

This report is public	
Growth and Regeneration Funding 2025/26 – 2027/28	
Committee	Executive
Date of Committee	7 October 2025
Portfolio Holder presenting the report	Portfolio Holder for Finance, Property and Regeneration, Cllr Lesley McLean
Date Portfolio Holder agreed report	25 September 2025
Report of	Corporate Director Communities, Ian Boll

Purpose of report

To secure project funding to the Growth & Regeneration and Development Management Services within the Place and Regeneration Directorate to address capacity constraints and to support priority projects including the Housing Delivery Action Plan, Local Area Energy Planning, inputting into the Oxford Growth Commission and enabling infrastructure to support complex development sites.

1. Recommendations

The Executive resolves:

- 1.1 To accept an award of £300k funding from MHCLG to be spent in 2025/26 on investment in capacity funding to support the acceleration of infrastructure and housing delivery in Bicester as part of the Bicester Garden Town Programme.
- 1.2 To transfer £600k from the projects reserve to a new earmarked “Growth and Regeneration Projects Reserve” and to allocate £100k of this in 2025/26. This funding will add capacity to the other two Area Oversight Group areas of Banbury and Kidlington (and the 4 surrounding parish areas of the Local Plan Partial Review 2020) to accelerate housing and employment delivery through projects detailed in the report.
- 1.3 To delegate to the Corporate Director Communities¹, in consultation with the Portfolio Holder for Finance, Property and Regeneration, the programme management and change control of funding to meet the identified projects, and subject to approval of the project business plans by Executive Committee as identified within the report.

2. Executive Summary

¹ The post title will change to Executive Director Place and Regeneration effective 15 October 2025
Cherwell District Council

- 2.1 This report seeks to secure project capacity and resources for the Growth & Regeneration and Development Management Services to enable the effective delivery of key projects and action plans to drive housing delivery, economic growth and enhance communities across Cherwell.
- 2.2 This investment will enable the council to:
- Attract external investment, including infrastructure funding and ongoing capacity support to the approved sites within the Local Plan and identified as strategic priorities, accelerate housing development by working with developers in an enabling role and through the prioritisation of S106 funded projects. This is a key part of the Cherwell Housing Delivery Action Plan 2025 approved by the Executive in February 2025.
 - Support the development and delivery of complex regeneration schemes and address key challenges in town centres including but not limited to East West Rail London Road railway crossing options analysis, projects referenced in the emerging Oxfordshire County Council Rail Strategy (OxRail 2040) such as a new mobility hub at Banbury Station, prepare a new masterplan to interrelate the new communities of the Local Plan Partial Review sites with the existing communities of Kidlington and the surrounding parishes.
 - Provide support to Area Oversight Groups and the Area Priority Plans through the development of regeneration plans for our three main urban areas, leveraging and harnessing CDC owned assets to bring forward regeneration.
- 2.3 This fixed term investment will deliver new plans and supporting evidence ahead of the Government's devolution act requirements of spatial development strategies, to ensure our communities are best represented through collaborative visions for sustainable development. It will provide capacity to continue working with developers on specific issues that are delaying housing delivery due to complex infrastructure requirements and to work closely with stakeholders on the development of new town centre visions, specific to each area oversight group.

Implications & Impact Assessments

Implications	Commentary
Finance	<p>The council has sufficient reserves within the Projects Reserve to transfer £600k into the new "Growth and Regeneration Projects Reserve".</p> <p>The reserves policy allows Executive to amend the earmarking of reserves and to allocate reserves in year.</p> <p>Once 2026/27 and onwards projects are sufficiently scoped, with financial costs and performance metrics identified, future funding can be released following Executive Committee approval.</p> <p>Michael Furness, Assistant Director Finance, 25 September 2025</p>
Legal	<p>Detailed business plans as noted in paragraph 4.5 of this report will need to be prepared to set out the case for this funding and identify how it is to be spent. These Business Plans will need to be</p>

	<p>approved by Executive Committee to ensure there is appropriate oversight of the spending.</p> <p>As noted within the report, once these Business Plans have been approved a robust project management and reporting structure should be implemented to ensure that the funding is achieving the desired outcomes and being spent in line with the overall objectives and approved plans.</p> <p>Once the Business Plans are approved there will need to be appropriate input from procurement team to ensure that the Business Plans are implemented in a procurement complaint manner.</p> <p>Legal services will review the terms of the MHCLG grant in order to confirm that there are no issues with allocating the funding in the manner envisaged by this report.</p> <p>Denzil Turbervill, Head of Legal, 25 September 2025</p>			
Risk Management	<p>Delays in deploying funding and resources could hinder progress on housing and infrastructure priorities, risking missed targets and reduced external investment. However, the proposal in this report outlines clear mitigation measures—including delegated programme management, performance monitoring, and phased funding allocation—which demonstrate a proactive approach to managing these risks effectively. As such there’s no risk as a direct consequence of this report, risks related to this proposal will be managed through the service Operational Risk Register and escalated to the Leadership Risk Register as and when deemed necessary.</p> <p>Celia Prado-Teeling, Performance Team Leader, 24 September 2025</p>			
Impact Assessments	Positive	Neutral	Negative	Commentary
Equality Impact		X		N/A
A Are there any aspects of the proposed decision, including how it is delivered or accessed, that could impact on inequality?		X		N/A
B Will the proposed decision have an impact upon the lives of people with protected characteristics, including employees and service users?		X		N/A

Climate & Environmental Impact	X			Progressing LAEP work will have a positive impact on decarbonisation through the understanding and delivery of low carbon energy solutions.
ICT & Digital Impact		X		N/A
Data Impact		X		N/A
Procurement & subsidy		X		N/A
Council Priorities	<p>Priority 1: Economic prosperity "We want to create diverse, active town centres and welcoming, vibrant villages throughout Cherwell"</p> <p>Priority 3: Environmental stewardship "We are committed to making and promoting choices today that will help safeguard our district for future generations"</p> <p>Priority 4: Quality housing and place making "Cherwell will be a place where people feel at home in areas that improve their health, happiness and wellbeing today and in the future"</p>			
Human Resources	N/A			
Property	N/A			
Consultation & Engagement	N/A			

Supporting Information

3. Background

- 3.1 Cherwell has over 8,000 homes with planning permission and awaiting construction. The council approved a Housing Delivery Action Plan in February 2025 to support acceleration of housing delivery and support sustainable growth in the district, within which are a number of actions which require resourcing to deliver, including:
1. Local Area Energy Plans (LAEP's) - The council, with all other Oxfordshire authorities, is working to develop an LAEP to identify energy grid constraints and infrastructure investment requirements to support the transition away from fossil fuels to renewable energy sources and prepare for the increased demand from decarbonisation of vehicles and heating systems. There is a chronic shortage of future energy supply impacting the pace of delivery of housing and employment in Bicester particularly but increasing also in other areas of the district, requiring investment and innovation.
 2. CDC Area Oversight Groups (AOG's) - These groups have been established to bring together key stakeholders and agree local priorities under an Area Priority Plan, support planning colleagues to resolve outstanding S106 issues, apply for

external funding from MHCLG/Homes England, engage with developers on strategic delivery priorities and support local communities.

- 3.2 Funding for AOG's initially came from Bicester Garden Town Programme funding together with short term funding allocations for Banbury through the Banbury Vision project and for Kidlington through a two-year investment approved in February 2024 for 2024/5 – 2025/6.
- 3.3 In addition, external project pressures and demands on resources need to be met for the council to be able to respