2024/25 and the subsequent update to the programme budget for this financial year 2024/25 be approved.
- (4) That the reduction in capital budget for S106 Development of Activity Play Zones from £0.600m to £0.142m to reflect the actual cost to the Council be approved and it be noted that the remaining £0.458m is to be met by the Football Foundation.

Reasons

The report updates the Executive on the projected year-end financial position of the council for 2024/25. 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 financial position up to the end of March 2025, therefore there are no alternative options to consider.

77 **Adjournment of Meeting**

Having concluded the items of business, in line with the resolutions under items 8 and 9 (Minutes 71 and 72), at 7.20pm the Chairman adjourned the meeting to 1pm on Thursday 5 December for consideration of the Proposed Cherwell Local Plan 2042 and Local Development Scheme.

Chairman:

Date:

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Cherwell District Council

Executive

Minutes of the reconvened 2 December 2024 meeting of the Executive held at Bodicote House, Bodicote, Banbury, Oxon OX15 4AA, on 5 December 2024 at 1.00 pm

Present:

Councillor David Hingley (Leader of the Council & Portfolio Holder for Strategic Leadership) (Chairman)
Councillor Lesley McLean (Deputy Leader of the Council and Portfolio Holder for Finance, Property & Regeneration) (Vice-Chairman)
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 Parkinson, Portfolio Holder for Safer Communities
Councillor Rob Pattenden, Portfolio Holder for Healthy Communities

Also Present:

Councillor John Broad
Councillor David Rogers

Also Present Virtually:

Councillor Dr Isabel Creed, Chair, Overview and Scrutiny Committee

Officers:

Ian Boll, Corporate Director Communities
Michael Furness, Assistant Director Finance & S151 Officer
Shiraz Sheikh, Assistant Director Law & Governance and Monitoring Officer
David Peckford, Assistant Director Planning & Development
Christina Cherry, Planning Policy, Conservation & Design Manager
Maria Dopazo, Principal Planning Policy Officer
Natasha Clark, Governance and Elections Manager

Officers Attending Virtually:

Stephen Hinds, Corporate Director Resources and Transformation
Holly Jones, Planning Policy Officer

78 **Reconvening of Meeting**

The Chairman welcomed Members and officer to the reconvened meeting.

79 **Proposed Cherwell Local Plan 2042**

The Assistant Director Planning and Development submitted a report to seek approval of the Proposed Cherwell Local Plan 2042 for the purpose of inviting representations.

In introducing the report, the Portfolio Holder for Planning and Development thanked the Assistant Director Planning and Development, Planning Policy, Conservation and Design Manager and all officers who had contributed to the proposed Cherwell Plan 2042 and all accompanying documents.

The Chair of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee, Councillor Dr Creed, addressed Executive to report on the deliberations of the Committee which had considered the proposed Cherwell Local Plan 2042 in detail at their extraordinary 12 November meeting and 26 November meeting, adjourned to 3 December. The Committee had agreed comments and recommendations to Executive on the content of the Plan and recommended Executive approve the proposed Cherwell Local Plan 2042 for the purpose of inviting representations under Regulations 19 and 20 of The Town and Country Planning (Local Planning) (England) Regulations 2012 (as amended).

On behalf of Executive, the Chairman thanked Councillor Creed and the Overview and Scrutiny Committee for their thorough review, comments and recommendations.

The Portfolio Holder for Planning and Development and Assistant Director Planning and Development explained that the proposed changes to the Plan arising from the Overview and Scrutiny Committee's deliberations had been considered by officers, in consultation with the Portfolio Holder for Planning and Development, and were set out at Appendix 9 to the report (annex to the Minutes as set out in the Minute Book).

The Chairman referred to correspondence from developers that had he had received and had also been sent to a number of Members, including Overview and Scrutiny Committee members, and officers and confirmed that the council had responded to all correspondence. The responses had been shared with the Overview and Scrutiny Committee.

In response to Executive comments, the Assistant Director Planning and Development provided clarification in respect on Oxford's unmet housing need and, referring to the Duty to Cooperate, confirmed there was, and would continue to be, liaison with West Oxfordshire District Council.

In considering the report, Members commended the work that had been undertaken building on and improving the previous version of the Cherwell Local Plan.

Resolved (unanimously)

- (1) That, having considered and noted the comments made by the Overview and Scrutiny Committee meetings on 12 November 2024 and 4 December 2024 (reconvening of adjourned 26 November 2024 meeting) the following change be made to paragraph 8.5. of the Proposed Local Plan:

“ We need to carefully manage development pressures in the interest of seeking housing delivery which benefits local communities, does not lead to unacceptable pressure on local infrastructure **including health care facilities which must meet the needs of our rural communities**, and can be supported by sustainable and active travel options and which does not cause damage to the environment that makes our rural areas attractive and distinctive.”
- (2) That the Proposed Cherwell Local Plan 2042 (Annex to the Minutes as set out in the Minute Book), as amended by Appendix 9 to the report and resolution (1) above, be approved for the purpose of inviting representations under Regulations 19 and 20 of The Town and Country Planning (Local Planning) (England) Regulations 2012 (as amended).
- (3) That it be agreed that the Assistant Director – Planning and Development be authorised to approve the final presentation of the Plan and to make any necessary minor administrative amendments and corrections to it prior to formal publication and in consultation with the Portfolio Holder for Planning and Development.
- (4) That it be agreed that the Assistant Director – Planning and Development be authorised to publish any necessary supporting documents, including an Infrastructure Delivery Plan, and other background papers in consultation with the Portfolio Holder for Planning and Development.

Reasons

A Proposed Local Plan 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 Plan has been informed by three formal public consultations, continuous engagement and cooperation and evidence gathering. Officers recommend that representations now be invited under Regulations 19 and 20 of The Town and Country Planning (Local Planning) (England) Regulations 2012 (as amended).

Alternative options

Option 1: To delay consideration of the Proposed Local Plan and to not invite representations at this time.

Delaying would have the advantage of waiting for the final, revised version of the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF). However, the Government has stated, '*We propose transitional arrangements to maintain the progress of plans at more advanced stages of preparation, while maximising proactive planning for the homes our communities need*'. As the Proposed Local Plan has been prepared under the existing NPPF and can comply with the suggested transitional arrangements, officers do not recommend delay.

Option 2: To reconsider the content of the Proposed Local Plan

The Proposed Local Plan has been prepared having regard to statutory requirements, evidence and national planning policy and guidance. If Members do not agree with significant aspects of the Plan, officers would need to consider the planning reasons for any changes and the implications for the evidence base including the Sustainability Appraisal. There would be delay to the programme. Whether the Council would need to continue the Plan under the forthcoming NPPF would require consideration.

80

Local Development Scheme

The Assistant Director Planning and Development submitted a report to seek approval of an updated Local Development Scheme (LDS) to produce the Council's key planning policy documents.

On behalf of Executive, the Portfolio Holder for Planning and Development thanked the Assistant Director Planning and Development, Planning, Policy Conservation & Design Manager and all officers in the Planning Policy Team and wider support for their hard work in the drafting of the updated Local Development Scheme.

Resolved (unanimously)

- (1) That the updated Local Development Scheme (LDS) be approved.

Reasons

An updated LDS is a legal duty for the council as it is stated under section 15 of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 (as amended). It provides a programme for completion of the Cherwell Local Plan Review and a potential Community Infrastructure Levy. The LDS will be used by officers, the public, partners and developers and other stakeholders to monitor the production of documents and to plan for associated consultations. Approval of the LDS is needed to assist project management and ensure that the Council meets its statutory responsibilities for planning. The LDS will be reviewed again if there is a further, significant change in circumstances.

Alternative options

Option 1: Not to approve the LDS.

The Council has a statutory responsibility to maintain an LDS. If the Council did not prepare its own LDS the Secretary of State could impose one. Aside from legal duty, not to approve the LDS could undermine the confidence of the public and stakeholders about the Council's plan-making programme. The LDS would need to be re-presented to the Executive at a future meeting.

Option 2: To reconsider the content of the LDS.

The LDS has been prepared having regard to the Council's statutory responsibilities and current resources. It is considered by officers to be appropriate for the present and foreseeable circumstances.

The meeting ended at 1.35 pm

Chairman:

Date:

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Cherwell District Council

Executive

Minutes of a meeting of the Executive held at Bodicote House, Bodicote, Banbury, Oxon OX15 4AA, on 6 January 2025 at 6.30 pm

Present:

Councillor David Hingley (Leader of the Council & Portfolio Holder for Strategic Leadership) (Chairman)
Councillor Lesley McLean (Deputy Leader of the Council and Portfolio Holder for Finance, Property & Regeneration) (Vice-Chairman)
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 Ian Middleton, Portfolio Holder for Neighbourhood Services
Councillor Rob Parkinson, Portfolio Holder for Safer Communities
Councillor Rob Pattenden, Portfolio Holder for Healthy Communities

Present virtually (no voting rights)

Councillor Nick Cotter, Portfolio Holder for Housing

Also Present:

Councillor Amanda Watkins, Leader of the Opposition, Labour Group

Officers:

Gordon Stewart, Chief Executive
Ian Boll, Corporate Director Communities
Stephen Hinds, Corporate Director Resources and Transformation
Michael Furness, Assistant Director Finance & S151 Officer
Shiraz Sheikh, Assistant Director Law & Governance and Monitoring Officer
Natasha Clark, Governance and Elections Manager

Officers Attending Virtually:

Mona Walsh, Assistant Director - Property
Richard Smith, Head of Housing

Declarations of Interest

There were no declarations of interest.

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

There were no petitions or requests to address the meeting.

The Chairman welcomed Councillor Watkins, Leader of the Opposition, Labour Group to the meeting and invited her to indicate if she wished to speak on any item.

83 **Minutes**

The Minutes of the meeting held on 2 December 2024 and the reconvened meeting held on 5 December 2024 were agreed as correct records and signed by the Chairman.

84 **Chairman's Announcements**

The Chairman made the following statement in response to the Government's English Devolution White Paper, which had been published on 16 December 2024:

"The Cherwell Executive welcomes the English Devolution White Paper, which outlines the Government's ambition "to shift power away from Whitehall into the hands of those who know their communities best." We believe local government works best when it is close to the people it serves, champions important local issues and gives a democratic voice to the communities it represents.

As the Government progresses with its proposals to reorganise local government for two-tier areas such as Oxfordshire, engaging in open discussions and exploring how local councils can maintain strong connections with their communities will be vital, and this commitment to dialogue is the approach we seek to pursue here. As demonstrated by the work of district councils over the past several decades, the value of local connections cannot be overstated.

At the same time, we recognise the Government's focus on Mayoral Combined Authorities and the benefits of delivering at scale. Strong regional leadership, supported by a Combined Authority, has the potential to drive long-term vision, create integrated transport systems, and deliver economic benefits that support growth and prosperity across wider areas. These are opportunities that, if delivered effectively with the input of district councils to ensure local voices are heard, can directly benefit Cherwell and Oxfordshire.

While these proposals are still in the early stages, with many details yet to be clarified, it is clear they bring both opportunities and challenges. We are carefully considering what the proposals could mean for our communities, services, and decision-making in our local area and across Oxfordshire. As a modern and forward-thinking council, our goal at Cherwell is to work

effectively with our neighbouring councils to shape a future structure that will deliver meaningful benefits to residents.

We firmly believe in the power of local government to create positive change and improve places, lives, and opportunities for the people we serve. As devolution moves forward, local government must continue to act in the best interests of residents and deliver the quality public services they expect. What is crucial now is that we engage swiftly and meaningfully with this process, ensuring we get the future right for our communities in this time of significant change for local authorities.”

85

Transformation Contract Extension

The Corporate Director Resources and Transformation submitted a report to outline a fourth phase of work to progress the Councils transformation programme and obtain approval to extend the contract with our partner to deliver this next phase.

In considering the report, Executive Member commented on the importance of evaluating where interactive AI could be used to make the council more effective. In response to Executive Member comments regarding the feasibility of the transformation programme with current staffing levels and whether the proposals would be flexible enough for future devolution, the Chief Executive advised that the skills and resources needed to undertake the work properly would be reviewed and it may be necessary to bring skills in. The Corporate Director Resources and Transformation explained that the programme of work could be adapted to allow for shorter term gains.

On behalf of Executive, the Portfolio Holder for Resources thanked staff for their hard work on the project.

Resolved

- (1) That a short contract extension be awarded to PA Consulting for a fourth phase and final phase of work to the value of £116,090.
- (2) That the transfer of £116,090 from the reserves earmarked for transformation, to fund this additional phase of work be approved.
- (3) That it be agreed to receive the “Case for Change” and associated outputs, once delivered, to consider whether and how to take forward the proposed transformation programme.

Reasons

The council has identified the key activities required to drive forward transformation. Maintaining momentum is essential to delivering transformation and achieving long-term financial sustainability.

The council possesses a significant amount of capability and knowledge with regard to service delivery and this will be key to transformation. Supported by the expertise and capacity of a trusted partner will ensure that the council is best placed to drive this next phase of transformation forward whilst also achieving best value.

Alternative options

Option 1: Undertake a new competitive procurement exercise for the key deliverables outlined in the Case for Change. The council could undertake a new competitive procurement exercise.

Benefits

- Would give other suppliers an opportunity to tender for this work.

Dis-benefits

- A new partner would lack the tacit knowledge and understanding that the current partner has gained through the initial three phases of work.
- A competitive procurement exercise would take at least 4-weeks to undertake once Executive approval obtained on 6 January 2025, require more council resources and lead to a loss in momentum.
- A new procurement exercise is unlikely to attract much interest from suppliers as only two including our current partner tendered for the original contract and the other party (if interested) is unlikely to be happy to follow another suppliers approach and they would be required to pick up where they left.
- Opportunity for current partner to challenge this process (phase 4) as it was scoped as an option in their existing contract

This option was discounted due to the dis-benefits outweighing the benefits.

Option 2: Progress with existing resources and without external expertise

Benefits

- No immediate budget requirement

Dis-Benefits

- The council does not have the expertise and capacity to deliver this next phase so it is likely to take significantly longer as resources will need to develop the necessary capability and this would lead to a loss in momentum. Given this, the assurances on outputs could not be at a level that where the risk of potentially jeopardising the transformation outcomes is minimised, thereby increase the risk of reliance on reducing service levels to meet our financial requirements.
- Additional time would be required to mobilise resources without negatively impacting service delivery, which could include back filling posts to create the capacity needed. A budget would be needed for any back-fill arrangements

This option was discounted due to the need for the council to progress with delivery of the transformation as quickly as possible in order to deliver change with proper skills and resources to enable the transformation.

86

New Housing Allocations Scheme 2025

The Assistant Director Wellbeing and Housing submitted a report to seek approval for a new Housing Allocations Scheme.

In considering the report, Executive members thanked officers for their work on the Scheme and commended the changes, highlighting the creation of a banding for survivors of domestic abuse and increased priority for armed forces personnel.

Resolved

- (1) That the new Housing Allocations Scheme 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. A periodic review of policies is therefore appropriate.

Alternative options

Option 1: Not bring forward a new Allocations Scheme. This is rejected as it is important that the Council has Policies that are up to date with legislation and can respond to current challenges.

87

Traffic Regulation Order in Pioneer Square

The Assistant Director Property submitted a report to promote an off-street Traffic Regulation Order on land the Council owns and has responsibility for outside the entrances to Franklin House including the Travelodge Hotel in order to mitigate the risks to the public at large and to the Council itself caused by unsafe parking and traffic movements in the area.

Resolved

- (1) That the promotion of an off-street Traffic Regulation Order on land the Council owns and has responsibility for outside the entrances to Franklin House including the Travelodge Hotel be approved in order to mitigate the risks to the public at large and to the Council itself caused by unsafe parking and traffic movements in the area.
- (2) That the Assistant Director – Property be authorised to start formal consultation on the proposed off-street Traffic Regulation Order, and, following due consideration of any representations received at the consultation stage and in consultation with the Monitoring Officer and the Portfolio Holder for Neighbourhood Services, to make any decisions and exercise all powers necessary in respect of whether or not to make and/or seal the proposed Order.

Reasons

Approval of the promotion of an off-street Traffic Regulation Order as described will remove obstructions caused by unregulated parking and obstructions to traffic needing to access service areas.

This will improve safety for pedestrians and ensure that the existing taxi drop offs and disabled parking space are accessible and available to use.

The costs associated with promoting and implementing the Traffic Regulation Order can be met from existing budgets. Enforcement of this Off-Street Traffic Regulation Order and issue of Penalty Charge Notices will be carried out by Oxfordshire County Council at no additional cost to the Council.

Alternative options

Option 1: Do nothing.

This option has been rejected. Not promoting the off-street Traffic Regulation Order means proper enforcement to manage parking will not be available and car users will continue to abuse parking. Furthermore, the Council runs the risk of possible claims from the public if an accident were to happen.

88

Finance Monitoring Report November 2024

The Assistant Director of Finance (Section 151 Officer) submitted a report to report to Executive the council's forecast financial position as at the end of the November 2024.

Resolved

- (1) That the contents of the council's financial management report as at the end of November 2024 be noted.
- (2) That the reprofiling of capital projects beyond 2024/25 and the subsequent update to the programme budget for this financial year 2024/25 be approved.
- (3) That the virement of £1.031m from Policy Contingency to services for the Cost of Living award for 2024/25 as agreed in November be approved.
- (4) That the allocation of £0.500m Policy Contingency to cover the cost of appeals be approved.

Reasons

The report updates Executive on the projected year-end financial position of the council for 2024/25. 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 financial position up to the end of March 2025, therefore there are no alternative options to consider.

89

Council Tax Base 2025/2026

The Assistant Director Finance (Section 151 Officer) submitted a report to provide the Council tax Base for 2025/26.

Resolved

- (1) That the report of the Assistant Director of Finance for the calculation of the Council's Tax Base for 2025/26 be approved.
- (2) That it be agreed that, in accordance with the Local Authorities (Calculation of Council Tax Base) (England) Regulations 2012, the amount calculated by Cherwell District Council as its Council Tax Base for the year 2025/26 shall be **59,853.6**.
- (3) That it be agreed that for the parishes which form part of its area (as shown in the Annex to the Minutes as set out in the Minute Book), the amount calculated as the Council Tax Base for the year 2025/26 in respect of special items shall be as indicated in the column titled Tax Base 2025/26.
- (4) That it be agreed that for the Flood Defence Areas which form part of its area, the amount calculated as the Council Tax Base for the year 2025/26 for the purposes of levies on Oxfordshire County Council by River Authorities, shall be:

Thames Flood Defence Area	57,459.5
Anglian (Great Ouse) Flood Defence Area	1,941.6
Severn Region Flood Defence Area	452.5
TOTAL	59,853.6

Reasons

The Council must legally set a tax base for the following year by 31 January. This will allow the Council to notify its preceptors of the taxbase in order for them (and the Council) to set their budgets for 2025/26.

Alternative options

There are no alternative options. The Council has to set a tax base in order to set its council tax for 2025/26.

90 **Urgent Business**

There were no items of urgent business.

The meeting ended at 7.10 pm

Chairman:

Date:

Cherwell District Council

Executive

Minutes of a meeting of the Executive held at Bodicote House, Bodicote, Banbury, Oxon OX15 4AA, on 3 February 2025 at 6.30 pm

Present:

Councillor Lesley McLean (Deputy Leader of the Council and Portfolio Holder for Finance, Property & Regeneration) (Vice-Chairman, 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 Rob Parkinson, Portfolio Holder for Safer Communities

Councillor Rob Pattenden, Portfolio Holder for Healthy Communities

Apologies for absence:

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

Councillor Ian Middleton, Portfolio Holder for Neighbourhood Services

Also Present:

Councillor Phil Chapman

Councillor David Rogers

Also Present Virtually:

Councillor Amanda Watkins, Leader of the Opposition, Labour Group

Councillor Les Sibley, Leader of the Independent Group

Officers:

Gordon Stewart, Chief Executive

Ian Boll, Corporate Director Communities

Stephen Hinds, Corporate Director Resources and Transformation

Michael Furness, Assistant Director Finance & S151 Officer

Nicola Riley, Assistant Director Housing and Wellbeing

Shiraz Sheikh, Assistant Director Law & Governance and Monitoring Officer

David Peckford, Assistant Director Planning & Development

Christina Cherry, Planning Policy, Conservation & Design Manager

Natasha Clark, Governance and Elections Manager

Officers Attending Virtually:

Shona Ware, Assistant Director Customer Focus

Richard Smith, Head of Housing

91 **Declarations of Interest**

There were no declarations of interest.

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

There were no petitions or requests to address the meeting.

The Chairman welcomed Councillor Watkins, Leader of the Opposition, Labour Group, Councillor Sibley, Leader of the Independent Group, Councillor Chapman and Councillor Roger to the meeting and invited them to indicate if they wished to speak on any item.

93 **Minutes**

The minutes of the meeting held on 6 January 2025 were agreed as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

94 **Chairman's Announcements**

There were no Chairman's announcements.

95 **Urgent Business**

There were no items of urgent business.

96 **Budget Setting for 2025/26 and the Medium-Term Financial Strategy up to 2029/30**

The Assistant Director Finance (Section 151 Officer) submitted a report for Executive to consider and approve the Budget Setting for 2025/26 and Medium Term Financial Strategy 2029/30 as per the recommendations.

Executive members thanked the Portfolio Holder for Finance, Regeneration and Property, Assistant Director Finance (Section 151 Officer) and the Finance team for their hard work in putting forward the proposed budget.

Resolved

- (1) That authority be delegated to the Section 151 Officer (S151), following consultation with the Leader of the Council and Portfolio Member for Finance, Regeneration and Property to complete the legal Council Tax

calculations once all the information required has been received and submit as appendices to the budget report to Council.

- (2) That authority be delegated to the S151 Officer, following consultation with the Leader of the Council and Portfolio Holder for Finance, Regeneration and Property to make appropriate changes to the Executive's proposed budget to Council including policies and plans.
- (3) That Council be recommended to approve the proposed Fees and Charges schedule for 2025/26 and statutory notices be placed where required.
- (4) That Council be recommended to consider and note the Equality Impact Assessments of the Budget.
- (5) That Council be recommended to approve the Corporate Plan and to note the Internal Perspectives.
- (6) That, in relation to the Revenue Budget Strategy and Medium-Term Financial Strategy (MTFS), Council be recommended to approve:
 - i. The net revenue budget for the financial year commencing on 1 April 2025, as set out below, and further analysed in the Budget Book.

Directorate; Net budget 2025/26 £m
Communities: 12.120
Resources: 7.528
Service Sub-total: 19.648
Corporate Costs: 3.926
Policy Contingency: 2.620
Net Cost of Services: 26.194
 - ii. The MTFS and Revenue Budget 2025/26, including the Savings Proposals and Investments.
- (7) That, in relation to Council Tax, Council be recommended to approve:
 - i. An increase in the Basic Amount of Council Tax for Cherwell District Council for the financial year beginning on 1 April 2025 of £5, resulting in a Band D charge of £158.50 per annum.
 - ii. That for long term empty properties, from 1 April 2025 an additional council tax premium will be charged of 100 per cent for properties empty for one year or more, replacing the current 100 per cent premium that begins after 2 years of a property being empty. All other empty property premiums will remain.
- (8) That, in relation to the Capital Programme and related strategies, Council be recommended to approve:
 - i. The Capital Bid(s) and Capital Programme.

- ii. The Capital and Investment Strategy 2025/26, including the Minimum Revenue Provision (MRP) Policy.
 - iii. The Treasury Management Strategy, including the Prudential Indicators, and Affordable Borrowing Limit for 2025/26.
- (9) That, in relation to reserves, Council be recommended to approve:
- i. A minimum level of General Balances of £7.8m.
 - ii. The Reserves Policy.
 - iii. The medium-term reserves plan.
- (10) That Council be recommended to approve The Pay Policy Statement, as required by the Localism Act 2010.

Reasons

This report provides information around the various building blocks that make up the proposed budget for 2025/26 and beyond, allowing members to consider and scrutinise the elements of the budget and provide advice and guidance to council to help further shape both budget setting for 2025/26 and the MTFS up to 2029/30.

Alternative options

It is a legal requirement to set a balanced budget and the recommendations as outlined set out a way to achieve this. The following alternative option has been identified and rejected for the reasons set out below.

Option 1: To reject the current proposals and make alternative recommendations. Members will not be aware of the medium-term financial forecast or implications of alternatives if they choose to take this option.

97

New Cherwell District Council Housing Strategy 2025-2030

The Assistant Director Wellbeing and Housing submitted a report to seek approval for the new Cherwell District Council Housing Strategy 2025-2030.

In response to a question from the Leader of the Independent regarding whether any sites in the district had been identified as suitable for keyworker housing, the Portfolio Holder for Housing explained that keyworker housing was important and the Strategy was broad enough to allow for future discussions on this.

Resolved

- (1) That the Cherwell District Council Housing Strategy 2025-2030 be approved.

Reasons

It is important that the Council has up to date policies for its key service areas and it is important that they are legislatively and operationally sound. A periodic review of policies is therefore appropriate.

Alternative options

Option 1: Not bring forward a new Housing Strategy. This is rejected as it is a best practice that the Council produces and reviews its housing strategy.

98

Annual Monitoring Report 2024

The Assistant Director Planning and Development submitted a report to seek approval for publication the 2024 Annual Monitoring Report (AMR) which included a housing land supply update (December 2024). The report also sought approval of the accompanying updates to the Local Plan's Infrastructure Delivery Plan and Brownfield Land Register update (December 2024).

In introducing the report, the Portfolio Holder for Planning and Development explained that the most significant conclusions were that Cherwell continued to deliver homes and employment land, albeit fewer homes than in recent years, and affordable housing completions had increased. The Council could not however, now demonstrate a five-year supply of deliverable housing land and the preparation of an action plan to assist housing delivery was recommended.

In response to comments from Executive members, the Leader of the Opposition and Councillor Chapman, the Portfolio Holder for Planning and Development explained that the increase in local housing need was due to the Government revising the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) and the standard method in December 2024 and confirmed the importance of the Local Plan being submitted to the Planning Inspectorate as soon as possible.

The Housing Delivery Action Plan work would include consideration of developments with planning permission that were not being progressed and infrastructure issues and there would be opportunity for all Members to have input. Additionally, at its 28 January 2025 meeting, the Overview and Scrutiny Committee (OSC) had requested that the Action Plan be submitted to a future OSC meeting.

Resolved

- (1) That the 2024 Annual Monitoring Report (AMR) including a Housing Land Supply Statement and a 2023/24 Infrastructure Delivery Plan update be approved for publication.
- (2) That the 2023/24 Brownfield Land Register be approved for publication.

- (3) That the Assistant Director Planning and Development be instructed to prepare a Housing Delivery Action Plan in consultation with the Portfolio Holder for Planning and Development Management.
- (4) That the Assistant Director Planning and Development be authorised to approve the final presentation of the AMR and Brownfield Land Register and to make any necessary minor administrative amendments and corrections to them prior to formal publication and in consultation with the Portfolio Holder for Planning and Development Management.

Reasons

The Annual Monitoring Report provides important information to measure the effectiveness of planning policies and to assist policy making and development management decision making. It is the statutory mechanism for monitoring housing delivery.

Its most significant conclusions are that Cherwell continues to deliver homes and employment land, albeit fewer homes than in recent years. Affordable housing completions has increased. The Council cannot however, now demonstrate a five-year supply of deliverable housing land and the preparation of an action plan to assist housing delivery is recommended.

It is recommended that the AMR and Brownfield Land Register be approved for publication.

Alternative options

Option 1: Deferment to seek significant amendment of the: 2024 Annual Monitoring Report, Infrastructure Delivery Plan or Brownfield Land Register. Officers consider the documents to comprise robust factual reporting and updating against relevant indicators and requirements, supported by data and research. Members are therefore asked to consider amendment through delegation and consultation with the Portfolio Holder should they consider significant changes to be necessary.

Option 2: Not to approve the documents for publication. Production of an Authorities Monitoring Report is a statutory requirement and the AMR's wider information supports the Local Plan implementation and review. Updating the Brownfield Land Register is also a statutory requirement. The Infrastructure Delivery Plan is required to monitor and support delivery of the adopted Cherwell Local Plan 2011-2031 and its Partial Review.

Finance, Performance and Risk Monitoring Report Quarter 3 2024-25

The Assistant Director Finance (Section 151 Officer) and Assistant Director Customer Focus submitted a report to report to Executive the council's forecast financial position, performance and risk as at the end of the Quarter 3 2024-25.

Resolved

- (1) That the council's financial, performance and risk report as at the end of Quarter 3 2024 -25 be noted.
- (2) That the reprofiling of capital projects beyond 2024/25 and the subsequent update to the programme budget for this financial year 2024/25 be approved.
- (3) That the Use of Reserve Requests (Annex to the Minutes as set out in the Minute Book) be approved.
- (4) That the proposed write offs (Exempt Annex to the Minutes as set out in the Minute Book) be approved.
- (5) That the Minimum Revenue Provision (MRP) underspend of (£1.600m) due to the reprofiling of capital projects within the programme be noted and the moving of this to the Projects Reserve (Annexes to the Minutes as set out in the Minute Book) be approved.

Reasons

The report updates Executive on the projected year-end financial position of the council for 2024/25, and performance and risk position as of the end of Quarter 3 2024-25. Regular reporting is key to good governance and demonstrates that the council is actively managing its resources sustainably.

Alternative options

Option 1: This report summarises the council's forecast financial position up to the end of March 2025, and performance and risk position as of the end of Quarter 3 2024-25, therefore there are no alternative options to consider.

100 Exclusion of the Press and Public

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

101 Finance, Performance and Risk Monitoring Report Quarter 3 2024-25 - Exempt Appendix

There being no questions on the exempt appendix, it had been agreed under item 10 (Minute 99).

The meeting ended at 7.22 pm

Chairman:

Date:

Cherwell District Council

Executive

Minutes of a meeting of the Executive held at Bodicote House, Bodicote, Banbury, Oxon OX15 4AA, on 3 March 2025 at 6.30 pm

Present:

Councillor David Hingley (Leader of the Council & Portfolio Holder for Strategic Leadership) (Chairman)
Councillor Lesley McLean (Deputy Leader of the Council and Portfolio Holder for Finance, Property & Regeneration) (Vice-Chairman)
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 Robert Parkinson, Portfolio Holder for Safer Communities
Councillor Rob Pattenden, Portfolio Holder for Healthy Communities

Also Present:

Councillor Dr Isabel Creed, Chair, Overview and Scrutiny Committee

Also Present Virtually:

Councillor Amanda Watkins, Leader of the Opposition, Labour Group

Officers:

Gordon Stewart, Chief Executive
Stephen Hinds, Corporate Director Resources and Transformation
Shiraz Sheikh, Assistant Director Law & Governance and Monitoring Officer
Julia Harrington, Cherwell Area Growth Lead
Andy Bowe, Banbury Area Lead
Natasha Clark, Governance and Elections Manager

Officers Attending Virtually:

Ed Potter, Assistant Director Environmental Services
Tim Hughes, Head of Regulatory Services & Community Safety
Joanne Kaye, Head of Finance and Deputy Section 151 Officer

Declarations of Interest

There were no declarations of interest.

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

There were no petitions or requests to address the meeting.

The Chairman welcomed Councillor Watkins, Leader of the Opposition, Labour Group and Councillor Creed, Chair of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee, to the meeting and invited them to indicate if they wished to speak on any item.

104 **Minutes**

The minutes of the meeting held on 3 February 2025 were agreed as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

105 **Chairman's Announcements**

The Chairman reminded Members that an additional Executive meeting was scheduled for Wednesday 19 March.

106 **'A Banbury for the Future' Report**

The Corporate Director Communities submitted a report which updated the Executive on the progress of 'A Banbury for the Future' project; the community engagement with residents, businesses and delivery partners and the emerging Banbury area action plan and sought authority from the Executive to publish the draft engagement findings.

'A Banbury for the Future' project was established in 2023 when the previous Executive approved the appointment of consultants to carry out an extensive vision engagement exercise on the future of the town centre and its environs.

Engagement on the vision for Banbury has been completed, with the vision engagement findings compiled into a draft report. The Council has engaged with partners over the last year in developing a draft action plan from the engagement findings.

On 4 November 2024 the Executive agreed to adopt an area-based approach with the objective to strengthen community and stakeholder engagement into major growth sites across the district in support of delivering more holistic and sustainably planned developments, aligned to Council priorities.

As part of this area-based approach a new Area Action Plan was currently under development bringing together several existing action plans into one new document, including the engagement findings from the consultants draft report. This new, updated Action Plan would form part of the Area Framework

of documents which would be reviewed and prioritised by the new Area Oversight Group for Banbury.

Resolved

- (1) That the publication of the draft Banbury vision engagement report be authorised.
- (2) That officer be requested to engage further with the community and partners through the Banbury Area Oversight Group and subgroups, with a view to developing the new Banbury Area Action Plan.

Reasons

The vision engagement exercise and the findings it has generated provide an understanding of how people view Banbury, the challenges it faces but also a desire for change, highlighting the opportunities and demonstrating its potential.

There is a clear desire to see Banbury town centre improve. Over 99% of survey respondents want see improvements to the town centre. The engagement process indicates that to deliver this change, Banbury needs a change of mindset. The report highlights some major issues the vision needs to address.

This report seeks the Executive's approval to publish the draft Banbury vision engagement findings report. The reason for the recommendation is to progress the work on Banbury as set out in the report. It remains important to maintain the focus on continued community engagement; by publishing the draft vision engagement findings report, the Council is reaffirming its commitment to regeneration and growth in Banbury.

Alternative options

Option 1: Not publishing the vision engagement findings or delaying the publication may lead to a lack of momentum in delivering the new Banbury Area programme and may also make further community engagement more challenging as it may be perceived as a lack of commitment to the Banbury area.

107

Banbury Public Spaces Protection Order (PSPO) Implementation Report

The Head of Regulatory Services and Community Safety submitted a report which asked Executive to decide whether to introduce a PSPO in Banbury town centre. A consultation was recently undertaken on a proposal to introduce a new Public Spaces Protection Order (PSPO) for Banbury town centre. The report set out the background to the proposal, a summary of the consultation undertaken and the feedback from stakeholders and the details of the potential scope of the Order.

In considering the report, Executive members noted the support for the PSPO during the public consultation, commended and thanked the Community Wardens for the work they undertook and noted the importance of a joined-up approach.

Resolved

- (1) That it be agreed to introduce a Public Spaces Protection Order for Banbury town centre taking into consideration the outcomes of the public consultation and the feedback received from stakeholders.
- (2) That it be agreed that the basis of the order will be items below, which were included in the scope of the PSPO consulted on and the order will apply to the area set within the red border on the map as set out in the Annex to the Minutes (as set out in the Minute Book).
 - No begging within 10 metres of a cash or payment machine or begging in a manner which is aggressive or intimidating or is likely to cause someone to feel harassed, alarmed or distressed
 - No person shall consume alcohol in the restricted area (other than in residential premises or premises specified in Section 62(1) of the Act) in a manner which causes nuisance or annoyance to other persons in the locality.
 - No person shall continue to consume alcohol when directed by an officer to stop in the restricted area.
 - No person shall fail to surrender alcohol or a container for alcohol when requested to do so by an officer in the restricted area.
 - No person shall cause harassment, alarm or distress to any individual(s) by committing antisocial behaviour. Examples may include the use of offensive or abusive language or acting in an aggressive manner.
- (3) That it be agreed the order can remain in place for up to 3 years.

Reasons

The results of the consultation show overwhelming support for the introduction of a PSPO in Banbury Town Centre from the public and stakeholder organisations. The responses support including all three prohibitions that were included in the consultation.

Crime and incident data from the Police evidence supports the conclusion that prevalent and persistent problem of anti-social behaviour in and around Banbury town centre and that the legal requirements for the introduction of a PSPO are met. Therefore, the Executive is recommended to approve the introduction of the PSPO for Banbury town centre.

Alternative options

Option 1: Not introduce a PSPO.

This option is not recommended. The information gathered to support the introduction of a PSPO for Banbury town centre demonstrates that there is a persistent problem with ASB occurring in and around Banbury town centre.

The consultation outcomes show very strong support for the introduction of a PSPO to tackle this problem and stakeholders, including Thames Valley Police, support the proposal.

Option 2: Introduce a PSPO with a more limited scope.

This option is not recommended. The consultation outcomes show support for all aspects of the proposed PSPO, and the information collected provides evidence that the prohibitions to be included are proportionate to the issues that the PSPO will look to address.

108

Oxfordshire Leaders Joint Committee Terms of Reference

The Corporate Director Communities submitted a report detailing that the concluding stages of the Oxfordshire Housing and Growth Deal required adjustments to the working arrangements of the Future Oxfordshire Partnership (FOP) for 2025 and a change of name for the Future Oxfordshire Partnership. The report proposed corresponding amendments to the Terms of Reference (TOR) and the Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) between Cherwell District Council and the other five Oxfordshire councils party to the Partnership.

In response to Executive comments regarding the scrutiny arrangements under the revised TOR and MOU, the Leader advised that at Cherwell, he would ensure meeting papers were forwarded to all councillors for their information and there was a mechanism for scrutiny. The Chair of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee confirmed that she was happy to work with the Leader and Executive to ensure scrutiny of items if needed.

Resolved

- (1) That the revised Terms of Reference and Memorandum of Understanding be approved and it be noted that these will take effect following approval by each of the six Oxfordshire councils.

Reasons

The proposed changes to governance documents arise from the principles agreed by FOP members at its meeting on 26 November 2024. The changes have been discussed by the Oxfordshire Councils' Monitoring Officers.

Alternative options

Option 1: Do not endorse the revised TOR or MOU

Not endorsing the new TOR or MOU will exclude Cherwell District Council from the Leaders Joint Committee and thereby disadvantage it from the collaborative joint working that it facilitates.

109

Finance Monitoring Report January 2025

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

Resolved

- (1) That the council's financial management report as at the end of January 2025 be noted.
- (2) That the reprofiling of capital projects beyond 2024/25 and the subsequent update to the programme budget for this financial year 2024/25 be approved.
- (3) That the Use of Reserve and Grant Funding Requests as set out in the Annex to the Minutes (as set out in the Minute Book) be approved.
- (4) That the New Planning & Building Control fee proposal as set out in the Annex to the Minutes (as set out in the Minute Book) be approved.
- (5) That it be agreed to remove capital project (40315) S106 – Longford Park Sport Pitches £0.010m from the programme as it is not required as capital expenditure and it be agreed for it to be transferred to revenue grant earmarked reserves to be used for ongoing maintenance.

Reasons

The report updates Executive on the projected year-end financial position of the council for 2024/25. 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 financial position up to the end of March 2025, therefore there are no alternative options to consider.

110 Urgent Business

There were no items of urgent business.

111 Exclusion of the Press and Public

That under Section 100A of the Local Government Act 1972, the public and press be excluded from the meeting for the following item 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.

112 **Dry Recycling Contracts**

The Assistant Director Environmental Services and Corporate Director Communities submitted an exempt report regarding dry recycling contracts.

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 7.24 pm

Chairman:

Date:

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Cherwell District Council

Executive

Minutes of a meeting of the Executive held at Bodicote House, Bodicote, Banbury, Oxon OX15 4AA, on 19 March 2025 at 5.00 pm

Present:

Councillor David Hingley (Leader of the Council & Portfolio Holder for Strategic Leadership) (Chairman)
Councillor Lesley McLean (Deputy Leader of the Council and Portfolio Holder for Finance, Property & Regeneration) (Vice-Chairman)
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 Robert Parkinson, Portfolio Holder for Safer Communities

Apologies for absence:

Councillor Tom Beckett, Portfolio Holder for Greener Communities

Also Present:

Councillor Dr Isabel Creed, Chair, Overview and Scrutiny Committee
Councillor John Broad

Also Present Virtually:

Councillor Barry Wood

Officers:

Gordon Stewart, Chief Executive
Michael Furness, Assistant Director Finance & S151 Officer
Shiraz Sheikh, Assistant Director Law & Governance and Monitoring Officer
Alex Rycroft, Strategic Finance Business Partner
Curtis Leung, NMT Graduate
Natasha Clark, Governance and Elections Manager

Officers Attending Virtually:

Ian Boll, Corporate Director Communities

Declarations of Interest

There were no declarations of interest.

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

There were no petitions or requests to address the meeting.

The Chairman welcomed non-Executive Councillors to the meeting and asked they indicate if they wished to speak.

115 **Minutes**

The minutes of the meeting held on 3 March 2025 were agreed as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

116 **Chairman's Announcements**

The Chairman advised that this was the last Executive meeting to be held at Bodicote House. The next Executive meeting on 7 April would take place in the council's new offices at Castle Quay.

117 **Local Government Reorganisation Options**

The Corporate Director Resources and Transformation submitted a report to provide an overview of the interim plan and each of the proposal for local government reorganisation in Oxfordshire, prior to submission to the Government on 21 March 2025.

In introducing the report, the Chairman advised that there were revised recommendations to those that had been published (revisions in italics):

"The Executive resolves to:

1.1 Note the receipt of the statutory invitation received from the Minister of State for Housing, Communities & Local Government on 5 February 2025.

1.2 *Approve the interim plan developed collaboratively by Oxfordshire councils (county, city and districts) as set out in Appendix 1 and the emerging options for local government reorganisation set out in Appendices 2-4 for submission to Minister of State for Local Government and English Devolution.*

1.3 *Approve that the Leader of the Council write to the Minister of State for Local Government and English Devolution to express support for [preferred option once discussed] ."*

The Chairman advised that all Oxfordshire councils (county, city and districts) had coordinated in producing the report and options set out in the appendices. This had included several meetings of Council Leaders and Chief Executives.

Each Cabinet / Executive was also meeting today or the following day to agree their response.

With regards to recommendation 1.2, the Chairman explained that he had no issues with the submission of the joint response as an interim report on progress and options for Oxfordshire as it was a reflection on the position at the present time.

With regards to recommendation 1.3 and submission of support for an option, the Chairman explained that he had given much consideration and, given the timescales, had been considering a draft a response in anticipation, subject to the views of Executive. The Chairman advised that he hoped the submitted response would be in coordination with West Oxfordshire District Council, with whom there had been close coordination given the proximity of the districts and that in each model Cherwell and West Oxfordshire would merge.

The Chairman explained that, at this point he did not consider a three unitary option was a desirable option for multiple reasons including it not being built on existing boundaries and it was not clear about the geography it would adopt. The one unitary option was possible, but it was quite large and risked losing the local connection to communities there currently was.

The Chairman advised that, in his view, a two unitary option was the most credible option for local government reorganisation in the area and highlighted positive considerations, including that the size of the proposed authority met the Government's guidelines for a population of half a million, greater focus on communities at the local level, a consequent ability to deliver services building on collaborative working to meet the financial challenges ahead and giving the area a greater voice in the new devolution framework helping harness local views and driving sustainable growth locally.

The Chairman advised that whilst the letter would be from the Executive, there had been cross party engagement, including the establishment of a Leaders' Advisory Group for Local Government Organisation and devolution, which had met earlier this month, and the approach was being informed by these discussions. It was important that cross-party engagement continued over the coming months.

In considering the options, Executive members endorsed the Chairman's comments and agreed that a two unitary option was the most credible option and support for this should be expressed in the letter from the Leader to the Minister of State for Local Government and English Devolution.

Resolved

- (1) That the receipt of the statutory invitation received from the Minister of State for Housing, Communities & Local Government on 5 February 2025 be noted.
- (2) That the interim plan developed collaboratively by Oxfordshire councils (county, city and districts) and the emerging options for local

government reorganisation (Option one – single unitary council; Option two – two unitary councils; Option three – three unitary councils) be approved for submission to Minister of State for Local Government and English Devolution.

- (3) That it be approved that the Leader of the Council write to the Minister of State for Local Government and English Devolution to express support for option two, two unitary councils.

Reasons

This proposed option is in line with the guidance from central Government and identifies the submission and members are asked to both note the receipt of the statutory invitation received from the Minister of State for Housing, Communities & Local Government on 5 February 2025, and to note the interim plan update as set out in Appendix 1 to the report and the emerging options for local government reorganisation set out in the Appendices 2, 3 and 4 to the report.

Alternative options

Option 1: The Council may not wish to submit any proposals to Government in which to reorganise local government. Given the Government's stated expectation that areas should submit proposals, this option is not recommended.

118 Urgent Business

There were no items of urgent business.

The meeting ended at 5.22 pm

Chairman:

Date:

Cherwell District Council

Executive

Minutes of a meeting of the Executive held at 39 Castle Quay, Banbury, OX16 5FD, on 7 April 2025 at 6.30 pm

Present:

Councillor David Hingley (Leader of the Council & Portfolio Holder for Strategic Leadership) (Chairman)

Councillor Tom Beckett, Portfolio Holder for Greener Communities
Councillor Chris Brant, Portfolio Holder for Corporate Services
Councillor Nick Cotter, Portfolio Holder for Housing
Councillor Ian Middleton, Portfolio Holder for Neighbourhood Services
Councillor Robert Parkinson, Portfolio Holder for Safer Communities

Apologies for absence:

Councillor Lesley McLean, Deputy Leader of the Council and Portfolio Holder for Finance, Property & Regeneration
Councillor Jean Conway, Portfolio Holder for Planning and Development Management
Councillor Rob Pattenden, Portfolio Holder for Healthy Communities

Also Present:

Councillor Amanda Watkins, Leader of the Opposition, Labour Group

Officers:

Gordon Stewart, Chief Executive
Ian Boll, Corporate Director Communities
Stephen Hinds, Corporate Director Resources and Transformation
Michael Furness, Assistant Director Finance & S151 Officer
Shiraz Sheikh, Assistant Director Law & Governance and Monitoring Officer
David Peckford, Assistant Director Planning & Development
Nicola Riley, Assistant Director Housing and Wellbeing
Shona Ware, Assistant Director Customer Focus
Jacey Scott, Head of Revenues and Benefits
David Spilsbury, Head of Digital and Innovation
Natasha Clark, Governance and Elections Manager

Officers Attending Virtually:

Mona Walsh, Assistant Director - Property
Claire Cox, Assistant Director Human Resources

119 **Declarations of Interest**

There were no declarations of interest.

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

There were no petitions or requests to address the meeting.

The Chairman welcomed Councillor Watkins, Leader of the Opposition, the Labour Group, to the meeting and invited her to indicate if she wished to speak on any item.

121 **Minutes**

The minutes of the meeting held on 19 March 2025 were agreed as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

122 **Chairman's Announcements**

The Chairman welcomed Members and officers to the first Executive meeting at the council's new office at Castle Quay. Executive members and the Leader of the Opposition thanked officers for their work resulting in the move of the council's headquarters.

The Chairman advised that further to the decision at the 19 March Executive meeting in respect of Local Government Reorganisation options, a letter had been sent to the Minister of State for Local Government and English Devolution from the Oxfordshire councils (county, city and districts). A separate letter had also been sent from Cherwell District Council and West Oxfordshire District Council. It was anticipated there would be feedback would be received in May.

123 **Annual Delivery Plan and Performance Measure 2025/2026**

The Assistant Director Customer Focus submitted a report to agree the council's Annual Delivery Plan (ADP) and Performance measures for 2025/26.

In considering the report, Executive members thanked officers for their hard work on the ADP and Performance Measures and their support to individual Portfolio Holders.

Resolved

- (1) That the council's Annual Delivery Plan and Performance Framework for 2025/26 be approved.

- (2) That the responsibility for finalising the milestones and the Key Performance Indicators be delegated to the Assistant Director for Customer Focus in consultation with the Portfolio Holder for Corporate Services.

Reasons

This report sets out a suggested annual delivery plan and framework for measuring and monitoring the council's performance and progress towards achieving better outcomes for its communities.

Alternative options

Option 1: Not to have an annual delivery plan and performance framework, however without one, the council cannot monitor its progress towards achieving its desired outcomes and therefore agree any corrective action that might be necessary to keep them on track. This option has therefore been rejected as the council would risk being able to deliver better outcomes for its communities.

124 Local Authority Housing Fund Round 3

The Assistant Director Wellbeing and Housing submitted a report to seek approval for the expenditure of the capital grant received from the Local Authority Housing Fund (LAHF) Round 3.

In response to a question from the Leader of the Opposition, Councillor Watkins, the Portfolio Holder for Housing explained that the grant would be used to deliver 8 units of accommodation with 4 units to be used as temporary accommodation for households owed a homelessness duty by the Council, and 4 units to be initially let (at first let only) to those on Afghan resettlement schemes. The units would be delivered at the end of March 2026 in accordance with grant conditions.

Resolved

- (1) That a capital grant to South Oxfordshire Housing Association (SOHA) for the delivery of new social housing within Cherwell from the grant received from Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local government (MHCLG): Local Authority Housing Fund Round 3 be approved.
- (2) That the increase to the Council's capital programme of £1.4m that arises from the report be approved.

Reasons

Delivering more social housing in district is a key objective and providing suitable, self-contained, housing for those in temporary accommodation is important. Accepting this grant is a way in which the council can enable more

housing delivery, easing pressures, without significant financial expenditure or risk.

Alternative options

Option 1: Not to transfer the grant to SOHA. The Council is under time pressure to deliver units as conditions of the grant. The government have provided the grant based on the Council's assurance to deliver quickly. To use an alternative delivery method, which is not currently known, risks non-delivery and repayment of the grant. This is therefore rejected.

125

Discretionary Housing Payments Policy

The Assistant Director Finance (Section 151 Officer) submitted a report to inform Executive of the reviewed policy for Discretionary Housing Payment (DHP) and proposed updates.

In response to Executive member questions, the Head of Revenues and Benefits confirmed that eligible applicants would be signposted to the scheme. The Head of Revenues and Benefits confirmed that spending of the funding was maximized.

Resolved

- (1) That the contents of the reviewed policy for Discretionary Housing Payments be noted.
- (2) That the reviewed policy for Discretionary Housing Payments be approved.

Reasons

Discretionary Housing Payments are vital for residents in the current economic climate and help to support our most vulnerable residents with housing costs. It is recommended that the policy is endorsed by Executive to continue delivering support to these customers.

Alternative options

Option 1: To return the funds to the Department for Works and Pensions. This has been rejected as this would not be in line with Cherwell's objectives of continuing to respond to the cost-of-living crisis and working to prevent homelessness.

126

Urgent Business

There were no items of urgent business.

The meeting ended at 7.00 pm

Chairman:

Date:

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Cherwell District Council

Executive

Minutes of a meeting of the Executive held at 39 Castle Quay, Banbury, OX16 5FD, on 10 June 2025 at 6.30 pm

Present:

Councillor David Hingley (Leader of the Council & Portfolio Holder for Strategic Leadership) (Chair)
Councillor Lesley McLean (Deputy Leader of the Council and Portfolio Holder for Finance, Property & Regeneration) (Vice-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 Robert Parkinson, Portfolio Holder for Safer Communities
Councillor Rob Pattenden, Portfolio Holder for Healthy Communities

Also Present Virtually:

Councillor Amanda Watkins, Leader of the Labour Group
Councillor Lynne Parsons, Overview and Scrutiny Committee Chair

Officers:

Gordon Stewart, Chief Executive
Ian Boll, Corporate Director Communities
Michael Furness, Assistant Director Finance & S151 Officer
Shiraz Sheikh, Assistant Director Law & Governance and Monitoring Officer
David Peckford, Assistant Director Planning & Development
Hitesh Mahawar, Climate Change Programme Manager
Natasha Clark, Governance and Elections Manager

Officers Attending Virtually:

Stephen Hinds, Corporate Director Resources and Transformation
Ed Potter, Assistant Director Environmental Services
Julia Harrington, Head of Regeneration and Growth
Nicola Riley, Assistant Director Housing and Wellbeing
David North, Housing Grants & Standards Team Leader

There were no declarations of interest.

2 Petitions and Requests to Address the Meeting

There were no petitions or requests to address the meeting.

The Chair welcomed Councillor Watkins, Leader of the Labour Group, and Councillor Parsons, Chair of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee, to the meeting and invited them to indicate if they wished to speak on any item.

3 Minutes

The minutes of the meeting held on 7 April 2025 were agreed as a correct record and signed by the Chair.

4 Chair's Announcements

The Chair advised that following the submission in March by the councils in Oxfordshire of an interim proposal to the Government, which set out three options that would be developed into full proposals, Cherwell District Council had committed to developing the two-unitary option for consideration by the Government in partnership with West Oxfordshire, Vale of White Horse, South Oxfordshire and West Berkshire councils. Information about the two unitary proposals were available on the council's website and a public engagement exercise, which included three events and an online survey, had commenced.

5 Housing Delivery Action Plan

The Assistant Director Planning and Development submitted a report to present a Housing Delivery Action Plan (HDAP) and seek agreement to the actions to improve Cherwell's five year housing land supply position.

Councillor Parsons, Chair of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee, addressed Executive to provide feedback from the Committee's consideration of the Housing Delivery Action Plan at their 3 June meeting. In the course of its discussion, the Committee had commented on the importance of adequate staffing and resource to deliver the plan, robust recognition of the number of people on the housing waiting list, ensuring necessary infrastructure to deliver developments and had agreed seven recommendations to be submitted to Executive:

- (1) That the Executive is cognisant of the large numbers of people on the housing waiting lists.
- (2) That implementation of the Housing Delivery Action Plan include prioritisation of staffing and resources.

- (3) That more details on the resources to deliver the Housing Delivery Action Plan be provided by The Assistant Director - Planning and Development.
- (4) That the Leader write to central Government on any delays that might be caused by delays in responses by Government departments.
- (5) That suitable measures be taken to ensure that Section 106 agreements are processed on time to avoid delays.
- (6) That further consideration be given to necessary infrastructure developments to deliver the Housing Delivery Action Plan.
- (7) That further consideration be made to risk management of the delivery of the Housing Delivery Action Plan.

The Portfolio Holder for Planning and Development Management and Chair thanked Councillor Parsons and the Overview and Scrutiny Committee for their feedback, which they confirmed would be taken on board. In response to the recommendations, the Portfolio Holder for Planning and Development explained that the Chief Executive had given reassurance that resource would be made available.

The Chair confirmed he would write to the Government as per the fourth recommendation.

With regards Section 106 agreements and infrastructure development, the Portfolio Holder for Planning and Development Management referred to the Area Oversight Groups (AOGs) that had been established to bring together key stakeholders and agree local priorities under an Area Priority Plan. The key areas of work included supporting Planning Officers to resolve outstanding S106 issues and Planning / preparation for the receipt of S106 infrastructure contributions to ensure efficient spend / delivery. Joint working was important to address and unblock obstacles to housing delivery.

Resolved

- (1) That, having had regard to the feedback from the Overview and Scrutiny Committee, the Housing Delivery Action Plan be approved for publication.
- (2) That officers be instructed to keep the Housing Delivery Action Plan under review, having regard to comments received, and to make any necessary changes in consultation with the Portfolio Holder for Planning and Development Management.
- (3) That officers be 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.

Reasons

In order to improve the district's housing land supply position and address the obstacles and delays to housing delivery, it is recommended that the Housing Delivery Action Plan is agreed.

Alternative options

Option 1: Seek reconsideration of the Housing Delivery Action Plan. Officers consider that the proposed action plan provides the necessary foundation for improving the housing land supply situation. It can be reviewed in response to changing circumstances in consultation with the Portfolio Holder for Planning and Development Management.

6 A Future for Banbury update including the Banbury Area Priority Plan

The Corporate Director Communities submitted a report which provided an update on the work in progress in relation to the Banbury area following the publication of the Banbury 2050 report; and included the emerging Banbury Area Priority Plan (APP) as part of the developing Area Oversight Framework.

The Banbury APP was a compilation of the Banbury 2050 vision engagement findings and recommendations, whilst also included the priority plans currently under development at Oxfordshire County Council (OCC), with the aim to share one APP for the area.

In response to Executive member comments regarding community engagement and similar plans for Bicester Kidlington, the Portfolio Holder for Finance, Property and Regeneration explained dates for community engagement would be shared with Members in due course. Plans for Bicester and Kidlington were at a draft stage whilst Banbury was ahead as OCC had secured £300k of funding in its capital programme to deliver a Banbury masterplan in 2025/26. OCC had also secured funding for active travel projects focussing on design feasibility work for two active travel corridors in Banbury. Other funded projects included the installation of new seating and planting in Market Place and a Banbury Wayfinding project to be scoped.

Resolved

- (1) That the update be noted.

Reasons

The Banbury Area Priority Plan contains the projects currently identified from a variety of community engagement events and project action plans. The aim is for CDC and OCC to have one Banbury APP and to work jointly to enable and deliver projects. The APP is an important tool for enabling the delivery of projects within Banbury and it will be reviewed and monitored by the Banbury Area Oversight Group as part of the CDC Area Framework approach.

Alternative options

This report is submitted for information only.

7 **Housing Civil Penalties Policy**

The Assistant Director Wellbeing and Housing submitted a report to seek approval for the new Housing Civil Penalties Policy.

In response to Executive member comments regarding how cases came forward, the Portfolio Holder for Housing and Assistant Director Wellbeing and Housing explained that civil penalties were an alternative to prosecution for certain housing offences and were a good deterrent. The Housing Team followed up on complaints and/or concerns raised by tenants, Registered Providers, neighbours and elected Members.

Resolved

- (1) That the new Housing Civil Penalties Policy be approved.
- (2) That changes to the reviewed Housing Standards Enforcement 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. A periodic review of policies is therefore appropriate.

Alternative options

Option 1: Not bring forward a new and amended policy.

Our current approach to determining civil penalties is not consistent with the recent Upper Tribunal decisions, in particular Leicester CC vs Morjaria. This means that our current approach to calculating penalties will be at increasing risk of challenge. Therefore updates to the civil penalties policy are necessary. Changes to the Housing Standards Enforcement Policy are necessary for the creation of the new, compliant policy. Furthermore, it is important the Council policies are reviewed regularly to ensure that they are able to meet customer needs, service needs and are legislatively sound. This option is therefore rejected.

Option 2: Amend but retain as a combined policy.

Owing to the level of detail and complexity contained within the new civil penalties policy, coupled with the benefits of being consistent with the approach taken by numerous other local authorities, means combining the policies would make both unwieldy, difficult to use and less effective. This option is therefore rejected.

8 **Acceptance of Public Sector Decarbonization Scheme (PSDS) 4 Grant**

The Climate Change Programme Manager submitted a report to provide an update to the Executive on the funding attached to the Public Sector Decarbonisation Scheme (PSDS), allocate resources and implement the delivery of the associated building decarbonisation works in line with the Council's Strategic Priorities and carbon emissions reduction to achieve CDC's Carbon Net Zero 2030 target.

In response to Executive member comments regarding the timescales and arrangements should a site not come forward, the Portfolio Holder for Greener Communities, Corporate Director Communities Climate Change Programme Manager explained that there was a three-year planned programme of work and a risk register would be set up as part of the management of the project. Confirmation had been received from three of the sites and there was wider work in the Climate Action Plan so there were contingency schemes to ensure use of the grant was optimised.

Resolved

- (1) That it be agreed to proceed with the implementation of grant funding of £ 1,099,862 from the Public Sector Decarbonisation Scheme (PSDS) 4 as awarded by Salix Finance.
- (2) That an increase in the capital programme of £1,099,862 in line with the level of grant award, profiled in line with the timetable for receipt of the grant, be approved.
- (3) That the Net Zero Capital Projects budget be reprofiled to meet the match funding contribution of £350,911.40 and a further £210,000 to support deliver of the PSDS programme to fund:
 - Property team capacity and budget resource (personnel and funding) to manage procurement, contracts, installation oversight, and maintenance.
 - Capacity and budget resource (personnel and funding) to address outstanding rectification works from the previous PSDS-funded projects.
- (4) That the financial implications associated with the acceptance of the Public Sector Decarbonization Scheme 4 Grant, including that the profile of grant receipts is not flexible and so any slippage in the project will result in a risk that the council's contribution to the scheme increases, be noted.

Reasons

Accepting the PSDS funding offers a cost-effective and timely opportunity to make meaningful progress toward the Council's Strategic Priorities and Carbon Net Zero 2030 target. The projects supported by this funding will make our estate more energy efficient, reduce long-term energy costs, and demonstrate leadership in sustainability across the district.

The Executive is therefore recommended to approve the acceptance of the PSDS grant and support the delivery of the funded projects, enabling timely mobilisation and ongoing oversight.

Alternative options

Option 1: Do Nothing: Rejected due to continued reliance on high-carbon heating systems, missed opportunity for grant funding, and failure to meet internal climate targets.

Option 2: Delay Decision: Rejected due to time-sensitive nature of funding acceptance and delivery deadlines imposed by Salix Finance.

Option 3: Fund Through Council Capital Only: Rejected due to high capital cost burden and absence of external match-funding opportunity.

9 Finance and Performance Monitoring Report End of Year 2024-2025

The Assistant Director of Finance (S151 Officer) and Assistant Director – Customer Focus submitted a report to report to Executive the council's financial position and performance at the end of Year 2024-2025.

Resolved

- (1) That the council's financial and performance report at the End of Year 2024-2025 be noted.
- (2) That the reprofiling of capital projects beyond 2024-2025 (annex to the Minutes as set out in the Minute Book) and the subsequent update to the programme budget for this financial year 2025-2026 be approved.
- (3) That the reserve movements (annex to the Minutes as set out in the Minute Book) be approved.
- (4) That the outturn for 2024-2025, which is a surplus of (£0.162m) after the proposed contributions to reserves of £2.020m, be noted.

Reasons

The report updates the Executive on the year-end financial position and performance of the council for 2024/25, and performance position as of the end of year 2024-25. Regular reporting is key to good governance and demonstrates that the council is actively managing its resources sustainably.

Alternative options

Option 1: This report summarises the council's forecast financial position and performance position up to the end of End of Year 2024-25, therefore there are no alternative options to consider.

10 **Appointments to Partnerships, Outside Bodies, Member Champions and Shareholder Committee 2025/2026**

The Assistant Director Law and Governance submitted a report to appoint representatives to Partnerships, Outside Bodies, where these are executive functions, Member Champions and the Shareholder Committee, for the municipal year 2025/2026.

Resolved

- (1) That appointments to partnerships, outside bodies, the Shareholder Committee, Member Champions and advisory groups for the 2025/2026 municipal year be made as set out in the annex to the report (as set out in the Minute Book).
- (2) That authority be delegated to the Assistant Director Law and Governance, in consultation with the Leader of the Council, to appoint Members to any outstanding vacancies and make changes to appointments, including new appointments, as may be required for the 2025/2026 Municipal Year.
- (3) That appointed Members be reminded to update their Register of Interests as may be required, to reflect these appointments.

Reasons

It is proposed that representatives are appointed to Partnerships, Outside Bodies and as Member Champions as set out in the 1 to the report (annex to the Minutes as set out in the Minute Book) to ensure that the Council is represented and maintains links with partnerships and outside bodies.

Delegation to the Assistant Director Law and Governance, in consultation with the Leader provides flexibility for the remainder of the Municipal Year to appoint to any outstanding vacancies, or if amendments are required to any appointments, and ensures they are made in a timely manner.

Alternative options

Option 1: Not to appoint representatives to outside bodies, partnerships and as Member Champions. This is not recommended as the internal working groups would be ineffective and the Council would not be represented on these outside bodies and could miss valuable information and opportunities.

11 **Urgent Business**

There were no items of urgent business.

The meeting ended at 7.35 pm

Chair:

Date:

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Council

Record of Portfolio Holder Decisions for the period December 2024 to 11 July 2025

Area of Responsibility	Decision Subject Matter
Portfolio Holder for Finance, Property and Regeneration	Draft Oxfordshire Local Nature Recovery Strategy Consultation approval

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Cherwell District Council

Accounts, Audit and Risk Committee

Minutes of a meeting of the Accounts, Audit and Risk Committee held at Bodicote House, Bodicote, Banbury, Oxon OX15 4AA, on 20 November 2024 at 6.30 pm

Present:

Councillor Alisa Russell (Chairman)
Councillor David Rogers (Vice-Chairman)
Councillor Nick Cotter
Harry Lawson, Independent Person

Substitute Members:

Councillor Rob Parkinson (In place of Councillor Jean Conway)
Councillor Andrew McHugh (In place of Councillor Nicholas Mawer)
Councillor Linda Ward (In place of Councillor Ian Middleton)

Apologies for absence:

Councillor Besmira Brasha
Councillor Jean Conway
Councillor Nicholas Mawer
Councillor Ian Middleton
Sarah Thompson – Independent Person

Also Present:

Councillor Frank Ideh
Connor Munro, Internal Audit, Veritau
Sarah Butler, Internal Audit, Veritau

Also Present Virtually:

Kevin Suter, External Audit, EY

Officers:

Michael Furness, Assistant Director Finance & S151 Officer
Joanne Kaye, Head of Finance and Deputy Section 151 Officer
Natasha Clark, Governance and Elections Manager

Officers Attending Virtually:

Richard Smith, Head of Housing
Celia Prado-Teeling, Performance Team Leader
Alex Rycroft, Strategic Finance Business Partner

41

Appointment of Chairman

As the Chairman of the Accounts Audit and Risk Committee had stood down from the Committee, the Governance and Elections Manager – Democratic and Elections opened the meeting and called for nominations for the appointment of Chairman of the Accounts, Audit and Risk Committee for the remainder of the 2024/2025 municipal year.

It was proposed by Councillor McHugh and seconded by Councillor Rogers that Councillor Rogers be appointed Chairman of the Accounts, Audit and Risk Committee for the remainder of the 2024/2025 municipal year.

It was subsequently proposed by Councillor Cotter and seconded by Councillor Parkinson that Councillor Russell be appointed Chairman of the Accounts, Audit and Risk Committee for the remainder of the 2024/2025 municipal year.

There being two nominations for Chairman of the Accounts, Audit and Risk Committee, it was put to the vote. The Committee voted three in favour of Councillor Rogers and four in favour of Councillor Russell. Therefore, Councillor Russell was appointed Chairman for the remainder of the 2024/25 municipal year.

Resolved

- (1) That Councillor Alisa Russell be appointed Chairman of the Accounts, Audit and Risk Committee for the remainder of the 2024/2025 municipal year.

42

Appointment of Vice-Chairman (if required)

There was no requirement to vote for a Vice-Chairman.

43

Declarations of Interest

There were no declarations of interest.

44

Petitions and Requests to Address the Meeting

There were no petitions or requests to address the meeting.

45

Minutes

The Minutes of the meeting of the Committee held on 25 September 2024 were agreed as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

46 **Chairman's Announcements**

There were no Chairman's announcements.

47 **Urgent Business**

There were no items of urgent business.

48 **Counter Fraud Progress Report**

The Assistant Director of Finance (Section 151 Officer) submitted a report to update the Committee on the counter fraud work undertaken so far in 2024/25.

In introducing the report, Sarah Butler, Corporate Fraud Manager at Veritau provided an update on the work that had been carried out by Veritau following their appointment as the council's internal auditor on 1 May 2024. The Committee was advised that the Veritau team had been working closely with the Revenues and Benefits team at the Council to gain an awareness of how the Council worked and the systems it used.

The Committee was advised that the council's website had been updated to enable members of the public to report fraud to Veritau. Up to 25 October, Veritau had received sixty eight referrals, fifty nine of which had been assessed with some of these requiring further investigation.

Resolved

- (1) That the Counter Fraud Progress report be noted.

49 **Counter Fraud Policy Update Report**

The Assistant Director of Finance (Section 151 Officer) submitted a report which sought approval of two updated policies, Counter Fraud and Corruption Policy and Anti-Money Laundering Policy

In introducing the report, Sarah Butler, Corporate Fraud Manager at Veritau (the council's internal auditor) advised that the updated policies would bring the Council in line with best practice in the sector and would also update relevant contact details for reporting purposes.

Resolved

- (1) That the Counter Fraud and Corruption Policy be approved.
- (2) That the Anti-money Laundering Policy be approved.

50

Internal Audit Progress report 2024-25

The Assistant Director of Finance (Section 151 Officer) submitted a report which provided the Committee with an update on the delivery of the internal audit work programme for 2024/25, following approval of the programme at the meeting of 29 May 2024.

In introducing the report, Connor Murray, Assistant Director – Audit Assurance at Veritau, provided the Committee with a progress report on the activity undertaken by Veritau as the Council's internal auditors. The Committee was advised that work was progressing well and that Veritau would be in a position to provide a full opinion on the Council's risk management, governance and internal controls by the end of the financial year.

In response to a question relating to overdue actions in areas of business continuity and GDPR, the Committee was advised that these were being monitored and still required attention and would be included in future audit reports.

Resolved

- (1) That the progress made in delivering the 2024/25 internal audit work programme be noted.

51

External Audit Update 2022-2023

Kevin Suter, Partner Assurance – Government and Public Sector at EY provided a verbal update on the External Audit 2022-23.

The Committee was advised that due to the backstop arrangements introduced by Central Government that required Statement of Accounts up to 2022-23 to be published by 13 December 2024, EY would only be able to provide a disclaimed opinion for the Council's accounts 2022-23. The Committee was advised that this was a nationwide issue and it did not imply that there was anything wrong with the Council's accounts, rather that it was as a result of the fact that no audit work had not been undertaken due to the backlog in the sector.

In response to questions from the Committee, the External Auditor confirmed that no work had been undertaken for the 2022-23 Accounts. This was due to delays in completing previous audits along with resourcing issues. The Committee was also advised that as opening balances would not be certified it would take time for appropriate assurances to be re-built. To prevent accounts for every subsequent year being given a disclaimer opinion, the Financial Reporting Council (FRC) was in the process of issuing guidance for auditors to help build assurances over the next 3 – 4 years, subject to good quality accounts.

In response to questions regarding the EY fees for the work undertaken, the Committee was advised that EY did not have a contract with CDC rather with

Public Sector Audit Appointment (PSAA), which set the fees. PSA had yet to confirm fees and would look at each audit and set an individual fee for each audit. The Committee was advised that the Council would still receive formal assurance certificates relating to Value for Money as part of the fees being charged by EY.

Resolved

- (1) That the verbal update on the External Audit 2022-2023 be noted.

52 **Risk Monitoring Report Q2 2024-2025**

The Assistant Director Customer Focus submitted a report to update the Committee on how well the Council was managing its Strategic Risks.

In introducing the report, the Performance Team Leader advised the Committee that there had been no change in the Leadership Risk Register during Quarter 2 2024-25.

Resolved

- (1) That the Risk Monitoring Report for Quarter 2 2024-25 be noted.

53 **Housing Management Performance**

The Assistant Director Wellbeing and Housing submitted a report which provided the Committee with an annual report on Housing Management Performance relating to the Council's small stock holding of properties and in particular, matters that related to complaints performance in accordance with the Housing Ombudsman's Complaints Handling Code and the wider Social Housing (Regulation) Act.

In introducing the report, the Portfolio Holder for Housing explained that the report was a new regulatory requirement that had come in to effect in April 2024. The Committee was advised that once the report was approved it would be published on the Council's website.

In response to a question querying the value of the Tenants Satisfaction Measures Survey as the council only has a small stockholding and the low level of responses, the Head of Housing explained that whilst this meant the results in some measures could be distorted, it was still necessary to report and publish the Measures.

Resolved

- (1) That the Housing Management Performance report be noted and it be also noted that the Housing Management Performance Annual Report and Complaints Handling Code self-assessment would be published on

the Council's website and sent to the Housing Ombudsman as the Council's return for 2023-24.

54 **2022/23 Final Statement of Accounts**

The Assistant Director of Finance submitted a report on the 2022/23 Final Statement of Accounts.

In introducing the report, the Head of Finance advised the Committee that this was the final version of the accounts and that some changes had been made to the draft set of accounts that were presented to the Committee its meeting on the 20 March 2024. The most significant change was the downward valuation of the Council's property by £1.43M which had not been included in the draft accounts. The Committee was assured that procedures had been put in place to prevent this happening again. The Committee was advised that whilst the change led to amendments to the Statement of Accounts, it did not impact on the General Fund balance.

In response to questions from the Committee regarding the downward valuation of property, the Head of Finance confirmed that this was likely due to lower than anticipated rental yields being achieved from these assets.

In response to a question regarding the level of Audit fees being charged by EY, the Council's External Auditor for the 2022/23 Statement of Accounts, the Assistant Director of Finance explained that the cost was subject to review by the Public Sector Audit Appointments (PSAA) and therefore that this may be reduced. The Committee was advised that any reduction in fees would be potentially offset by work required on the opening balances for the 2023/24 accounts alongside increased fees for the year.

Resolved

- (1) That the final 2022/23 Statement of Accounts and the associated changes between draft and final version be noted.

55 **Financial Management Code - Forecast Self-Assessment Update 2024-25**

The Assistant Director of Finance (Section 151 Officer) submitted a report which updated the Committee on the results of the Council's forecast self-assessment position at February 2025 against the requirements of CIPFA's Financial Management Code.

In introducing the report, the Head of Finance advised the Committee that the Financial Management Code was the minimum that Local Authorities had to do to comply with Section 151 of the Local Government Act to meet its financial responsibilities and that this was the responsibility of the Section 151 officer, Corporate Leadership team and the Executive.

The Committee was advised that the Council's self-assessment was green in all areas of the Financial Management Code which demonstrated a resilient and sustainable approach to managing the Council's finances.

Resolved

- (1) That the Council's forecast self-assessment position of strong compliance at February 2025 against the requirements of CIPFA's Financial Management Code be noted.

56 **Treasury Management Report - Mid-year review 2024-25 (September 2024)**

The Assistant Director of Finance submitted a report that updated the Committee on treasury management performance and compliance with treasury management policy for 2024-25 as required by the Treasury Management Code of Practice.

In introducing the report, the Head of Finance advised that all treasury management activities undertaken to date during the financial year 2024-25 complied with the Council's approved Treasury Management Strategy, and all Prudential Indicators were met during the reporting period. Over the course of the year, there was an overall Treasury Management forecast underspend of £0.015m compared to the approved budget.

Resolved

- (1) That the Treasury Management mid-year review 2024-25 (September 2025) be noted and Council be recommended to receive the report.

57 **Work Programme**

The Head of Finance provided an update on the Committee's work programme.

Resolved

- (1) That the work programme update be noted.

The meeting ended at 7.39 pm

Chairman:

Date:

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Cherwell District Council

Accounts, Audit and Risk Committee

Minutes of a meeting of the Accounts, Audit and Risk Committee held at Bodicote House, Bodicote, Banbury, Oxon OX15 4AA, on 15 January 2025 at 7.00 pm

Present:

Councillor Alisa Russell (Chairman)
Councillor David Rogers (Vice-Chairman)
Councillor Frank Ideh
Councillor Ian Middleton
Councillor Rob Parkinson
Councillor Dom Vaitkus
Harry Lawson, Independent Person (no voting rights)
Sarah Thompson, Independent Person (no voting rights)

Apologies for absence:

Councillor Besmira Brasha
Councillor Nicholas Mawer

Also Present:

Councillor Lesley McLean, Deputy Leader and Portfolio Holder for Finance, Regeneration and Property

Also Present Virtually:

Mark Bartlett, External Audit, Bishop Fleming
Craig Sullivan, External Audit, Bishop Fleming
Connor Munro, Internal Audit, Veritau

Officers:

Shiraz Sheikh, Assistant Director Law & Governance and Monitoring Officer
Joanne Kaye, Head of Finance and Deputy Section 151 Officer
Ian Upstone, Waste Resource Manager
Alex Rycroft, Strategic Finance Business Partner
Patrick Davis, Democratic and Elections Officer

Officers Attending Virtually:

Ian Boll, Corporate Director Communities
Claire Cox, Assistant Director Human Resources
Ruth Wooldridge, Health and Safety Manager

58 **Declarations of Interest**

There were no declarations of interest.

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

There were no petitions or requests to address the meeting.

60 **Minutes**

The Minutes of the meeting of the Committee held on 20 November 2024 were agreed as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

61 **Chairman's Announcements**

There were no Chairman's announcements.

62 **Urgent Business**

There were no items of urgent business.

63 **Verbal update on the 2023-24 Statement of Accounts**

Craig Sullivan, Partner and Mark Bartlett, Director at Bishop Fleming, the council's external auditor, provided the Committee with an update on the Audit Completion Report and the Auditor's Annual Report.

In response to a question regarding the reclassification of assets between investment assets and property, plant and equipment (PPE), the Committee was advised that PPE was one of the main items that remained to be fully audited.

In response to a question regarding the lack of information in Section 6, Audit Adjustments, the Committee was advised that work was still being undertaken on this element of the audit and the pension liability commitment was still subject to a final valuation.

In response to questions regarding the impact of the disclaimed opinion on the opening balances for 2023/24 due to a disclaimed opinion for the 2022/23 audit, the Committee was advised that the current audit had included work on transactional data and management accounts for the 2023/24 period and this had not led to any concerns that would impact on the opinion provided by Bishop Fleming. The Committee was advised that there would still be a disclaimed opinion due to there not being assurance provided on the opening balances.

Resolved

- (1) That the 2023/24 Statement of Accounts verbal update be noted.

64

External Audit 2023/24 Update

The Assistant Director of Finance (Section 151 Officer) submitted a report to update the Committee on the status of the audit of the 2023/24 statement of accounts, to note the proposed changes to the draft statement of accounts; to note the draft Letter of Representation; and to seek delegated authority to finalise the accounts with the auditors by the backstop date for the 2023/24 accounts.

In introducing the report, the Portfolio Holder for Finance, Property and Regeneration highlighted the changes that had been made since the final draft accounts had been issued which included changes in value to long term assets and a likely change to come in relation to the recording of the pension fund liability. The Committee was advised that none of the changes impacted on the General Fund balance.

In response to a question regarding the change in valuation of property assets, the Committee was advised that the asset in question was Tramway Industrial Estate.

In response to a question regarding the billing from the previous External Auditors the Committee was advised that Public Sector Audit Appointments would be reviewing the audit fees for the 2022/23 statement of accounts.

Resolved

- (1) That the proposed changes between the draft and final statement of accounts for 2023/24 be noted.
- (2) That the draft Letter of Representation for 2023/24 (annex to the Minutes as set out in the Minute Book) be noted.
- (3) That once the final audit opinion for 2023/24 was received, the Assistant Director Finance (S151 Officer), in consultation with the Chair of the Accounts, Audit and Risk Committee (or Vice Chair in their absence), be authorised to make any further changes to the accounts agreed with the auditors and sign the accounts and it be noted that any further changes would be brought to the Committee's attention at its next meeting following the signing.
- (4) That the Assistant Director of Finance (S151 Officer), in consultation with the Chair of the Committee (or Vice Chair in their absence), be authorised to make any further changes to the letter of representation agreed with the auditors that may arise during completion of the audit and it be noted that any further changes would be brought to the Committee's attention at its next meeting following the signing.

65

Annual Governance Statement 2023-2024 – Update on Actions

The Assistant Director of Law and Governance and Monitoring Officer submitted a report to consider an update on actions from the Annual Governance Statement (AGS) 2023/2024.

In introducing the report, the Assistant Director of Law and Governance and Monitoring Officer advised the Committee that the Annual Governance Statement was a document that explained the processes and procedures that were in place to enable the Council to carry out its functions and also to ensure that it complied with the Governance Code and relevant legislation.

In response to a question regarding the implementation of kerbside glass recycling the Committee was advised that the Council was required to implement this initiative by April 2026. The Council was expected to receive its first Extended Produce Responsibility (EPR) payment from DEFRA in 2025/26.

Resolved

- (1) That the update on the actions arising from the Annual Governance Statement 2023/2024 be noted.

66

Local Code of Corporate Governance

The Assistant Director of Law and Governance and Monitoring Officer submitted a report to review the Local Code of Corporate Governance. The code was part of the overall system of internal control at the Council and supported the provision of the Annual Governance Statement (AGS) which was approved annually by the Accounts, Audit and Risk Committee.

In introducing the report, the Assistant Director of Law and Governance and Monitoring Officer advised the Committee that although it was not a legal requirement, the implementation of the Local Code of Corporate Governance was viewed as best practice for local authorities and was based on the CIPFA / Solace Framework for Corporate Governance in Local Government. The Committee was informed that the Local Code of Corporate Governance was reviewed annually.

Resolved

- (1) That the Council's Local Code of Corporate Governance be approved.

67

Capital and Investment Strategy and Draft Treasury Management Strategy 2024/25

The Assistant Director of Finance (Section 151 Officer) submitted a report to update the Committee on the draft Capital and Investment Strategy and Treasury Management Strategy for 2025-26.

In introducing the report the Portfolio Holder for Finance, Property and Regeneration advised the Committee that the Strategies set the limits that the Council must work within. They were reviewed annually as part of the budget setting process and submitted to the Committee for review, comment and recommendation to the Executive.

In response to a question from the Committee regarding the reduction of the operational boundary from £290M to £200M, within the Capital and Investment Strategy, the Head of Finance advised that this was now calculated using a risk-based approach rather than a worst case basis which was viewed as a more realistic approach to these parameters.

Further questions were raised regarding the Capital Programme budgets for the “Quality Housing and Place Making” and “Running the Business” corporate priorities. The Head of Finance undertook to provide more information to the Committee.

Resolved

- (1) That the draft Capital and Investment Strategy for 2025-26 and draft Treasury Management Strategy for 2025-26 be recommended to Executive.

68

Internal Audit Progress Update 2024/25

The Assistant Director of Finance (Section 151 Officer) submitted a report which provided the Committee with an update on the delivery of the internal audit work programme for 2024/25.

In introducing the report, Connor Munro, Assistant Director – Audit Assurances at Veritau explained that the report was intended to provide the Committee with assurances that Veritau were on track to deliver the internal audit work programme for the current year, to provide outcomes on finalised audits and an overview on the full activity that had been undertaken during the year. Since the last report to the Committee the procurement compliance and corporate health and safety engagements had been completed.

In response to a question regarding the effectiveness of the controls that were currently in place particularly relating to procurement compliance, the Committee was advised that it was too early in the audit to come to a conclusion but the Corporate Leadership Team were taking this issue seriously and appropriate actions had been agreed.

In response to a question regarding the Merton College planning application appeal, the Committee was advised the internal audit had concentrated on the events that led to the appeal along with performance management within the planning service.

In response to a question regarding the nine agreed actions that were overdue, further information would be circulated to the Committee.

Resolved

- (1) That the progress made in delivering the 2024/25 internal audit work programme be noted.

69 **Work Programme**

The Head of Finance provided an update on the Committee's work programme.

Resolved

- (1) That the work programme update be noted.

The meeting ended at 8.20 pm

Chairman:

Date:

Cherwell District Council

Accounts, Audit and Risk Committee

Minutes of a meeting of the Accounts, Audit and Risk Committee held at Bodicote House, Bodicote, Banbury, Oxon OX15 4AA, on 19 March 2025 at 6.30 pm

Present:

Councillor David Rogers (Vice-Chairman)
Councillor Frank Ideh
Councillor Nicholas Mawer
Councillor Ian Middleton
Councillor Robert Parkinson
Councillor Dom Vaitkus
Sarah Thompson, Independent Person

Apologies for absence:

Councillor Alisa Russell
Councillor Besmira Brasha

Also Present:

Connor Munro, Internal Audit, Veritau
Sarah Butler, Internal Audit, Veritau
Mark Bartlett, External Audit, Bishop Fleming

Officers:

Michael Furness, Assistant Director Finance & S151 Officer
Jacey Scott, Head of Revenues and Benefits
Patrick Davis, Democratic and Elections Officer

Officers Attending Virtually:

Celia Prado-Teeling, Performance Team Leader
Ruth Wooldridge, Health and Safety Manager

70 Declarations of Interest

There were no declarations of interest.

71 Petitions and Requests to Address the Meeting

There were no petitions or requests to address the meeting.

72 **Minutes**

The Minutes of the meeting of the Committee held on 15 January 2025 were agreed as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

73 **Chairman's Announcements**

There were no Chairman's announcements.

74 **Urgent Business**

There were no items of urgent business.

75 **Draft Annual Report of the Accounts, Audit and Risk Committee 2024-25**

The Assistant Director of Finance (Section 151 Officer) submitted the draft annual report of the Accounts, Audit and Risk Committee for the financial year 2024/25. It had been prepared to enable the Committee to demonstrate to Council how it had fulfilled its terms of reference.

In introducing the report, Connor Munro, Assistant Director – Audit Assurances at Veritau advised the Committee that the report summarised the work that had been undertaken by the Committee over the last twelve months. The report detailed how the Council had discharged its responsibility over the year at its meetings in line with its terms of reference as set out in the constitution. The Committee was advised that under accountability arrangements a self-assessment of its effectiveness needed to be undertaken in the next municipal year.

In response to a question regarding the PR9 planning appeal, the Committee was advised that a report was in the process of being drafted and it was the intention to bring this to the next meeting of the Committee on the 28 May 2025.

Resolved

- (1) That the draft annual report be finalised in preparation for the Accounts, Audit and Risk Committee Chair's presentation to Council.

76 **Internal Audit Work Programme 2025-26**

The Assistant Director of Finance (Section 151 Officer) submitted a report which provided the Committee with the programme of internal audit work to be undertaken in 2025/26.

In introducing the report, Connor Munro, Assistant Director – Audit Assurances at Veritau advised the Committee that the work undertaken as

part of the annual report formed the basis of the internal auditor's opinion of the strength of the framework of the Council's risk management, governance and control. The Committee was advised that the work was carried out via a series of eight audits across eleven key assurance areas.

In response to a question regarding how the internal audit work programme would examine the amount of work being undertaken by officers in relation to local government reorganisation and the impact this may have on the day to day running of the council, the Committee was advised that this would be addressed through the internal audit process.

In response to a question regarding the assumptions made in the medium-term financial strategy that would move the Council in to a deficit position in 2026-27, the Committee was advised that the key driver in the forecast budget gap was the potential reduction in resources following the proposed business rates reset by Central Government along with other local government finance reforms.

Resolved

- (1) That the 2025/26 internal audit work programme be approved.

77

Counter Fraud Progress Report

The Assistant Director of Finance (Section 151 Officer) submitted a report which provided an update on counter fraud work undertaken so far in 2024/25 (covering the period 1 May 2024 to 26 February 2025).

In introducing the report, Sarah Butler, Corporate Fraud Manager at Veritau gave an update on the work that had taken place over the last few months, which included training sessions with the Customer Services and Housing teams alongside ongoing work with Revenues and Benefits. The Committee was advised that the Counter Fraud Team had received 124 referred since 1 May 2024. As at the 26 February 2025, there were fourteen cases under active investigation. Since 1 May 2024, twelve investigations had been completed.

In response to a question regarding data matching between electoral registration data and council tax records, the Committee was advised that this information proved useful as it helped to flag issues that required further investigation.

In response to questions regarding the origins of the referrals and whether any patterns could be established, the Committee was advised that the referrals came from three main sources: members of the public, data matching and council officers. The unsuccessful referrals generally related to issues that did not affect the Council directly such as work undertaken by Oxfordshire County Council and the Department of Work and Pension, which were sent to the most appropriate organisation. There was not an obvious trend of unsuccessful referrals coming from any particular channel.

In response to a question regarding the process of dealing with referrals, the Committee was advised that the first stage was to triage each case and to undertake basic checks. Cases were then evaluated as to the risk they represented with the highest risk cases given the highest priority.

In response to a question regarding a bounced cheque, the Committee was advised that the details would be circulated following the meeting.

Resolved

- (1) That the update on the counter fraud work undertaken so far in 2024/25 be noted.

78 2025-26 Counter Fraud Plan

The Assistant Director of Finance (Section 151 Officer) submitted a report to update the Committee on the counter fraud plan for 2025/26.

In introducing the report, Sarah Butler, Corporate Fraud Manager at Veritau provided an overview of the strategy and advised that its structure was largely informed by the Fighting Fraud and Corruption Locally strategy for local authorities.

In response to a question regarding the way in which risk areas were assessed between the inherent risk and residual risk indicators, the Committee was advised that although the controls in place were considered to be appropriate, there would always be a risk and these would be mitigated as best they can.

Resolved

- (1) That the 2025/26 Counter Fraud Plan be approved.

79 Risk Based Verification Policy

The Assistant Director Finance submitted a report to seek approval of the reviewed Risk Based Verification (RBV) Policy for 2025/26.

In introducing the report, the Portfolio Holder for Finance, Property and Regeneration outlined the Risk Based Verification process. The aim was to reduce the burden on customers and enable low risk claims to be put into payment more quickly which allowed resources to be dedicated to higher risk claims.

In response to a question as to whether the risk assessment that was made in real time was undertaken by a person or by the software, the Head of Revenues and Benefits Services advised the Committee that after income and expenditure data had been received a risk score was assigned by the

software. The claim would then be processed by an officer. Risk scores were reviewed regularly by the Revenues and Benefits management team. It was agreed that updated information on the risk scores would be circulated to the Committee once it was ready.

In response to a question regarding the source of the data that was used to determine the risk score, the Committee was advised that this came from historical data built up over a period of time but was not specific to an individual.

In response to a question regarding the level of sampling that was undertaken to check the low risk scores it was agreed that additional information would be circulated to the Committee afterwards.

Resolved

- (1) That the report be noted.
- (2) That the Risk Based Verification policy for the financial year 2025/26 be approved.

80

Risk Monitoring Report Q3 2024-25

The Assistant Director Customer Focus submitted a report to update the Committee on how well the Council was managing its strategic risks.

In introducing the report, the Portfolio Holder for Corporate Services confirmed that there were no score changes in the Leadership Risk Register during the quarter. One risk had been added to the Risk Register which was in relation to the local government reorganisation and the likely impact of this on Cherwell District Council and its residents.

Resolved

- (1) That the Risk Monitoring Report for Quarter 3 2024-25 be noted.

81

Annual Health and Safety Report 2023-24

The Assistant Director of Human Resources submitted a report to provide the Committee with the Council's Health and Safety performance over the 2023-24 financial year and its plan for the current year.

In introducing the report, the Portfolio Holder for Corporate Services advised that the majority of incidents recorded involved Environmental Health, which was viewed as the highest risk area within the council due to the nature of the work undertaken by the department. The Committee was advised that the Annual Health and Safety report for 2024-25 would be submitted to the May

Committee meeting and thereafter reports would be submitted on a quarterly basis.

In response to a question regarding the reporting of near misses, the Committee was advised that the aim was to quantify these incidents going forward so that they were reported in a similar way to accidents.

In response to a question regarding the relationship between the number of accidents and the number of days lost, the Committee was advised that not all incidents resulted in time off work. It was dependent on the nature of the injury and any proposed return to work would only take place after discussions between the employee and their manager.

The Committee was advised the proactive health surveillance programme had been developed in consultation with the Council's Occupational Health Advisor and was tailored to the employee's role. This was currently under review to ensure that the suitable screening was taking place.

The Committee suggested that future reports include context to reflect the increase in the number of properties that had been built in the Cherwell district and the impact this may have had on the number of reported accidents.

Resolved

- (1) That the content of the Annual Health and Safety Report 2023-24 be noted.
- (2) That officers be requested to provide more context to the data in the reports.

82

2023-24 Final Statement of Accounts

The Assistant Director of Finance (S151 Officer) submitted a report to ask the Committee to note the final audit results and annual report of the council's external auditors in relation to the 2023/24 statement of accounts.

In introducing the report, the Portfolio Holder for Finance, Property and Regeneration advised the Committee that the 2023/24 statement of accounts had been published by the statutory deadline of the 28 February 2025 with a disclaimer opinion. The Committee was advised that there had been some changes from the draft accounts that had been presented at their 15 January meeting, these included a change in the pension liability which had increased by £7.65M to reflect the asset ceiling effect. The Committee was advised that none of the changes impacted on the general fund.

Resolved

- (1) That the final 2023/24 Statement of Accounts and the associated changes between the draft and final versions be noted.

- (2) That the final letter of representation for 2023/24 be noted.
- (3) That the final Auditor's Annual Report and Audit Completion Report from the council's external auditors, Bishop Fleming, be noted.

83 **External Audit Plan 2024/25**

The Assistant Director Finance submitted a report outlining the External Audit Plan for 2024/25 from the Council's external auditors, Bishop Fleming LLP

In response to a question regarding the implications of local government reorganisation on the external audit plan, the Committee was advised that there was no direct impact on the 2024/25 audit plan at this time.

Resolved

- (1) That the External Audit Plan for 2024/25 be noted.

84 **Accounting Policies 2024-25**

The Assistant Director Finance submitted which asked the Committee to review and approve the Accounting Policies for inclusion in the 2024/25 Statement of Accounts which were due to be published by 30 June 2025. The Council was required to set accounting policies which set out the specific principles, bases, conventions, rules, and practices applied by an authority in preparing and presenting financial statements

In introducing the report, the Portfolio Holder for Finance, Property and Regeneration explained that the main change was the updated leasing section that reflected the new international financial reporting standard but this did not impact council tax payers. The new standard also required the Council to set a threshold of low value items that would not appear on the balance sheet, it was proposed that this should be set at £10K.

In response to a question regarding the transformation project currently being undertaken by the Council and how this might be impacted by local government reorganisation, the Committee was advised irrespective of any future changes to its structure, the Council still needed to set a balanced budget over the next three years.

Resolved

- (1) That the accounting policies as recommended by the Chief Finance Officer be approved.

Treasury Management Report Q3 2024-25

The Assistant Director Finance (S151 Officer) submitted a report which provided information on treasury management performance and compliance with treasury management policy for 2024-25 as required by the Treasury Management Code of Practice.

The Committee was advised that Council had operated within the Treasury and Prudential indicators as set out in the Treasury Management Strategy Statement 2024-25.

In response to questions regarding borrowing costs and investment income, the Committee was advised that the Council had locked in its borrowing at a lower rate and had been able to invest any surplus income from investments at a higher rate.

In response to a question regarding the management of a particular loan, the Committee was advised that there was currently little difference between the use of the overdraft compared to a loan. It was anticipated that the borrowing rate of the latter was expected to drop in the next couple of months and officers would then review the situation.

In response to a question regarding the investment of funds in green investments the Committee was advised that security, liquidity and yield remained the primary investment considerations as required by the Treasury Management Code. The Assistant Director of Finance explained that there were potentially times where investment offers were similar and in these situations the Council would always select the green option.

Resolved

- (1) That the Treasury Management Q3 2024/25 report be noted.

The meeting ended at 7.59 pm

Chairman:

Date:

Cherwell District Council

Accounts, Audit and Risk Committee

Minutes of a meeting of the Accounts, Audit and Risk Committee held at 39 Castle Quay, Banbury, OX16 5FD, on 21 May 2025 at 7.26 pm

Present:

Councillor Simon Lytton (Chairman)
Councillor David Rogers (Vice-Chairman)
Councillor Besmira Brasha
Councillor Frank Ideh
Councillor Nicholas Mawer
Councillor Ian Middleton
Councillor Robert Parkinson
Councillor Dom Vaitkus

1 Appointment of Chairman for the municipal year 2025/2026

It was proposed by Councillor Rogers and seconded by Councillor Parkinson that Councillor Lytton be appointed Chair of the Accounts, Audit and Risk Committee for the municipal year 2025/2026.

There were no further nominations.

Resolved

- (1) That Councillor Simon Lytton be appointed Chair of the Accounts, Audit and Risk Committee for the municipal year 2025/2026.

2 Appointment of Vice-Chairman for the municipal year 2025/2026

It was proposed by Councillor Mawer and seconded by Councillor Vaitkus that Councillor Rogers be appointed Vice-Chair of the Accounts, Audit and Risk Committee for the municipal year 2025/2026.

There were no further nominations.

Resolved

- (1) That Councillor David Rogers be appointed Vice-Chair of the Accounts, Audit and Risk Committee for the municipal year 2025/2026.

The meeting ended at 7.27 pm

Chairman:

Date:

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Cherwell District Council

Accounts, Audit and Risk Committee

Minutes of a meeting of the Accounts, Audit and Risk Committee held at 39 Castle Quay, Banbury, OX16 5FD, on 28 May 2025 at 6.30 pm

Present:

Councillor Simon Lytton (Chair)
Councillor David Rogers (Vice-Chair)
Councillor Frank Ideh
Councillor Nicholas Mawer
Councillor Ian Middleton
Councillor Robert Parkinson
Councillor Dom Vaitkus
Sarah Thompson, Independent Person

Substitute Members:

Apologies for absence:

Councillor Besmira Brasha

Also Present:

Councillor Lesley McLean, Deputy Leader and Portfolio Holder for Finance, Regeneration and Property
Councillor Chris Brant, Portfolio Holder for Corporate Services
Connor Munro, Internal Audit, Veritau

Also Present Virtually:

Sarah Butler, Internal Audit, Veritau

Officers:

Michael Furness, Assistant Director Finance & S151 Officer
David Peckford, Assistant Director Planning & Development
Denzil Turbervill, Head of Legal Services
Ruth Wooldridge, Health and Safety Manager
Natasha Clark, Governance and Elections Manager
Patrick Davis, Democratic and Elections Officer

Officers Attending Virtually:

Paul Seckington, Head of Development Management

3

Declarations of Interest

There were no declarations of interest.

4 **Minutes**

The Minutes of the meetings of the Committee held on 19 March 2025 and 21 May 2025 were agreed as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

5 **Chairman's Announcements**

- 1) The Chair updated the Committee on the process to recruit a new Independent Person. This was still ongoing with the current deadline for applications to be received by the 22 June.
- 2) Members of the Committee were reminded that Treasury Management training would take place after the next meeting on the 16 July 2025.

6 **Requests to Address the Meeting**

There were no petitions or requests to address the meeting.

7 **Urgent Business**

There were no items of urgent business.

8 **Head of Internal Audit Annual Report 2024/25**

The Assistant Director of Finance (Section 151 Officer) submitted a report which presented the Head of Internal Audit's Annual Report for 2024/25. This summarised internal audit work undertaken in 2024/25 provided an opinion on the Council's System of Internal Control. The report also included an update to the internal audit charter, which had been updated to ensure that it reflects the requirements of the Global Internal Audit Standards in the UK Public Sector, which came into effect on 1 April 2025

In introducing the report, Connor Munro, Assistant Director – Audit Assurances at Veritau advised the Committee that the paper reported on the outcomes of the internal audit work carried out and the strength of opinion on the Council's arrangements for risk management, governance and internal controls. The Committee was advised that for the 2024-25 financial year the Head of Internal Audit's opinion was that this framework provided "Reasonable Assurance" but that there were two areas which needed to be considered for inclusion in the Annual Governance Statement.: Health and Safety Management system; and the Management of strategic site applications.

In response to a question regarding the possibility of including a timeline of overdue audit recommendations to show how quickly these had been

actioned, the Assistant Director – Audit Assurance confirmed that this was something Veritau intended to include in future reports.

Resolved

- (1) That the results of internal audit work undertaken, and the opinion of the Head of Internal Audit that Reasonable Assurance can be provided on the adequacy and effectiveness of the council's framework of governance, risk management and internal control be noted.
- (2) That the outcome of Veritau's quality assurance and development arrangements, including the confirmation that the internal audit service conforms to public sector internal auditing standards be noted.
- (3) That the two significant control weaknesses that had been identified by internal audit during the year which were considered relevant to the preparation of the Annual Governance Statement: the council's health and safety management system and its handling of strategic site applications, be noted.
- (4) That the draft internal audit charter be approved.

9

Counter Fraud Annual Report

The Assistant Director of Finance (Section 151 Officer) submitted the Counter Fraud Annual Report for 2024/25.

In introducing the report, Sarah Butler, Corporate Fraud Manager at Veritau advised the Committee that the report updated the Committee on the Fraud Team's work in 2024/25. Veritau had established a good working relationship with various departments within the Council and that twelve fraud investigations had taken place.

In response to a question regarding how the figure of 66% of successful outcomes of fraud investigations compared to previous years and other Councils, the Corporate Fraud Manager explained that the industry standard was around 50% but it was difficult to provide comparative data due to the nature of the work undertaken. Comparisons with previous years were not available as this was the first year Veritau had been engaged as the Council's counter-fraud provider.

Resolved

- (1) That the Counter Fraud Annual Report 2024/2025 be noted.

10

Annual Health and Safety Report 2024-25

The Assistant Director of Human Resources submitted a report that provided the Committee with the Council's Health and Safety performance over the 2024/25 financial year and its plan for the current year.

In introducing the report, the Portfolio Holder for Corporate Services explained that the majority of incidents and accidents that had been recorded involved Environmental Services. Due to the nature of the work undertaken, this was the highest area of risk for the Council. Each incident was investigated thoroughly with appropriate corrective actions taken as necessary including training, supervision and monitoring.

In response to a question regarding the availability of comparative data from other local District Councils, the Committee was advised that this was reported monthly to the Core Leadership Team and that Cherwell's data was similar to other Councils.

In response to a question regarding the increase in the amount of vehicle accidents in 2024/2025, the Health and Safety Manager explained that the Environmental Services management team was working on an action plan to reduce the number of accidents.

The Committee requested that, as far as practicable, additional information on vehicle accident rates and the impact of the associated action plan; updated information on near misses and systems in place to address these; and, days lost for incidents that were non-RIDDOR accidents be included in future reports.

Resolved

- (1) That the Annual Health and Safety Report 2024/2025 be noted.
- (2) That it be noted that Health and Safety performance reports would be submitted quarterly to the Committee and officers be requested to incorporate the following in future reports as far as practicable: update on vehicle accident rates and impact of the action plan; update on near misses and systems in place to address these; and, days lost for incidents that are non-RIDDOR accidents.

11

Treasury Management Report - Annual Performance Report 2024/25

The Assistant Director Finance (S151 Officer) submitted a report which provided information on treasury management performance and compliance with treasury management policy for the end of the financial year 2024-25 as required by the Treasury Management Code of Practice. The report also demonstrated that all treasury management activities undertaken during the reporting period complied with the CIPFA Code of Practice and the council's approved Treasury Management Strategy.

In introducing the report, the Portfolio Holder for Finance, Property and Regeneration advised that as at 31 March 2025 the Council had borrowings of £165M, with an arranged overdraft of £15M and investments of £5M, which resulted in a net borrowing of £160M. This was similar to the 31 March 2024 year end net borrowing figure of £159M. The Treasury Management budget outturn position 2024/25 was a surplus of £1.571M.

In response to a question regarding the increase in the estimated ratio of financing costs to 36.8% in 2026/27, the Committee was advised that this was due to the anticipated business rates reset that was being implemented by Central Government.

In response to questions from the Committee regarding comparative data for the non-treasury investments position and the assumptions that had been made relating to the forecasted increase on financial investments, the Assistant Director of Finance agreed to provide this data after the meeting.

Resolved

- (1) That the Treasury Management Annual Performance Report 2024/2025 be noted.
- (2) That the Treasury Management Annual Performance Report 2024/2025 be recommended to Council.

12 Review of Committee Work Programme

The Assistant Director of Finance provided an update on the Committee's work programme.

Resolved

- (1) That the work programme update be noted.

13 Rutten Lane planning application: fact finding review outcomes and action plan

The Assistant Director of Planning and Development submitted a report with exempt appendices which presented the outcomes of the Veritau fact finding report surrounding the handling of the Rutten Lane planning application and subsequent appeal. The exempt appendices also provided the Committee with information on the Development Management service's draft action plan, which had been prepared in response to Veritau's review and to a separate lessons learned exercise carried out by the service.

It was proposed by Councillor Lytton and seconded by Councillor Rogers that the meeting move into private session to consider the exempt appendices to the report.

14 **Exclusion of public and press**

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.

15 **Rutten Lane planning application: fact-finding review outcomes and action plan - Exempt Appendices**

The Portfolio Holder for Finance, Property and Regeneration introduced the exempt appendices, which included an action plan for the management of strategic planning applications which would be developed further with the Portfolio Holder for Planning and Development.

In response to a question regarding funding of the additional resources required to address the recommendations arising from the report, the Committee was advised that this was under ongoing consideration by the Corporate Leadership Team.

In response to a question enquiring the suitability of the current software used and if there could be improved use of technology to assist with the process of managing large scale planning applications, the Assistant Director Planning and Development explained that the use and longer term suitability of the current software would be reviewed.

16 **Readmittance of the Press and Public**

Resolved

That the press and public be readmitted to the meeting.

17 **Rutten Lane planning application: fact finding review outcomes and action plan**

The press and public having been readmitted to the meeting, the Portfolio Holder for Finance, Property and Regeneration gave an overview of the report highlighting the timeline of the events that led to the appeal and the rationale as to the subsequent award of costs against the Council.

The Committee was advised that the review had been undertaken to reduce the risk of a similar outcome in the future and to produce a draft action plan to improve the management of strategic planning applications.

Resolved

- (1) That the findings and conclusions from Veritau's fact-finding review be noted.
- (2) That it be noted that a strategic planning applications action plan had been drafted by the council's Development Management service to help manage delivery of the identified improvements and that this would be finalised in consultation with the Portfolio Holder for Planning and Development Management.

The meeting ended at 8.30 pm

Chair:

Date:

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Cherwell District Council

Budget Planning Committee

Minutes of a meeting of the Budget Planning Committee held at Bodicote House, Bodicote, Banbury, Oxon OX15 4AA, on 10 December 2024 at 6.30 pm

Present:

Councillor Edward Fraser Reeves (Chairman)
Councillor Matt Hodgson (Vice-Chairman)
Councillor Tom Beckett (also, Portfolio Holder for Greener Communities)
Councillor Andrew Crichton
Councillor Frank Ideh
Councillor Rob Pattenden (also, Portfolio Holder for Healthy Communities)
Councillor David Rogers
Councillor Les Sibley
Councillor Dom Vaitkus
Councillor Barry Wood

Apologies for absence:

Councillor Gordon Blakeway
Councillor Rob Parkinson also, Portfolio Holder for Safer Communities)

Also Present:

Councillor Lesley McLean, Deputy Leader and Portfolio Holder for Finance, Regeneration and Property
Councillor Chris Brant, Portfolio Holder for Corporate Services

Also Present Virtually:

Councillor John Broad
Councillor Kieron Mallon
Councillor Dr Chukwudi Okeke
Councillor Amanda Watkins

Officers:

Michael Furness, Assistant Director Finance & S151 Officer
Shiraz Sheikh, Assistant Director Law & Governance and Monitoring Officer
Nicola Riley, Assistant Director Housing and Wellbeing
Leanne Lock, Strategic Business Partner - Business Partnering & Controls
Matt Swinford, Democratic and Elections Officer

Officers Attending Virtually:

Joanne Kaye, Head of Finance and Deputy Section 151 Officer
Gordon Stewart, Chief Executive
Ian Boll, Corporate Director Communities
Stephen Hinds, Corporate Director Resources and Transformation
Claire Cox, Assistant Director Human Resources
David Spilsbury, Head of Digital and Innovation
Mona Walsh, Assistant Director - Property
Shona Ware, Assistant Director Customer Focus
Paul Seckington, Head of Development Management

24 **Declarations of Interest**

There were no declarations of interest.

25 **Minutes**

The minutes of the meeting held on 29 October 2024 were agreed as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

26 **Chairman's Announcements**

There were no Chairman's announcements.

27 **Urgent Business**

There were no items of urgent business.

28 **Monthly Performance Report**

The Assistant Director of Finance (Section 151 Officer) submitted a report to report to the Committee the council's financial positions at the end of the financial year 2024-2025.

In introducing the report, the Portfolio Holder for Finance, Property and Regeneration advised the Committee that the Council's outturn position for 2024/25 was currently an overspend of £0.248m. The forecasted overspend was due to variations across Legal, Democratic and Elections and Procurement, Planning and Development, Property and Environmental. The Portfolio Holder for Finance, Property and Regeneration advised that the Corporate Leadership Team had agreed that a budget oversight group would meet with service managers each month to agree in year mitigation plans and further strengthen budget management and forecasting.

In response to a question from the Committee regarding the costs of planning appeals that the Council may incur as a result of losing a planning appeal and occurring costs from the appellant, the Portfolio Holder for Finance, Property and Regeneration advised that the Planning Committee made decisions on applications within its terms of reference at committee meetings, however officers would work with Planning Committee members and give training so decisions made at Planning Committee were less likely to incur costs at appeals.

Resolved

- (1) That the report be noted.

29

Budget Proposals 2025/26 - 2029/30

The Assistant Director of Finance (S151 Officer) submitted a report that set out the capital bid, investments, efficiencies and income changes for Cherwell District Council for the period 2025/26 to 2029/30 and proposed Fees & Charges schedule for 2025/26.

The Portfolio Holder for Finance, Property & Regeneration introduced the report and advised that the Council had identified that there was a budget gap in future years and recognised that funding would be significantly reduced. This was primarily due to the anticipated business rates reset, changes to new homes bonus grant and the fall out of one-off funding that had been provided in recent years. The Council was anticipating that the business rates reset and fall of funding will not take place until at least 2026/27.

The Portfolio Holder for Finance, Property & Regeneration advised that the Council had identified where investment was required across council services to meet external challenges like the impact of the cost-of-living crisis on homelessness and temporary accommodation.

The Assistant Director of Finance presented an update on the council's Medium Term Financial Strategy (MTFS). The Committee was advised that the main change to the MTFS that was set in February 2024 was a change to the Business Rates reset from Government which was not expected to take place in 2026/27 and would be phased in over a 3 year period. It had been assumed in February 2024 that the reset would take place in 2025/26.

The Assistant Director of Finance advised the Committee of the draft budget proposal risks and highlighted that it was expected that core funding would be allocated as it was in 2024/25 so the major grants would be distributed on the same basis. However, the Government's Finance Policy Statement advised that there would be a minimum increase of 0% for any local authority as part of their core spending power of which was a tweak made after the Council's Budget consultation was launched. It was expected more details would be issued with the draft local government finance statement, expected to be published on 19 December 2024.

In response to a question from the Committee in relation to the assumption of inflation being at 2%, the Assistant Director of Finance advised that it was a forecast however inflation has come down to around 2% and this was the Government's long-term target for inflation.

In response to Members' questions regarding the drop in the Council's spending budget shown in the latest position in the MTFS from £28.111mil in 2025/26 to £16.650mil in 2029/30, the Portfolio Holder for Finance, Property & Regeneration advised that the Council was currently undertaking a transformation programme and other projects with officers to ensure that the Council could meet the budget for that year. The Portfolio Holder for Finance, Property & Regeneration also advised that the Council was waiting for definite figures from Government and dates for changes, for example the business rates reset which may have an effect on the budget at a different time than currently expected.

Following a question from the Committee regarding the changes to National Insurance, the Assistant Director of Finance advised the £650k figure set out related to CDC staff costs.

Following a question from the Committee regarding a proposed 5% increase from Government in core funding for rural areas, the Assistant Director of Finance advised that the Government policy statement that mentioned the proposed increase was published after the Council's draft budget had been published. The Council was waiting for the draft local government finance statement that was expected to be published on 19 December 2024.

In response to a question as to why no revenue was projected from long term empty properties and second homes council tax, the Assistant Director of Finance advised that the proposal for the long term empty property premium would be introduced in April 2025. The additional income would be ongoing there would be no further income in future years. In relation to the second homes premium, legislation stated that the policy could not be implemented immediately. Consultation on the proposal was underway so the premium could be implemented a year later, in April 2026.

Executive Portfolio Holders, Corporate Directors and Assistant Directors gave an overview of the pressures, proposed savings and capital bids by service area within each directorate and answered questions from the Committee.

In response to a question from the Committee regarding the investment request from Housing for a £250k fund for temporary accommodation due to the rise in demand for temporary accommodation, the Assistant Director for Wellbeing and Housing confirmed that it was considered the amount should be sufficient.

Following a question on the increase in the subscription for the collection of garden waste, the Portfolio Holder for Finance, Property & Regeneration advised the Committee that this was a non-statutory function that the Council carried out and that other factors had been considered when putting forward the increase. The Corporate Director of Communities added that

Environmental Services were reporting a circa £200k overspend due to pressures in staffing budgets and recycling gate fees.

In response to a question from the Committee regarding the 20% increase in planning fees, the Head of Development Management advised that whilst the department had already been receiving the increased planning fees, the amount received had been below what had been expected. Whilst large applications were to be expected before the end of the financial year, the Head of Development Management confirmed that the increase in fees did not cover the full cost of the planning department.

Following a question from the Committee regarding the proposed reduction in weekday overtime rates from time and a half to standard pay and the possible consequences that may have on staff, the Assistant Director of Human Resources advised that departments with staff working high levels of overtime during the week were seeking more efficient ways to work.

Resolved

- (1) That, having given due consideration, Executive be advised that the Budget Planning Committee have no feedback, comments or recommendations in relation to capital bids, investments, efficiencies and income changes and fees and charges for inclusion as part of the 2025/26 budget proposal.
- (2) That the Budget Proposals 2025/2026 - 2029/30 report be noted.

30

Review of Committee Work Plan

The Committee considered it's work plan and had no queries or additional items for the Committee Work Plan.

Resolved

- (1) That the update on the Committee Work Plan update be noted.

The meeting ended at 8.09 pm

Chairman:

Date:

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Cherwell District Council

Budget Planning Committee

Minutes of a meeting of the Budget Planning Committee held at Bodicote House, Bodicote, Banbury, Oxon OX15 4AA, on 21 January 2025 at 6.30 pm

Present:

Councillor Edward Fraser Reeves (Chairman)
Councillor Gordon Blakeway
Councillor Andrew Crichton
Councillor Frank Ideh
Councillor Rob Pattenden
Councillor David Rogers
Councillor Les Sibley
Councillor Dom Vaitkus
Councillor Barry Wood

Apologies for absence:

Councillor Tom Beckett

Also Present:

Councillor Lesley McLean (Portfolio Holder for Finance, Property and Regeneration)

Also Present Virtually:

Councillor Matt Hodgson (Vice-Chairman)
Councillor Rob Parkinson

Officers:

Michael Furness, Assistant Director Finance & S151 Officer
Joanne Kaye, Head of Finance and Deputy Section 151 Officer
Leanne Lock, Strategic Business Partner - Business Partnering & Controls
Matt Swinford, Democratic and Elections Officer

31 Declarations of Interest

There were no declarations of interest.

32 Minutes

To confirm as a correct record the minutes of the meeting held on 10 December 2024.

33 **Chairman's Announcements**

There were no Chairman's announcements.

34 **Urgent Business**

There were no items of urgent business.

35 **Monthly Performance Report**

The Assistant Director of Finance (Section 151 Officer) submitted a report on the Council's financial positions at the end of the financial year 2024/25.

In introducing the report, the Portfolio Holder for Finance, Property and Regeneration advised the Committee that the Council's forecast outturn position for 2024/25 was an overspend of £0.098k. The overspend was primarily due to variations in Law and Governance, Planning and Development, Property and Environmental Services.

The Portfolio Holder for Finance, Property and Regeneration explained that there was an overspend within Environmental Services in relation to gate fees of £0.200m which was currently being reviewed and consideration being given to what level of market risk policy contingency available to help mitigate this.

The Portfolio Holder for Finance, Property and Regeneration advised the Committee that there was a projected in-year underspend of £0.411m with £0.466m to be profiled into future years.

In response to a question from the Committee regarding the reported £0.195m under budget forecast variance within policy contingency, the Head of Finance advised that this was due to a higher forecast than needed for the final cost of living adjustment for the staff annual pay award.

Resolved

(1) That the report be noted

36 **Capital and Investment Strategy 2025-26**

The Assistant Director of Finance submitted a report for the Committee to consider the draft Capital Strategy and Investment strategy for 2025-26 and recommend to the Executive.

In introducing the report, the Portfolio Holder for Finance, Property and Regeneration advised the Committee that the Capital Strategy and Investment Strategy must be approved by Full Council annually and must satisfy the requirements of government legislation and CIPFA guidance.

In relation to the Capital Strategy the Portfolio Holder for Finance, Property and Regeneration explained that the operation boundary for debt was proposed to be reduced from £290m to £200m. This was due to the Council changing the approach on how the limit had been calculated to better reflect the most likely scenario for external debt.

Resolved

- (1) That the draft Capital and Investment Strategy 2025/26 be recommended to the Executive.

37

Review of Reserves

The Assistant Director of Finance submitted a report to update Budget Planning Committee on the Review of Reserves that has taken place in preparation of the budget for 2025/26 and the Medium-Term Financial Strategy 2025/26 – 2029/30.

In introducing the report, the Portfolio Holder for Finance, Property and Regeneration advised the Committee that an annual review of the council's reserves was undertaken as part of the budget setting process to ensure the council maintained a prudent level of reserves over the medium term.

The Portfolio Holder for Finance, Property and Regeneration advised that, after conducting a risk assessment, it was proposed that the council increase its current minimum level of general balances from £6.129m to £7.852m. This was due to the level of uncertainty in the discussions of Local Government funding reforms.

Resolved

- (1) That the outcome of the review of reserves and the forecast over the MTFS period be noted
- (2) That, having given due consideration, Executive be advised that the Budget Planning Committee supports the draft reserve allocations.

38

Review of Committee Work Plan

The Committee considered its work plan. It was proposed by Councillor Wood and seconded by Councillor Sibley that at the next meeting of the Committee, the Committee be provided with an update on the Council's transformation project.

Resolved

- (1) That, subject to a Committee request for an additional item, update on the Council's transformation project, to the 4 March 2025 meeting, the work programme be noted.

The meeting ended at 6.48 pm

Chairman:

Date:

Cherwell District Council

Budget Planning Committee

Minutes of a meeting of the Budget Planning Committee held at Bodicote House, Bodicote, Banbury, Oxon OX15 4AA, on 4 March 2025 at 6.30 pm

Present:

Councillor Edward Fraser Reeves (Chairman)
Councillor Tom Beckett
Councillor Gordon Blakeway
Councillor Frank Ideh
Councillor Robert Parkinson
Councillor Rob Pattenden
Councillor David Rogers
Councillor Les Sibley
Councillor Dom Vaitkus

Substitute Members:

Councillor Lynne Parsons (In place of Councillor Andrew Crichton)

Apologies for absence:

Councillor Andrew Crichton
Councillor Barry Wood

Also Present:

Councillor Lesley McLean, Deputy Leader and Portfolio Holder for Finance, Regeneration and Property

Also Present Virtually:

Councillor Matt Hodgson (Vice-Chairman)

Officers:

Joanne Kaye, Head of Finance and Deputy Section 151 Officer
Matt Swinford, Democratic and Elections Officer

Officers Attending Virtually:

Leanne Lock, Strategic Business Partner - Business Partnering & Controls

39 **Declarations of Interest**

There were no declarations of interest.

40 **Minutes**

The minutes of the meeting held on 21 January 2025 were agreed as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

41 **Chairman's Announcements**

There were no Chairman's announcements.

42 **Requests to Address the Meeting**

There were no requests to address the meeting.

43 **Urgent Business**

There were no items of urgent business.

44 **Budget Monitoring Report**

The Assistant Director of Finance submitted a report which provided the forecast outturn position for the end of the financial year 2024-2025 based on the position as at 31 December 2024.

In introducing the report, the Portfolio Holder for Finance, Property and Regeneration advised the Committee that, the forecast outturn position for the Council for the 2024/25 financial year was an overspend of £43k. The forecast overspend was due to variations across Environmental Services, Property and Legal and Democratic. The Portfolio Holder for Finance, Property and Regeneration advised the Committee that all services were considering ways that the forecast overspend would be mitigated.

The Portfolio Holder for Finance Portfolio Holder for Finance, Property and Regeneration advised that the Council's projected year end forecast for capital profiled spend was projected to be an in-year underspend of £.0438m with £0.270 recommended to be re-profiled into future years.

It was proposed by Councillor Reeves and seconded by Councillor Rogers that the meeting move into private session to consider exempt appendix 6.

45 **Exclusion of 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 item 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.

46 **Monthly Monitoring Report - Exempt Appendix**

The Committee asked questions regarding the exempt appendix, debt write offs, which were duly answered by the Portfolio Holder Finance, Property and Regeneration.

47 **Readmittance of the Press and Public**

Resolved

That the press and public be readmitted to the meeting.

48 **Budget Monitoring Report**

Having readmitted the press and public and having discussed the public report and appendices and exempt appendix, the Committee noted the report.

Resolved

(1) That the report be noted.

The meeting ended at 6.43 pm

Chair:

Date:

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Cherwell District Council

Budget Planning Committee

Minutes of a meeting of the Budget Planning Committee held at 39 Castle Quay, Banbury, OX16 5FD, on 21 May 2025 at 7.28 pm

Present:

Councillor Edward Fraser Reeves (Chair)
Councillor Dom Vaitkus (Vice-Chair)
Councillor Tom Beckett
Councillor Gordon Blakeway
Councillor Mark Cherry
Councillor Andrew Crichton
Councillor Frank Ideh
Councillor Robert Parkinson
Councillor Rob Pattenden
Councillor David Rogers
Councillor Les Sibley
Councillor Barry Wood

1 Appointment of Chairman for the municipal year 2025/2026

It was proposed by Councillor Rogers and seconded by Councillor Vaitkus that Councillor Reeves be appointed Chair of the Budget Planning Committee for the municipal year 2025/2026.

There were no further nominations.

Resolved

- (1) That Councillor Eddie Reeves be appointed Chair of the Budget Planning Committee for the municipal year 2025/2026.

2 Appointment of Vice-Chairman for the municipal year 2025/2026

It was proposed by Councillor Cherry and seconded by Councillor Rogers that Councillor Vaitkus be appointed Vice-Chair of the Budget Planning Committee for the municipal year 2025/2026.

There were no further nominations.

Resolved

- (1) That Councillor Dom Vaitkus be appointed Vice-Chair of the Budget Planning Committee for the municipal year 2025/2026.

The meeting ended at 7.29 pm

Chair:

Date:

Cherwell District Council

General Licensing Committee

Minutes of a meeting of the General Licensing Committee held at 39 Castle Quay, Banbury, OX16 5FD, on 21 May 2025 at 7.29 pm

Present:

Councillor Rebecca Biegel (Chair)
Councillor Fiaz Ahmed (Vice-Chair)
Councillor Andrew Crichton
Councillor Dr Henry Elugwu
Councillor Lesley McLean
Councillor Ian Middleton
Councillor Robert Parkinson
Councillor Chris Pruden
Councillor Barry Wood

Apologies for absence:

Councillor Phil Chapman
Councillor Nick Cotter
Councillor John Willett

1 Appointment of Chairman for the municipal year 2025/2026

It was proposed by Councillor Crichton and seconded by Councillor Pruden that Councillor Biegel be appointed Chair of the General Licensing Committee for the municipal year 2025/2026.

There were no further nominations.

Resolved

- (1) That Councillor Rebecca Biegel be appointed Chair of the General Licensing Committee for the municipal year 2025/2026.

2 Appointment of Vice-Chairman for the municipal year 2025/2026

It was proposed by Councillor McLean and seconded by Councillor Wood that Councillor Ahmed be appointed Vice-Chair of the General Licensing Committee for the municipal year 2025/2026.

There were no further nominations.

Resolved

- (1) That Councillor Fiaz Ahmed be appointed Vice-Chair of the General Licensing Committee for the municipal year 2025/2026.

The meeting ended at 7.30 pm

Chair:

Date:

Cherwell District Council

Licensing Acts Committee

Minutes of a meeting of the Licensing Acts Committee held at 39 Castle Quay, Banbury, OX16 5FD, on 21 May 2025 at 7.30 pm

Present:

Councillor Rebecca Biegel (Chair)
Councillor Fiaz Ahmed (Vice-Chair)
Councillor Andrew Crichton
Councillor Dr Henry Elugwu
Councillor Lesley McLean
Councillor Ian Middleton
Councillor Robert Parkinson
Councillor Chris Pruden
Councillor Barry Wood

Apologies for absence:

Councillor Phil Chapman
Councillor Nick Cotter
Councillor John Willett

1 Appointment of Chairman for the municipal year 2025/2026

It was proposed by Councillor Crichton and seconded by Councillor Pruden that Councillor Biegel be appointed Chair of the Licensing Acts Committee for the municipal year 2025/2026.

There were no further nominations.

Resolved

- (1) That Councillor Rebecca Biegel be appointed Chair of the Licensing Acts Committee for the municipal year 2025/2026.

2 Appointment of Vice-Chairman for the municipal year 2025/2026

It was proposed by Councillor McLean and seconded by Councillor Wood that Councillor Ahmed be appointed Vice-Chair of the Licensing Acts Committee for the municipal year 2025/2026.

There were no further nominations.

Resolved

- (1) That Councillor Fiaz Ahmed be appointed Vice-Chair of the Licensing Acts Committee for the municipal year 2025/2026.

The meeting ended at 7.32 pm

Chair:

Date:

Cherwell District Council

Overview and Scrutiny Committee

Minutes of a meeting of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee held at Bodicote House, Bodicote, Banbury, Oxon OX15 4AA, on 26 November 2024 at 6.30 pm

Present:

Councillor Dr Isabel Creed (Chairman)
Councillor Nigel Simpson (Vice-Chairman)
Councillor Gordon Blakeway
Councillor John Broad
Councillor Andrew Crichton
Councillor Frank Ideh
Councillor Simon Lytton
Councillor Lynne Parsons

Substitute Members:

Councillor Alisa Russell (In place of Councillor Grace Conway-Murray)
Councillor David Rogers (In place of Councillor Barry Wood)

Apologies for absence:

Councillor Grace Conway-Murray
Councillor Barry Wood

Also Present:

Councillor David Hingley, Leader of the Council
Councillor Rob Pattenden, Portfolio Holder Healthy Communities

Councillor Chris Brant, Portfolio Holder Corporate Services

Officers:

Gordon Stewart, Chief Executive
Stephen Hinds, Corporate Director Resources and Transformation
David Peckford, Assistant Director Planning & Development
Shona Ware, Assistant Director Customer Focus
Nicola Riley, Assistant Director Housing and Wellbeing
Christina Cherry, Planning Policy, Conservation & Design Manager
Michael Carr, Interim Principal Officer - Scrutiny and Democratic Lead
Martyn Surfleet, Democratic and Elections Officer

Officers Attending Virtually:

Ian Boll, Corporate Director Communities
Mona Walsh, Assistant Director - Property

Shahin Ismail, Interim Head of Legal Services & Deputy Monitoring Officer
Susan Asbury, Safeguarding Officer
Ian Upstone, Waste Resource Manager
Jan Southgate, Health Protection, Compliance & Licensng Manager

29 **Declarations of Interest**

There were no declarations of interest.

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

There were no petitions or requests to address the meeting.

31 **Minutes**

The minutes of the meetings of the Committee held on 15 October and 12 November 2024 were agreed as correct records and signed by the Chairman.

32 **Chairman's Announcements**

The Chairman drew members attention to an email sent from the Monitoring Officer regarding two webinars on Overview and Scrutiny.

The first was on Thursday 12 December run by the Local Government Association and the second was on Thursday 20 February 2025, run by the Centre for Governance and Scrutiny

Members were invited to register their interest, and details would then be forwarded by officers after the meeting.

33 **Urgent Business**

There were no items of urgent business.

34 **Exclusion of the Press and Public**

A public supplement to the agenda was published on Monday 25 November. It was therefore not necessary to exclude the public and press for this item.

35 **Proposed Cherwell Local Plan 2042 - Supplementary EXEMPT Documents**

The draft versions of these documents were previously published as Exempt papers with the original agenda publication, for the reasons set out in that

agenda, but have subsequently been finalised and made available for publication on Monday 25 November.

36 **Proposed Cherwell Local Plan 2042 - Supplementary PUBLIC Documents**

The Assistant Director Planning and Development and Monitoring Officer addressed the meeting to request an adjournment of Proposed Local Plan 2042 to allow members the 5 clear days to read the public supplements published on the 25 November.

Members then discussed the officers request and agreed to adjourn the agenda item on the Proposed Local Plan 2042 to be held at a later date to allow time to review the published supplements. It was requested that officers follow up with members to arrange a date best suited to reconvene the meeting.

37 **Readmittance of the press and public**

A public supplement to the agenda was published on Monday 25 November. It was therefore not necessary to exclude and readmit the public and press for this item.

38 **Report on Safeguarding and the annual return**

Officers gave a verbal presentation on the Safeguarding Self-assessment 2024 and highlighted that it was on hold whilst the Safeguarding Partnership was agreed and that the boards would be replaced by a Designated Safeguarding Partnership & Lead Safeguarding Partnership.

Officers gave an overview of the work carried out year to date, highlighting key challenges and successes achieved as well as statistics on the internal "See it Report it" (SIRI) and the reporting of safeguarding concerns.

In response to a question regarding completion of member safeguarding training the Assistant Director – Housing and Wellbeing explained that training was ongoing and that officers were working with members to ensure sufficient training was provided.

Members also took the opportunity to thank officers for their hard work and dedication.

Resolved

- (1) That having given due consideration, the Council's Report on Safeguarding and the annual return be noted.

Performance Monitoring Report Quarter 2 2024-2025

The Committee considered a report from the Assistant Director – Customer Focus that detailed the council's performance position at the end of quarter 2 2024-2025.

In introducing the report, the Portfolio Holder for Corporate Services advised that of the 17 business plan measures with set targets, 14 were either achieved or within the agreed tolerance, one was slightly behind target, and two behind target. The two measures that were operating behind target related temporary accommodation where 77 households were reported in temporary accommodation against the maximum target of 45, and that the net additional housing completions to meet Cherwell needs where 307 housing completions (provisional) were reported against a target of at least 571 for the first half of the year.

In response to a question asking for more detailed figures in the rise of people in temporary accommodation and the support provided to single people with complex needs facing evictions from home office accommodation the Assistant Director – Housing and Wellbeing explained that residents who have not intentionally made themselves homeless are eligible to apply for emergency temporary accommodation, and that the process was designed to aid those with complex needs. With regards to more detailed figures, it was explained that due to the complexity and flux of homelessness applications detailed figures as to specific rise in reasons for homelessness are difficult to pinpoint.

In relation to a question on unmet housing needs, noting the position of 307 provisional housing completions against the target of at least 571 for the first half of 2024, and whether it was due for concern, the Assistant Director Planning and Development explained that it was a concern, and that it is due to many complex site specific challenges related to infrastructure and the housing needs of neighbouring authorities. It was also stated that the Councils position reflects national trends in unmet housing needs.

Resolved

- (1) That having given due consideration, the Council's Performance Monitoring Report Quarter 2 2024 - 2025 be noted.

Working Groups Update

The chair provided an update on the Equality, Diversity and Inclusion, Food Insecurity and Climate Action Scrutiny Working Groups since the last Overview and Scrutiny Committee on 15 October 2024.

The Interim Principal Scrutiny Officer, gave a brief update on the first meeting of the Climate action and EDI working groups, advising the appointment of Councillor Grace Conway-Murray as Chair and Councillor John Broad as Vice-chair of the Climate Action Working Group, and advising the appointment

of Councillor Rebecca Biegel as the Chair and Councillor Gemma Coton as Vice-Chair of the EDI working Group. An update was then provided on the focus and scope of the Working Groups for 2024 – 2025, which was set out in the respective terms of reference submitted to the Overview and Scrutiny Committee for agreement.

Members then agreed to a request by officers to alleviate the density of the remaining work programme items that dedicated sub-working groups be appointed to meet and provide updates to the committee on the following subjects –

- Planning Application Appeals
- Resettlement and Migration Annual Report

Resolved

- (1) That the Scrutiny Working Groups update be noted.
- (2) That the terms of reference for the Climate Action Scrutiny Working Group be agreed.
- (3) That the terms of reference for the Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Scrutiny Working Group be agreed.
- (4) That a Scrutiny Working Group be established to consider Planning Application Appeals, and the terms of reference be agreed. as follows:-
 - i). To consider a report from the Assistant Director Planning and Development and on planning application appeals performance monitoring.
 - ii). To consider the main planning policy issues in relation to planning application refusals and planning decisions overturned at appeal.
 - iii). To consider the main reasons for planning application refusals for planning decisions overturned at appeal.
 - iv). To consider the cost implications to the Council.
 - v). To consider any lessons learned from planning applications that might inform planning policy and practise.
- (5) That a Scrutiny Working Group be established to consider Resettlement and Migration, and the terms of reference be agreed. , as follows:-
 - i). To consider a report of the Assistant Director Wellbeing and Housing on resettlement and migration.

- ii). To consider the Council's resettlement activities throughout the year to identify successes and challenges in the council's policy and approach.

41

Work Programme 2024 - 2025 Update

The Chair provided an update on Committee's Work Programme 2024-25 advising that due to time constraints and officer availability there had been some changes to the proposed Work Programme the changes were set out as below –

- New Council Offices at Castle Quay (Exempt item) - Moved from 26 November to 28 January 2025
- Transformation Programme - Moved from 28 January 2025 to 11 March 2025
- Planning Application Appeals – delegated to dedicated sub-working group meeting TBC
- Resettlement and Migration Annual Report – delegated to dedicated sub-working group meeting TBC

Resolved

- (1) That the updated Scrutiny Work Programme 2024/2025 be agreed. as set out in the report, with the following amendments:-
 - i). To include an item on the sale of Bodicote House with the report from the Corporate Director for Resources and Transformation for consideration at the next meeting.
 - ii). To remove the item on Council Owned Companies (Graven Hill and Crown House) from 11th of March 2025 and referred for possible consideration by the committee in the next municipal year.
 - iii). In addition to the new scrutiny working groups already agreed on Planning Application Appeals and Resettlement and Migration to agree the work programme as set out in the report.

The meeting ended at 7.44 pm

Chairman:

Date:

Cherwell District Council

Overview and Scrutiny Committee

Minutes of a meeting of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee held at Bodicote House, Bodicote, Banbury, Oxon OX15 4AA, on 4 December 2024 at 6.00 pm

Present:

Councillor Dr Isabel Creed (Chairman)
Councillor Nigel Simpson (Vice-Chairman)
Councillor Gordon Blakeway
Councillor John Broad
Councillor Phil Chapman
Councillor Frank Ideh
Councillor Simon Lytton
Councillor Lynne Parsons

Substitute Members:

Councillor David Rogers (In place of Councillor Barry Wood)

Apologies for absence:

Councillor Grace Conway-Murray
Councillor Andrew Crichton
Councillor Harry Knight
Councillor Barry Wood

Also Present:

Councillor Jean Conway, Portfolio Holder for Planning and Development Management

Officers:

Ian Boll, Corporate Director Communities
David Peckford, Assistant Director Planning & Development
Christina Cherry, Planning Policy, Conservation & Design Manager
Maria Dopazo, Principal Planning Policy Officer
Michael Carr, Interim Principal Officer - Scrutiny and Democratic Lead
Martyn Surfleet, Democratic and Elections Officer

Officers Attending Virtually:

Shahin Ismail, Interim Head of Legal Services & Deputy Monitoring Officer
Holly Jones, Planning Policy Officer
Karyn Panting, Development Monitoring officer

42

Reconvening of Meeting

The Chairmen announced the reconvening of the adjourned meeting of the Overview and Scrutiny held on the 26 November 2024 and noted that members who were present at the previous meeting but unable to attend the reconvening sent their apologies to the committee.

43

Proposed Cherwell Local Plan 2042 - Supplementary PUBLIC Documents

****At its 26 November 2024 meeting, Overview & Scrutiny Committee resolved to adjourn consideration of this item. The Committee reconvened to consider this item****

The Overview and Scrutiny Committee considered a report of the Assistant Director Planning and Development on the draft proposed Cherwell Local Plan 2042 at its extraordinary meeting on 12 November 2024.

At the meeting, the Committee requested that the following supporting documents be submitted to this meeting for consideration prior to submission to Executive on 2 December 2024.

- a1) Draft Sustainability Appraisal Non-technical Summary
- a2) Draft Sustainability Appraisal WIP
- b) Draft WIP Habitats Regulation Assessment
- c) the Health and Equalities Impact Assessment
- d) Interim Duty to Cooperate Statement
- e) Local Plan Appendix 4 - Strategic Gaps associated with Banbury, Bicester and Heyford Park: Key Characteristics and Recommendations

The draft versions of these documents were published as Exempt papers with the original agenda publication, for the reasons set out on that agenda, but having been subsequently finalised and made available for publication. They were published with a Supplementary Note: Summary of Changes to the O&S Supplementary Documents on Monday 25 November.

Prior to the introduction of the Proposed Local Plan 2042 Supplementary Public Documents, members were informed of correspondence received from solicitors on behalf of prospective Developers challenging various factors of the Local Plan process, such as the duty to cooperate and unmet housing needs of neighbouring authorities. Members were advised that officers had consulted the Councils Legal team and were in the process of drafting responses to said correspondence, members were also advised that the correspondence would not change the outcome of the proceedings of the meeting and any potential decisions made.

Members posed several questions to the Assistant Director Planning and Development and Conservation and Design Manager relating to Strategic Options and Considerations, Timetable and Governance, Housing and

Economic Needs Assessments, Climate Change and Sustainable Development, Infrastructure, Consultation and Engagement.

In response to a question in relation to stipulations for the installation and retrofitting of solar energy panels on both domestic and industrial units with the goal of reducing energy costs, the Assistant Director Planning and Development explained that the sustainable construction standards proposed for net zero emissions in the plan should ensure that the resulting developments would be more energy efficient, and that the plan cannot require the use of Solar PV on developments, but through the standards proposed, the overarching goal of net zero emissions would therefore be achieved through multiple technologies and innovations which may well include solar energy. And if achieved would then result in lower energy costs involved in heating said developments.

In response to a question in relation to the Sustainability Assessment and the designation of land for employment and industrial use the Assistant Director Planning and Development explained that the plan contained flexibility to allow various forms of employment and development to take place within designated sites.

In response to a question in relation to the allocation and removal of green belt land adjacent to the Oxford Technology Park to allow for expansion of the site, members requested a further review of land allocated the Assistant Director Planning and Development explained that since the Local Plan 2015 the land in question had been allocated and subsequently built on and therefore had no need to remove it from the green belt, and that in preparation for the current proposed Local Plan a full review of green belt land had been undertaken, and therefore further examination would not be required.

At the end of questions, the chairmen on the request of members, agreed to adjourn the meeting for ten minutes to allow time to read the correspondence received and replies drafted to the prospective developers.

The meeting was adjourned, and the webcast paused at 19:54.

The meeting then reconvened, and the webcast resumed at 20:08 at which point members noted there were no questions or implications resulting from said correspondence.

The committee then considered its conclusions, observations, and recommendations to the Executive.

Resolved

- (1) That the following observations be noted: -
 - i). In consideration of the Draft Local Plan timeline being followed, it is noted that if the Local Plan submission is rejected by the Planning Inspectorate this could present a serious risk to the Council's local planning process.

- ii). Regarding the “duty to cooperate”, the importance of evidence of engagement with neighbouring local authorities, (including Oxford City Council).
 - iii). It is noted that planning officers agreed to meet with Chesterton Parish Council on employment proposals along the A41 corridor.
 - iv). The importance of the robustness of the Local Housing Needs Assessment is noted, particularly in regard to unmet housing needs of neighbouring local authorities.
 - v). It is noted that the Infrastructure Delivery Plan (IDP) will form part of the evidence base for the Local Plan.
 - vi). That it be noted that lessons learnt from the process followed pre-consultation scrutiny of the proposed Draft Local Plan include that there should be a longer lead in time for pre-consultation scrutiny.
- (2) That the following Recommendations be made to the Executive: -
- i). That the Draft Local Plan include a reference to Health in Rural Areas (provision of health facilities partially in rural areas).
- Proposed by Councillor David Rogers, Seconded by Cllr Phil Chapman and agreed with 7 votes for, 0 against and 2 abstentions*
- ii). That Executive be recommended to agree that the Proposed Cherwell Local Plan 2042 be approved for the purpose of inviting representations under Regulations 19 and 20 of The Town and Country Planning (Local Planning) (England) Regulations 2012 (as amended).
- Proposed by Councillor Isabel Creed, Seconded by Nigel Simpson and agreed unanimously*

The meeting ended at 8.27 pm

Chairman:

Date:

Cherwell District Council

Overview and Scrutiny Committee

Minutes of a meeting of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee held at Bodicote House, Bodicote, Banbury, Oxon OX15 4AA, on 28 January 2025 at 6.30 pm

Present:

Councillor Dr Isabel Creed (Chairman)
Councillor Nigel Simpson (Vice-Chairman)
Councillor Gordon Blakeway
Councillor John Broad
Councillor Phil Chapman
Councillor Andrew Crichton
Councillor Frank Ideh
Councillor Harry Knight
Councillor Simon Lytton
Councillor Lynne Parsons
Councillor Barry Wood

Apologies for absence:

None

Also Present:

Councillor Lesley McLean, Portfolio Holder for Finance, Property & Regeneration
Councillor Chris Brant, Portfolio Holder for Corporate Services
Councillor Rebecca Biegel
Councillor David Rogers

Also Present Virtually:

Councillor Grace Conway-Murray, Overview and Scrutiny Committee member attending virtually with no voting rights
Councillor Jean Conway, Portfolio Holder for Planning and Development Management
Councillor Nick Cotter, Portfolio Holder for Housing

Officers:

Gordon Stewart, Chief Executive
Shiraz Sheikh, Assistant Director Law & Governance and Monitoring Officer
Mona Walsh, Assistant Director - Property
David Peckford, Assistant Director Planning & Development
Nicola Riley, Assistant Director Housing and Wellbeing
Mike Gillespie, Interim Property and Assets Manager
Michael Carr, Interim Principal Officer - Scrutiny and Democratic Lead

Martyn Surfleet, Democratic and Elections Officer

Officers Attending Virtually:

Michael Furness, Assistant Director Finance & S151 Officer
Ian Boll, Corporate Director Communities
Shona Ware, Assistant Director Customer Focus
Celia Prado-Teeling, Performance Team Leader
Katie Thrussell, Head of Resettlement

44 **Declarations of Interest**

There were no declarations of interest.

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

There were no petitions or requests to address the meeting.

46 **Minutes**

The minutes of the meetings of the Committee held on 26 November and 4 December 2024 were agreed as correct records and signed by the Chairman.

47 **Chairman's Announcements**

There were no Chairmans announcements.

48 **Urgent Business**

There were no items of urgent business.

49 **Resettlement and Migration**

The Committee considered resettlement and migration schemes in Cherwell to assist asylum seekers and refugees. The Portfolio Holder for Housing provided introductory remark, and the Committee received a presentation from the Head of Resettlement that detailed the ongoing work carried out by the Resettlement and Migration department.

Committee members posed questions to the Portfolio Holder for Housing, the Assistant Director – Wellbeing and Housing and the Head of Resettlement, including on the definition of “legal” / “illegal” routes, the financial, resource and social impacts of the scheme to the Council and wider community, as well as the impact on housing supply and the volume of Freedom of Information (FOI) requests issued.

A question was asked about the resource burden arising from Freedom of Information requests and whether there was a resource limit placed on dealing with this. The Assistant Director – Wellbeing and Housing explained that there is a statutory limit on the number of hours a response takes before the council can place a charge. It was very rare to receive individual requests that exceeded this limit. Notwithstanding, dealing with the volume of Freedom of information requests was a resource pressure on the department.

In response to a question seeking clarification on what extent the schemes are compulsory and to what extent were local choice, the Assistant Director – Wellbeing and Housing explained that the Homes for Ukraine programme was based on sponsors and hosts within the district, so the Council had no control over the numbers of people wishing to live in Cherwell. It was very much a local offer to a group of people who needed housing.

The UK Resettlement Scheme (UKRS) was an initial agreement to settle 18 families predominantly from Syria. This programme had significantly reduced over time. The Afghan families' schemes placed all people in properties that were formally Ministry of Défense (MOD) (so not social housing or private housing). Whilst the Council could refuse to support families and not get involved in the programs at all, there had been an expectation nationally that local authorities would play their part.

Further questions had been submitted by members of the Committee in writing and the Assistant Director – Wellbeing and Housing said that she would be happy to provide a written answer to those.

It was proposed by Councillor Lynne Parsons to recommend that the Executive make training on Resettlement and Migration mandatory as part of the member development programme. This was seconded by Councillor Andrew Crichton.

The Committee discussed the motion. On being put to the vote, there were 4 votes for, 4 votes against and 1 abstention. The Chairman used their casting vote in favour of the proposal. It was agreed that mandatory member training on resettlement, asylum and migration be included in the member development programme.

Resolved

- (1) That having given due consideration, the presentation on Resettlement and Migration be noted.
- (2) That the Council Executive be recommended to publish key information on resettlement and migration data that is frequently requested through Freedom of Information (FOI) requests, to help manage future FOI requests.

- (3) That the Council Executive be recommended to agree that mandatory member training on resettlement, asylum and migration be included in the member development programme.

50

Performance Monitoring Report - Quarter Three

The Committee considered a report from the Assistant Director – Customer Focus that detailed the Council's performance position at the end of Quarter 3 2024-2025.

In introducing the report, the Portfolio Holder for Corporate Services advised that out of the 55 measures the Council, 44 were on track, 8 measures were slightly behind target and 3 measures were behind target. Of the 16 business plan measures 12 were not met, or achieved within the agreed tolerance, 2 were slightly behind and 2 were behind target. The two behind target were: -

- Number of homeless households in temporary accommodation, with 77 households in temporary accommodation against the target of 45. And reflects national statistics.
- Number of affordable homes delivered, with 38 affordable homes delivered against the target of 50 for quarter 3, this was reflected against the annual target, which was reported ahead, with 192 homes delivered against the target of 150.

Of the 15 annual delivery plan milestones, 12 were achieved and 3 were slightly behind schedule. All priorities except one were on track for delivery by year end. Of the 24 EDI action plan activities, 3 were slightly delayed.

Members were advised that the Quarter 4 monitoring report would be the final monitoring report under the current business plan. The 2025-26 business plan had been consulted on and would be submitted to the 24 February Council meeting alongside the 2025-2026 for agreement. The Priority areas were:

- Economic Prosperity
- Community Leadership
- Environmental Stewardship
- Quality Housing and Place Making

Members were also advised of the development of a new draft vision for a modern Council inspiring and enabling positive lasting change. The draft vision had been positively received by residents surveyed. This would also be submitted to the 24 February Council meeting.

In considering the report, Members commented that the number of households in Temporary Accommodation was the same as the previous quarter last quarter and queried if this meant that as one household moved into permanent accommodation another household took their place and sought clarity on how much temporary accommodation the council had.

In response to the question, the Portfolio Holder for Housing explained there was no secondary waiting and offered to follow up with a written supplementary response.

In response to a committee question on the cost of temporary accommodation to the council and impact on the overall Council budget, the Committee was advised that spend for the last financial year was £634,000. The Council had thus far been able to operate within existing budgets in delivering that temporary accommodation. There was a base budget provided for that provision but there were also government grants that the Council received annually that had been unspent in previous years creating financial reserves.

Having received several written questions in advance the Portfolio Holder for Housing agreed that responses would be provided in writing after the meeting.

In response to a question regarding the allocation of Government funds to tackle the condition of social housing within the area it was proposed by Councillor Parsons and seconded by Councillor Broad that the Executive be recommended to consider writing to social housing providers in the district to enquire how the providers are spending government grants to improve their stock in relation to the energy efficiency of housing in Cherwell with particular reference to the eradication of damp and mold.

Members voted unanimously in favour of the recommendation

The Chair advised that a recommendation had been submitted in advance. It was proposed by Councillor Parsons and seconded by Councillor Crichton that Notwithstanding the dedicated work by Council officers and the department to address homelessness and reduce the number of households in Temporary Accommodation, this Committee recommends that the Executive prioritise this area of work.

This Committee recommends that the Executive develop a robust plan for reducing homelessness and the numbers of households in Temporary Accommodation. This plan should include:

- A. Criteria for target setting,
- B. how the Council intends to use the additional funding provided by the government to address the number of families trapped in Temporary Accommodation and
- C. ways in which the Council can prevent the increasing numbers of children in Temporary Accommodation."

Members proceeded to discuss the recommendation seeking advice from officers regarding the proposals. On being put to the vote, there were 2 votes in favour, 7 against and no abstentions. The motion was therefore lost and fell.

Resolved

- (1) That having given due consideration, the Council's Performance Monitoring Report Quarter 3 2024 - 2025 be noted.
- (2) That Executive be recommended to write to social housing providers in the district to enquire how the providers are spending government grants to improve their stock in relation to the energy efficiency of housing in Cherwell with particular reference to the eradication of damp and mold.

51 **Scrutiny Working Groups Update**

The Committee received an update on the progress of the Scrutiny Working Groups established by the Committee since the last Overview and Scrutiny Committee on 26 November 2024, including verbal updates from the Chairmen of the Working Groups.

The Chairman of the Food Insecurity Scrutiny Working Group, Councillor Rebecca Biegel, provided an update on the Scrutiny Working Group

The Chairman of the Food Insecurity Scrutiny Working Group, Councillor Grace Conway-Murray, provided an update on the Scrutiny Working Group.

The Chairman of the Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Scrutiny Working Group, Councillor Rebecca Biegel, provided an update on the Scrutiny Working Groups.

An update was provided on the focus and scope of the Working Groups for 2024 – 2025, which was set out in the respective terms of reference submitted to the Overview and Scrutiny Committee for agreement.

The Committee noted that Resettlement and Migration scrutiny had now undertaken, earlier during this meeting and would therefore be removed from the work programme.

Resolved

- (1) That the progress of the Scrutiny Working Groups be noted.
- (2) That it be noted that the Resettlement and Migration Scrutiny Working Group had been concluded through the agenda item at the Overview and Scrutiny Committee on 28 January 2025.
- (3) That it be noted the Planning and Appeals Scrutiny Working Group would meet on 25 February 2025 for a Spotlight Review and report back to the next meeting of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee.

52 **Scrutiny Work Programme 2024-25 (Updated)**

The Chairman provided an update on Committee's Work Programme 2024-25 advising that due to the large volume of remaining items on the work programme that it was agreed to hold an additional meeting in March to better disperse the items over the two meetings. The Committee would therefore meet on both 11 March and 18 March.

It was proposed by Councillor Chapman and seconded by Councill Wood that due to the change in housing targets as a result of the updated National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) resulting in a lower than expected housing supply, officers be requested to submit a report to the Overview and Scrutiny Committee to cover any possible actions or mitigations that could be implemented in light of the current housing situation.

Members discussed the suggestion seeking advice from officers. On being put to the vote, there were 8 votes in favour, no votes against and 1 abstention. Democratic and Elections Officers would liaise with Planning regarding the scheduling of the item.

The Committee also requested that a report on the Housing Development Action Plan be submitted to a future meeting of the Committee.

Resolved

- (1) That subject to the following addition, the Scrutiny Work Programme 2024-25 be agreed.
- (2) Housing Development Action Plan to be submitted to a future meeting of the Committee.

53 **Exclusion of the Press and Public**

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.

54 **Sale of Bodicote House**

The Assistant Director Property submitted an exempt report detailing the process and progress of the proposed sale of Bodicote House.

Officers responded to a range of questions regarding the content of the report.

Resolved

- (1) That having given due consideration, the Council's report on the Sale of Bodicote House be noted.

The meeting ended at 8.59 pm

Chairman:

Date:

Cherwell District Council

Overview and Scrutiny Committee

Minutes of a meeting of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee held at Bodicote House, Bodicote, Banbury, Oxon OX15 4AA, on 11 March 2025 at 6.30 pm

Present:

Councillor Dr Isabel Creed (Chairman)
Councillor Nigel Simpson (Vice-Chairman)
Councillor Gordon Blakeway
Councillor John Broad
Councillor Andrew Crichton
Councillor Frank Ideh
Councillor Simon Lytton
Councillor Lynne Parsons

Substitute Members:

Councillor David Rogers (In place of Councillor Barry Wood)

Apologies for absence:

Councillor Phil Chapman
Councillor Grace Conway-Murray
Councillor Harry Knight
Councillor Barry Wood

Also Present:

Councillor David Hingley, Leader of the Council
Councillor Lesley McLean, Portfolio Holder for Finance, Property & Regeneration

Also Present Virtually:

Councillor Robert Parkinson, Portfolio Holder for Safer Communities

Officers:

Gordon Stewart, Chief Executive
Stephen Hinds, Corporate Director Resources and Transformation
Ian Boll, Corporate Director Communities
Mona Walsh, Assistant Director - Property
Tim Hughes, Head of Regulatory Services & Community Safety
Nicola Riley, Assistant Director Housing and Wellbeing
Michael Carr, Interim Principal Officer - Scrutiny and Democratic Lead
Martyn Surfleet, Democratic and Elections Officer

55 **Declarations of Interest**

There were no declarations of interest.

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

There were no petitions or requests to address the meeting.

57 **Minutes**

The minutes of the meeting of the Committee held on 28 January 2025 were agreed as correct record and signed by the Chairman.

58 **Chairman's Announcements**

There were no Chairmans announcements.

59 **Urgent Business**

There were no items of urgent business.

60 **Adjournment of the Meeting**

Due to technical difficulties with the audio visual system and webcast, the Chairman moved that the meeting stand adjourned for a 15 minutes to allow for technical issues to be resolved.

Resolved:

That the meeting be adjourned for 15 minutes.

61 **Cherwell Safer Communities Partnership**

The Committee considered a presentation from the Head of Regulatory Services and Community Safety on the Cherwell Community Safety Partnership (CCSP) detailing its inception as well as its duties and responsibilities. Members were informed of the make-up of the partnership and its seven statutory partners as well as other permanent members.

The Head of Regulatory Services and Community Safety updated the Committee on the CCSP Plan 2020 – 2023, detailing its notable successes in securing a Home Office Safer Streets 4 bid from the Office of the Police and Crime Commissioner (OPCC) to tackle youth related violence and Anti-Social Behaviour (ASB) in Banbury, introducing a Public Spaces Protection Order

for Bicester town centre, securing funding to support a Young Women and Girls project, working with Thames Valley Police (TVP) colleagues to deliver objectives for an ASB focused operation named OP JANKLE, as well as the Safeguarding Children in Banbury (SCiB) initiative.

The Head of Regulatory Services and Community Safety updated the Committee on the proposed new CCSP 2025 – 2028 priorities:

- Anti-social behaviour (ASB)
- Modern slavery and exploitation
- Violence Against Women and Girls (VAWG)
- Domestic Abuse
- Serious Violence
- Retail Crime (including shop lifting)
- Rough Sleeping.

Members were also updated on the Safer Oxfordshire Partnership (SOP), a thematic group in Oxfordshire that aimed to bring together community safety partners to work together to deliver joint priorities and emerging themes, with a focus to make the county a safer place to live, work and visit by providing strategic oversight and direction for preventing crime and anti-social behavior across Oxfordshire.

In response to a question regarding the lack of a CCSP plan for 2024 as well as a full report on the previous 2020 – 2024 plan, the Head of Regulatory Services and Community Safety advised that the change in the plans term and lack of a report were caused by the loss of staff as a result of the decoupling from Oxfordshire County Council.

It was proposed by Councillor Lynne Parsons to recommend that the Executive, as a matter of urgency, ensure that the Cherwell Safer Community Partnership plan be reviewed and updated and presented to this committee early in the next municipal year. This was seconded by Councillor Andrew Crichton.

The Committee discussed the motion. On being put to the vote, there were 5 votes for, 0 votes against and 3 abstentions. It was agreed that recommendation should be submitted to Executive as soon as practicable.

The Chairman welcomed the Police and Crime Commissioner for Thames Valley, Matthew Barber, Chief Constable Jason Hogg and Superintendent Benedict Clark, Thames Valley Police, to the meeting and invited them to update the Committee regarding policing in Thames Valley.

The Police and Crime Commissioner updated the Committee on officer numbers and plans for recruitment of additional officers. This included plans for increasing diversity and inclusion within the force, with measures being researched to encourage female applicants as well as applicants from diverse backgrounds.

The Police and Crime Commissioner gave an overview of the review and restructure of the Thames Valley force, highlighting that it was the largest review and restructure since 2010, with identified savings of £15.7m. £7m of these savings had been delivered to date. Members were advised that the restructure was necessitated by the uplift in demand on policing in the area and that dedicated command units for specific areas were being rolled out across the district.

The Police and Crime Commissioner explained the measures that had been undertaken to improve the response times on the nonemergency 101 police contact service. This included the introduction of new methods of contact such as social media channels, webchat functionality and an online victim portal as well as a new neighbourhood policing app.

The Chief Constable gave a presentation which provided more details on neighbourhood policing, focusing on the Thames Valley Alerts system which had seen a boost in users to the sum of 107,000, and a rise of 57.37% interactions, which better enabled the force to tackle local crime. Members were also advised on the focus on tackling E-Scooters and E-Bikes, with 31 E bikes/scooters seized in January 2025, 16 of which were seized in Oxford LCU.

Superintendent Clark provided the Committee with more details on some of the operations currently taking place to reduce knife crime, anti-social behaviour, retail theft and rural crime in the Cherwell district. The Committee was advised that the emphasis was on prevention of such activities and often involved a highly targeted approach working with other agencies and partners.

In response to Members' questions regarding if the Thames Valley "TV Alerts" could be simplified to make it more accessible and easier to use, the Police and Crime Commissioner advised that they were aware of issues accessing the system and would look to roll out training to tackle this issue.

Members of the Committee queried if all secondary schools had an individual school liaison officer or if they were shared and whether all schools in the district had access to this service. The Police and Crime Commissioner responded that there was dedicated coverage for both secondary and primary schools as part of the Safeguarding Children Partnership.

With regards the use of restorative justice for damage caused by antisocial behaviour, in response to a question if restorative justice was used on a regular basis to repair the harm caused by acts of ASB and what the impact was, the Police and Crime Commissioner explained that evidence to the effectiveness of restorative justice had been noted and that it was a potential avenue, but more research would be needed before implementation.

In response to a question regarding Oxfordshire County Council's proposals to switch off street lighting after 11pm in some areas, and whether TVP saw any potential risks or rise in crime due to the proposals, the Police and Crime Commissioner explained that TVP did express concerns about the proposals

and were in discussions with the County Council. It was not anticipated that crime levels would be greatly affected by the proposals, but residents' perception and concerns about crime would rise. TVP was working to increase the public's trust and perception of safety within the district.

It was agreed by the chairman that written responses to questions presented to the Portfolio Holder for Safer Communities would be provided after the meeting.

The Chairman thanked the Police and Crime Commissioner, the Chief Constable and Superintendent for their attendance.

Resolved

- (1) That having given due consideration, the Cherwell Safer Communities Partnership Presentation be noted.
- (2) That the Committee recommends that the Executive, as a matter of urgency, ensure that the Cherwell Safer Community Partnership Plan be reviewed and updated and presented to this committee early in the next municipal year.

62 Scrutiny Working Groups Update

The Committee received an update on the progress of the Scrutiny Working Groups established by the Committee since the last Overview and Scrutiny Committee on 28 January 2025.

Resolved

- (1) That the progress of the Scrutiny Working Groups be noted.

63 Scrutiny Work Programme 2024-25

The Chairman provided an update on Committee's Work Programme 2024-25, noting that the requested item on the Housing Development Action Plan had been included in the agenda for the next meeting on the 18 March 2024.

Resolved

- (1) That the Scrutiny Work Programme 2024-25 be agreed.

64 **Exclusion of the Press and Public**

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.

65 **New Council Offices at Castle Quay**

The Assistant Director Property submitted an exempt report detailing the process, progress and lessons learnt from the building of the new council offices within Castle Quay.

Officers responded to a range of questions regarding the content of the report.

Resolved

- (1) That having given due consideration, the Council's report on the New Council Offices at Castle Quay be noted.

The meeting ended at 8.57 pm

Chairman:

Date:

Cherwell District Council

Overview and Scrutiny Committee

Minutes of a meeting of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee held at Bodicote House, Bodicote, Banbury, OX15 4AA, on 18 March 2025 at 6.30 pm

Present:

Councillor Dr Isabel Creed (Chairman)
Councillor Nigel Simpson (Vice-Chair)
Councillor Gordon Blakeway
Councillor John Broad
Councillor Phil Chapman
Councillor Andrew Crichton
Councillor Frank Ideh
Councillor Simon Lytton
Councillor Lynne Parsons

Substitute Members:

Councillor David Rogers (In place of Councillor Barry Wood)
Councillor Gemma Coton (In place of Councillor Grace Conway-Murray)

Apologies for absence:

Councillor Grace Conway-Murray
Councillor Harry Knight
Councillor Barry Wood

Also Present:

Councillor David Hingley, Portfolio Holder for Strategic Leadership
Councillor Rebecca Biegel

Also Present Virtually:

Councillor Tom Beckett, Portfolio Holder for Greener Communities
Councillor Jean Conway, Portfolio Holder Planning and Development Management
Councillor Ian Middleton, Food Champion

Officers:

Gordon Stewart, Chief Executive
Nicola Riley, Assistant Director Housing and Wellbeing
Shona Ware, Assistant Director Customer Focus
Celia Prado-Teeling, Performance Team Leader
Michael Carr, Interim Principal Officer - Scrutiny and Democratic Lead
Martyn Surfleet, Democratic and Elections Officer

Officers Attending Virtually:

Ian Boll, Corporate Director Communities
Claire Cox, Assistant Director Human Resources
David Spilsbury, Head of Digital and Innovation

66 **Declarations of Interest**

There were no declarations of interest.

67 **Minutes**

The minutes of the meeting of the Committee held on 11 March 2025 were agreed as correct record and signed by the Chairman.

68 **Chairman's Announcements**

The Chairman made the following announcement;

Given the nature of the agenda items and the participants for each item, the order would be item 6 – Housing Action Plan Update as the first main item, followed by Item 9 – Transformation Programme, then item 8 - the Annual Delivery Plan and Performance Outcomes, then Item 7 – Everybody's Wellbeing Strategy Impact Assessment, due to the same officers supporting these items.

69 **Urgent Business**

There were no items of urgent business.

70 **Housing Action Plan Update**

The Committee considered a presentation from the Head of Development Management on the Councils Housing Delivery Action Plan.

In introducing the report, the Head of Development Management advised that at present, the Council could demonstrate a 2.3 year supply of housing against a 5 year housing supply target. The emerging Action Plan would identify the measures that the Council intended to undertake to help improve housing delivery in Cherwell.

Members were briefed on the timeline for the production of the Action Plan, and were advised that it was anticipated the draft plan would be presented to the Committee at its June meeting.

In response to a question regarding the pros, cons and risks of proceeding to Regulation 19 with the Local Plan rather than returning to Regulation 18 and the potential impact on speculative planning applications, the portfolio holder for Planning and Development Management advised that at this stage, returning to regulation 18 was not an option, the entire process of drafting a Local Plan would have to start again if significant changes were required. Proceeding to Regulation 19 stage as planned would provide greater protection for the council with regards to speculative applications.

Resolved

- (1) That having given due consideration, the Housing Action Plan update be noted.
- (2) That a further report be brought to the next meeting of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee on the 03 June 2025.

71

Transformation Programme

The Committee considered a presentation and report from the Assistant Director Customer Focus on the Council's Transformation Programme, covering an introduction, next steps, strategic alignment, and implications.

The Portfolio Holder for Strategic Leadership introduced the report, advising members that the programme began in June 2024 with an external consultant supporting services to deliver a three phase piece of work:

- Phase 1 – Cost Based Service Catalogue
- Phase 2 – Demand & Effectiveness Proposals
- Phase 3 – Service Level Options

Members were advised that panel sessions were implemented with the purpose to confirm that proposals were credible, implementation was achievable, the risks were appropriately assessed, and the potential benefits realistic.

It was also advised that PA Consulting were commissioned in January 2025 to help develop plans for achieving the transformation opportunities identified from the first three phases, specifically covering:

- Programme Set up.
- Agile Delivery – Process Automation
- Culture Change

This work concluded in early March 2025, and the final report, as part of a case for change, would be considered by the Executive as soon as practicable.

The Portfolio Holder for Strategic Leadership detailed that savings had been built into next year's budget from the £4.1m of identified effectiveness

changes from the phase 2 work. These efficiencies were identified by services without impacting service delivery and the levels residents currently receive from the Council. Any impact on service delivery would depend on the financial situation facing the Council at the time of budget setting, and as per the usual process there would be consultation on any proposed service level changes.

In response to a question regarding the impact of Local Government Reorganisation on the Transformation Programme, the Portfolio Holder for Strategic Leadership explained that the work was essential for ensuring the council was in the best position, having implemented strategic efficiencies for any future changes.

In response to a question on the involvement of both the Executive and the Overview and Scrutiny Committee in the process of the Transformation Programme, members were advised that regular updates would be provided throughout the process.

In response to a question on the possible implementation of Artificial Intelligence (A.I.) within the Councils service areas, the Head of Digital and Innovation advised that the integration of A.I. within service areas was being looked into as a way to enhance efficiency and improve accessibility to the services provided by the council.

Resolved

- (1) That having given due consideration, the Transformation Programme report be noted.

72 Annual Delivery Plan and Performance Outcomes Framework for 2025 - 2026

The Committee considered a report and presentation from the Assistant Director – Customer Focus on the Annual Delivery Plan and Performance Measures 2025-26 detailing the Council's new vision and strategic priorities.

The Portfolio Holder for Corporate Services introduced the report, detailing the overarching 5-year strategy that would be underpinned by Annual Delivery Plans for each year of the Corporate Plan period. The Annual Delivery Plans aim to set out the strategic actions for delivering each year, towards achieving the priorities established in its Corporate Strategy. Members were also advised that the council's progress towards achieving its strategic priorities and measuring service delivery would be set out through a series of Key Performance Indicators (KPIs).

In response to a question regarding tenant surveys, the Assistant Director - Housing and Wellbeing explained that there were reliant and robust relationships with housing providers and that milestones were in place to help them conduct surveys.

It was proposed by Councillor Parsons and seconded by Councillor Creed that in relation to the quarterly milestones within the Annual Delivery Plan, the following methodology and approach be adopted:

- Quarter 1 - Survey of tenants to analyse and establish a baseline for concerns and needs
- Quarter 2 - Establish a monitoring framework based on the analysis of the above
- Quarter 3 - Hold a registered providers forum
- Quarter 4 - Further survey of tenants to inform actions for 2026/27.

The Committee discussed the motion. On being put to the vote, there were 6 votes for, 1 vote against and 2 abstentions. It was agreed that recommendations should be submitted to Executive as soon as practicable.

It was proposed by Councillor Parsons and seconded by Councillor Creed that that the Key Performance Indicators (KPI) on Number of Homeless Households living in Temporary Accommodation retain the number of homeless households living in Temporary Accommodation and include an additional KPI metric on the number of people who are in nightly charged accommodation.

The Committee discussed the motion. On being put to the vote, the motion was upheld unanimously, and it was agreed that the recommendation should be submitted to Executive as soon as practicable.

Resolved

(1) That having given due consideration, the Annual Delivery Plan and Performance Measures 2025-26 report be noted.

(2) That it be recommended to the Executive:

- i. That the Key Performance Indicators (KPI) on Number of Homeless Households living in Temporary Accommodation retain the number of homeless households living in Temporary Accommodation and include an additional KPI metric on the number of people who are in nightly charged accommodation.
- ii. That in relation to the quarterly milestones within the Annual Delivery Plan the following methodology and approach be adopted:

- Quarter 1 - Survey of tenants to analyse and establish a baseline for concerns and needs
- Quarter 2 - Establish a monitoring framework based on the analysis of the above
- Quarter 3 - Hold a registered providers forum
- Quarter 4 - Further survey of tenants to inform actions for 2026/27.

Everybody's Wellbeing Strategy Impact Assessment

The Committee considered a report from the Assistant Director Housing & Wellbeing, providing an overview of the "Everybody's Wellbeing" Strategy and baseline outcome measures planned to be collected from the annual satisfaction survey and six-monthly citizen space surveys.

The Portfolio Holder for Healthy Communities introduced the report, informing members that feedback from the surveys would be collected to assess the need and impact while also linking into the Wellbeing Service plan. As well as working with performance team, annual satisfaction survey questions around wellbeing would be asked and collected to produce a baseline of where residents currently see their wellbeing and how they interact with areas of the wellbeing service, enabling the wellbeing team to establish a base and continually ask these questions on a six-month period to review progress. Action plan measures would be reported a quarterly basis.

In response to a question on the impact of Local Government Reorganisation (LGR) on the future of the Strategy as well as service levels across the district, the Assistant Director Housing & Wellbeing advised that LGR was in its very early stages, and as such would not impact on plans for several years. Work carried out in the interim would look to provide a firm foundation for whatever form of local authority existed in the future.

In response to a question regarding public participation in the surveys and what initiatives were in place to boost interaction, the Assistant Director Housing & Wellbeing advised that measures were being taken to involve young people more and that it was important to capture as many residents as possible. The council actively used its current social media channels for outreach but would also look into other platforms as appropriate.

Resolved

- (1) That having given due consideration, the Everybody's Wellbeing Strategy Impact Assessment report be noted.

Scrutiny Working Groups Update

The Committee received reports on the work of the Climate Action, Equality, Diversity and Inclusion and Food Insecurity working groups for the 2024 – 2025 municipal year.

The Chairman of each working group presented the findings and recommendations of each group to the Committee. Recommendations from each group would be taken forward to Executive for consideration in the next Municipal Year.

The Portfolio Holders for Greener Communities, Corporate Services and Healthy Communities thanked the respective working groups and their support officers for their work and recommendations.

Resolved

- (1) That the Scrutiny Working Groups update be noted.
- (2) That the Equality Diversity and Inclusion Scrutiny Report be agreed, adopted and referred to the Executive for an Executive Response, as set out in the Annex to the Minutes (as set out in the Minute Book).
- (3) That the Climate Action Scrutiny Report be agreed, adopted and referred to the Executive for an Executive Response, as set out in the Annex to the Minutes (as set out in the Minute Book).
- (4) That the Food Insecurity Scrutiny Report be agreed and adopted, as set out in the Annex to the Minutes (as set out in the Minute Book).
- (5) That the Planning Application Appeals Scrutiny Recommendations set out in the Scrutiny Update Briefing Report be agreed, as set out in the Annex to the Minutes (as set out in the Minute Book), and be referred to the Executive for an Executive Response and
- (6) That a scrutiny report be prepared setting out the findings of the Planning Application Appeals scrutiny inquiry and brought before the next meeting of the Committee for consideration and agreement.

75

Work Programme Update

The Chairman advised the Committee that as it was the end of the Municipal year the current work programme had concluded. A new work programme including the previously agreed Housing Action Plan update report, would be produced once the Committee had been re-appointed following the Full Council meeting on 21 May 2025.

The Chairman thanked the Committee for their participation throughout the municipal year.

Resolved

- (1) That the Scrutiny Work Programme 2024-25 be agreed.
- (2) That a report on the Housing Action Plan be brought to the next meeting of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee on the 03 June 2025.

The meeting ended at 9.19 pm

Chairman:

Date:

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Cherwell District Council

Overview and Scrutiny Committee

Minutes of a meeting of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee held at 39 Castle Quay, Banbury, OX16 5FD, on 3 June 2025 at 6.30 pm

Present:

Councillor Lynne Parsons (Chair)
Councillor Phil Chapman (Vice-Chair)
Councillor John Broad
Councillor Dr Isabel Creed
Councillor Frank Ideh
Councillor Simon Lytton
Councillor Zoe McLernon
Councillor Dr Chukwudi Okeke
Councillor Barry Wood

Apologies for absence:

Councillor Gordon Blakeway
Councillor Gemma Coton
Councillor Harry Knight

Also Present:

Councillor David Hingley, Leader of the Council and Portfolio Holder for Strategic Leadership
Councillor Jean Conway, Portfolio Holder Planning and Development Management

Officers:

Shiraz Sheikh, Assistant Director Law & Governance and Monitoring Officer
Ian Boll, Corporate Director Communities
David Peckford, Assistant Director Planning & Development
Christina Cherry, Planning Policy, Conservation & Design Manager
Aaron Hetherington, Principal Officer - Electoral Services Lead
Martyn Surfleet, Democratic and Elections Officer

Officers Attending Virtually:

Gordon Stewart, Chief Executive
Paul Seckington, Head of Development Management

It was proposed by Councillor Chapman and seconded by Councillor Broad that Councillor Parsons be elected Chair of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee for the municipal year 2025/2026.

There were no further nominations.

Resolved

- (1) That Councillor Lynne Parsons be elected Chair of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee for the 2025/2026 Municipal Year.

The Monitoring Officer opened the meeting and dealt with agenda item 1, Upon being appointed, Councillor Parsons then took the chair.

2 Appointment of Vice-Chairman for the Municipal Year 2025/2026

It was proposed by Councillor Creed and seconded by Councillor Okeke that Councillor Chapman be elected Vice-Chair of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee for the 2025/2026 Municipal Year.

There were no further nominations.

Resolved

- (1) That Councillor Phil Chapman be elected Vice-Chair of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee for the 2025/2026 Municipal Year.

3 Declarations of Interest

There were no declarations of interest.

4 Minutes

The minutes of the meeting of the Committee held on 18 March 2025 were agreed as correct record and signed by the Chair.

5 Chair's Announcements

There were no Chair's announcements.

6 Urgent Business

There were no items of urgent business.

7 Housing Delivery Action Plan

The Assistant Director - Planning and Development submitted a report which presented a draft Housing Delivery Action Plan (HDAP).

In introducing the report, the Portfolio Holder for Planning and Development Management and Assistant Director - Planning and Development advised that the Council's Annual Monitoring Report (AMR) 2024 had been submitted to the February 2025 meeting of the Executive. The AMR had assessed the council's five-year housing land supply position and concluded the council could only demonstrate a 2.3-year supply, which was a shortfall of 5017 homes per annum. The position was exacerbated by the amalgamation of Oxfor's unmet housing needs.

The Executive resolved that a HDAP be prepared in consultation with the Portfolio Holder for Planning and Development Management. The HDAP sought to address the housing shortfall and highlighted the need for additional resources and investment in software.

In response to a question regarding the focus on the council's housing waiting list and whether the action plan took into account families and vulnerable people with housing needs, the Portfolio Holder for Planning and Development Management agreed that there should be a focus on the existing housing needs for the district and that a strategy had been developed to help ensure the implementation of the HDAP.

In response to a question regarding capacity of the Bicester and Oxford Sewerage works to handle the increase in demand from future housing developments, the Assistant Director - Planning and Development advised that detailed discussions had taken place with relevant stakeholders such as Thames Water and the Environment Agency who were satisfied with the proposals set out within the development plan.

In response to a question regarding the communication between utility companies and housing developers, and the role the council took aligning the two to mitigate any infrastructure issues that may occur, the Planning Policy, Conservation & Design Manager advised that relevant officers liaised with developers and infrastructure providers annually via the Infrastructure Delivery Plan (IDP) and Annual Monitoring Report, and that information was updated on an ongoing basis.

Resolved:

- (1) That the Housing Delivery Action Plan report be noted.
- (2) That it be noted that the proposed plan requires more resource than is currently available to deliver it.
- (3) That the following recommendations be submitted to the 10 June 2025 Executive meeting when it considers the Housing Delivery Action Plan:
 - (1) That the Executive is cognisant of the large numbers of people on the housing waiting lists.

- (2) That implementation of the Housing Delivery Action Plan include prioritisation of staffing and resources.
- (3) That more details on the resources to deliver the Housing Delivery Action Plan be provided by The Assistant Director - Planning and Development.
- (4) That the Leader write to central Government on any delays that might be caused by delays in responses by Government departments.
- (5) That suitable measures be taken to ensure that Section 106 agreements are processed on time to avoid delays.
- (6) That further consideration be given to necessary infrastructure developments to deliver the Housing Delivery Action Plan.
- (7) That further consideration be made to risk management of the delivery of the Housing Delivery Action Plan.

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

The Chair advised members that further discussions on the work programme for 2025/26 would be held at the next meeting of the Committee on 17 June. Prior to this meeting there would be an informal work programme planning meeting on 11 June 2025. Members were encouraged to forward work programme suggestions to the Democratic and Elections team for consideration at the informal work programme planning meeting.

Resolved

- (1) That the Chair and Vice-Chair work with officers to bring forward a work programme, incorporating topics suggested by members, to the next Committee meeting.

The meeting ended at 7.55 pm

Chair:

Date:

Cherwell District Council

Overview and Scrutiny Committee

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

Present:

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

Councillor John Broad

Councillor Dr Isabel Creed

Councillor Frank Ideh

Councillor Harry Knight

Councillor Simon Lytton

Councillor Zoe McLernon

Councillor Barry Wood

Substitute Members:

Councillor Dorothy Walker (In place of Councillor Gemma Coton)

Councillor Amanda Watkins (In place of Councillor Lynne Parsons)

Councillor Besmira Brasha (In place of Councillor Dr Chukwudi Okeke)

Apologies for absence:

Councillor Lynne Parsons

Councillor Gordon Blakeway

Councillor Gemma Coton

Councillor Dr Chukwudi Okeke

Officers:

Shiraz Sheikh, Assistant Director Law & Governance and Monitoring Officer

Ian Boll, Corporate Director Communities

Nicola Riley, Assistant Director Housing and Wellbeing

Shona Ware, Assistant Director Customer Focus

Emma Faulkner, Principal Officer - Scrutiny and Democratic Lead

Martyn Surfleet, Democratic and Elections Officer

Officers Attending Virtually:

Ed Potter, Assistant Director Environmental Services

9

Declarations of Interest

There were no declarations of interest.

10 **Minutes**

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

11 **Chair's Announcements**

There were no Chair's announcements.

12 **Urgent Business**

There were no items of urgent business.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Resolved

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

14

Work Programme Planning for 2025-2026

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Resolved

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

The meeting ended at 7.55 pm

Chair:

Date:

Cherwell District Council

Personnel Committee

Minutes of a meeting of the Personnel Committee held at Bodicote House, Bodicote, Banbury, OX15 4AA, on 27 November 2024 at 6.30 pm

Present:

Councillor Amanda Watkins (Chairman)
Councillor Gemma Coton (Vice-Chairman)
Councillor Harry Knight
Councillor Nicholas Mawer
Councillor Lynne Parsons
Councillor Chris Pruden
Councillor Barry Wood

Substitute Members:

Councillor John Broad (In place of Councillor Fiona Mawson)
Councillor Dr Isabel Creed (In place of Councillor Rebecca Biegel)
Councillor Gordon Blakeway (In place of Councillor David Hingley)

Apologies for absence:

Councillor Rebecca Biegel
Councillor Chris Brant
Councillor Phil Chapman
Councillor David Hingley
Councillor Fiona Mawson

Officers:

Claire Cox, Assistant Director Human Resources
Susan Blunsden, HR Manager
Martyn Surfleet, Democratic and Elections Officer

18 Declarations of Interest

There were no declarations of interests.

19 Petitions and Requests to Address the Meeting

There were no petitions or requests to address the meeting.

20 Urgent Business

There were no items of urgent business.

21 **Minutes**

The Minutes of the meeting of the Committee held on 18 September 2024 were agreed as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

22 **Chairman's Announcements**

There were no Chairman's announcements.

23 **Workforce Profile Statistics - Quarter 2 of 2024-25**

The Assistant Director Human Resources submitted a report to update members on Cherwell District Council's workforce including measuring staff well-being and to highlight the actions officers are taking to address any issues.

In response to Members' questions regarding levels of absence linked to work related stress and what support was offered to staff, the Assistant Director Human Resources explained that several processes were in place to support staff, such as the return to work meeting, risk assessments, occupational health referrals, phased returns as well as the employee assist programme.

In response to Members' questions regarding access to employment and the interview process for minority groups, the Assistant Director Human Resources explained that the interview process was under review whilst data was gathered, and that an "Inclusion Champion network" was to be created to feed into the process.

In response to Members' questions regarding a request to include data on neurodivergence, the Assistant Director Human Resources explained officers will look to include any relevant data within the report due for the next meeting of the committee.

In response to Members' questions regarding the inclusion and support for British Sign Language (BSL) users within the council, the Assistant Director Human Resources explained that previous workforce data did not include BSL as a category, but would look to include it going forward, and that the EDI working group would be best placed to look into the inclusivity of BSL within the Council.

Resolved

- (1) That the workforce profile statistics for quarter 2 of 2024/25 (financial year dates) be noted.

Policy Review Updates

The Assistant Director Human Resources submitted a report to seek approval from the Personnel Committee on proposed changes to four existing HR policies: Organisational Change Policy, Paternity Leave Policy, Carer's Leave Policy, and Drugs and Alcohol Policy.

In response to Members' questions regarding the potential for side effects of prescription medication on work duties and were there any processes in place to monitor this, the Assistant Director Human Resources explained that this was not something included in the original policy and that officers would look into and feedback to the committee.

Resolved

- (1) That, having given due consideration, the following policies be approved for implementation:
 - a. Organisational Change Policy
 - b. Paternity Leave Policy
 - c. Carer's Leave Policy
 - d. Drugs and Alcohol Policy

The meeting ended at 7.14 pm

Chairman:

Date:

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Cherwell District Council

Personnel Committee

Minutes of a meeting of the Personnel Committee held at Bodicote House, Bodicote, Banbury, OX15 4AA, on 26 March 2025 at 6.30 pm

Present:

Councillor Amanda Watkins (Chairman)
Councillor Gemma Coton (Vice-Chair)
Councillor Rebecca Biegel
Councillor David Hingley
Councillor Nicholas Mawer
Councillor Fiona Mawson
Councillor Lynne Parsons
Councillor Chris Pruden
Councillor Barry Wood

Apologies for absence:

Councillor Phil Chapman
Councillor Harry Knight

Also Present Virtually:

Councillor Chris Brant, Portfolio Holder for Corporate Services

Officers:

Claire Cox, Assistant Director Human Resources
Martyn Surfleet, Democratic and Elections Officer

25 Declarations of Interest

There were no declarations of interests.

26 Urgent Business

There were no items of urgent business.

27 Minutes

The Minutes of the meeting of the Committee held on 27 November 2024, were agreed as a correct record and signed by the Chairman, subject to the correction of the following minor amendment:

That Councillor Gordon Blakeway be listed as substitute for Councillor David Hingley.

28 **Chairman's Announcements**

There were no Chairman's Announcements.

29 **Requests to Address the Meeting**

There were no requests to address the meeting.

30 **Gender Pay Gap Report**

The Committee considered a report from the Assistant Director Human Resources which provided the Committee with the latest Gender Pay Gap report for information ahead of it being published on the council's website by 30 March 2025.

In introducing the report, the Portfolio Holder Corporate Services advised Members that the Gender Pay Gap report outlined a mean difference in pay between men and women of 4.97%, with men earning an average of £1.01 more an hour than women. For the third year in a 4-year period, there had been no median pay difference between men and women. Even with a mean difference of 4.97% CDC remained significantly lower than the national public sector mean pay gap of 12.9%, and the median pay gap of 13.5%.

In response to a question regarding progress in addressing the gender balance in more male dominated departments, the Assistant Director Human Resources explained that the recruitment process sought to place the best candidate for the role wherever possible and that departments such as Waste Collection and Street Cleansing remained male dominated due to the nature of the work. Continuous monitoring would enable the council to focus its attention on areas of improvement.

In response to a question as to whether the council monitored the work other councils were undertaking to address any imbalances within their work force regarding gender and pay, the Assistant Director Human Resources advised that the council did not currently monitor other authorities work on gender statistics and pay but would seek information should it be required.

Resolved

- (1) That, having given due consideration, the Gender Pay Gap report be noted.

Workforce Profile Statistics - Quarter 3 2024-25

The Assistant Director Human Resources submitted a report to update the Committee on Cherwell District Council's (CDC) workforce including measuring staff well-being and to highlight the actions officers were taking to address any issues.

In introducing the report, the Portfolio Holder Corporate Services advised that the report outlined statistical data in relation to CDC's workforce at the end of quarter 3 of 2024/25 for information. There were no issues, risks or concerns to highlight.

In response to a question regarding negative feedback during exit interviews and whether there were any follow up actions and measures to ensure any concerns were rectified, the Assistant Director Human Resources explained that should negative feedback be received an investigation would be undertaken. Feedback and actions would subsequently be provided to the relevant officers should any action be required.

In response to a question regarding disclosure of disabilities at interview stage and whether there were any issues with encouraging people with disabilities to apply for roles at CDC, the Assistant Director Human Resources advised that CDC was a disability positive employer and that any applicant disclosing a disability would be guaranteed an interview. Applicants were encouraged to disclose disabilities at interview stage to allow for adequate amendments where possible.

Resolved

- (1) That the workforce profile statistics for quarter 3 of 2024/25 (financial year dates) be noted.

The meeting ended at 7.09 pm

Chair:

Date:

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Cherwell District Council

Personnel Committee

Minutes of a meeting of the Personnel Committee held at 39 Castle Quay, anbury, OX16 5FD, on 21 May 2025 at 7.32 pm

Present:

Councillor Amanda Watkins (Chairman)
Councillor Gemma Coton (Vice-Chair)
Councillor Rebecca Biegel
Councillor Chris Brant
Councillor Nicholas Mawer
Councillor Fiona Mawson
Councillor Lynne Parsons
Councillor Rob Pattenden
Councillor Chris Pruden
Councillor Barry Wood

Apologies for absence:

Councillor Phil Chapman
Councillor Harry Knight

1 Appointment of Chairman for the municipal year 2025/2026

It was proposed by Councillor Parsons and seconded by Councillor Coton that Councillor Watkins be appointed Chair of the Personnel Committee for the municipal year 2025/2026.

There were no further nominations.

Resolved

- (1) That Councillor Amanda Watkins be appointed Chair of the Personnel Committee for the municipal year 2025/2026.

2 Appointment of Chairman for the municipal year 2025/2026

It was proposed by Councillor Watkins and seconded by Councillor Brant that Councillor Coton be appointed Vice-Chair of the Personnel Committee for the municipal year 2025/2026.

There were no further nominations.

Resolved

- (1) That Councillor Gemma Coton be appointed Vice-Chair of the Personnel Committee for the municipal year 2025/2026.

The meeting ended at 7.33 pm

Chair:

Date:

Cherwell District Council

Personnel Committee

Minutes of a meeting of the Personnel Committee held at 39 Castle Quay, Banbury, OX16 5FD, on 25 June 2025 at 6.30 pm

Present:

Councillor Amanda Watkins (Chair)
Councillor Gemma Coton (Vice-Chair)
Councillor Rebecca Biegel
Councillor Chris Brant
Councillor Phil Chapman
Councillor Harry Knight
Councillor Nicholas Mawer
Councillor Fiona Mawson
Councillor Rob Pattenden
Councillor Chris Pruden
Councillor Barry Wood

Substitute Members:

Councillor Mark Cherry (In place of Councillor Lynne Parsons)

Apologies for absence:

Councillor Lynne Parsons

Officers:

Claire Cox, Assistant Director Human Resources
Susan Blunsden, HR Manager
Carly Richardson, HR Assistant
Martyn Surfleet, Democratic and Elections Officer

3 Declarations of Interest

There were no declarations of interests.

4 Urgent Business

There were no items of urgent business.

5 Minutes

The Minutes of the meetings of the Committee held on 26 March and 21 May 2025 were agreed as correct records and signed by the Chair.

6 Chair's Announcements

There were no Chair's announcements.

7 Requests to Address the Meeting

There were no requests to address the meeting.

8 Workforce Profile Statistics - Quarter 4 of 2024-25

The Assistant Director Human Resources submitted a report to update the Committee on Cherwell District Council's (CDC) workforce as at the end of quarter 4 of 2024/25, including measuring staff well-being and highlighting the actions officers were taking to address any issues.

In introducing the report, the Portfolio Holder for Corporate Services, Councillor Brant advised that there were no issues, risks or concerns to highlight.

In response to a question regarding the use of agency staff and whether solutions to recruit and maintain staff to mitigate this were being looked at, the Assistant Director Human Resources explained that the use of agency staff varied by department, and the purpose of using agency staff was to ensure services were maintained. The shortages impacting some departments, including planning, were a national issue, CDC was mitigating by targeted recruitment as well as graduate schemes.

In response to a question regarding information on how many applicants per ethnic group went on to successfully secure a position at the Council, the Assistant Director Human Resources advised that in its current format this was not captured in the report, but she would seek to include in future reports.

Resolved

- (1) That the workforce profile statistics for quarter 4 of 2024/25 (financial year dates) be noted.

9 Policy Review Updates

The Assistant Director Human Resources submitted a report to seek approval from the Personnel Committee on proposed changes to two HR policies: Neonatal Leave and Pay Policy and Induction Policy.

In introducing the report, the Portfolio Holder for Corporate Services, Councillor Brant, explained that the Induction Policy had been reviewed and updated following feedback from new starters to ensure that, whilst there would be individual service requirements by way of induction, corporate

information provided to new starters would be standardised, and that the reworked process would provide clarity to managers on the requirements within induction. The Neonatal Policy was a new policy brought forward following new legislation in April 2025 to support employees whose newborn child required neonatal care following birth.

In response to a suggestion to include workplace adjustments and accommodations for new starters being discussed and agreed as part of the onboarding and induction process in the Induction Policy, the Assistant Director Human Resources agreed that revisions to the policy would be made to include these suggestions.

Resolved

- (1) That, having given due consideration, the Neonatal Leave and Pay Policy be approved for implementation.
- (2) That, having given due consideration, subject to the inclusion of provisions for any workplace adjustments or accommodations to be agreed with a new starter as part of their induction, the Induction Policy be approved for implementation.

The meeting ended at 7.15 pm

Chair:

Date:

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Cherwell District Council

The Standards Committee

Minutes of a meeting of the Standards Committee held at 39 Castle Quay,
Banbury, OX16 5FD, on 21 May 2025 at 7.34 pm

Present:

Councillor Dorothy Walker (Chairman)
Councillor Linda Ward (Vice-Chair)
Councillor Dr Henry Elugwu
Councillor Julian Nedelcu
Councillor Dr Kerrie Thornhill
Councillor Barry Wood

Apologies for absence:

Councillor Phil Chapman
Councillor Nick Cotter

1 Appointment of Chairman for the municipal year 2025/2026

It was proposed by Councillor Nedelcu and seconded by Councillor Ward that Councillor Walker be appointed Chair of the Standards Committee for the municipal year 2025/2026.

There were no further nominations.

Resolved

- (1) That Councillor Dorothy Walker be appointed Chair of the Standards Committee for the municipal year 2025/2026.

2 Appointment of Vice-Chairman for the municipal year 2025/2026

It was proposed by Councillor Nedelcu and seconded by Councillor Wood that Councillor Ward be appointed Vice-Chair of the Standards Committee for the municipal year 2025/2026.

There were no further nominations.

Resolved

- (1) That Councillor Linda Ward be appointed Vice-Chair of the Standards Committee for the municipal year 2025/2026.

The meeting ended at 7.35 pm

Chair:

Date: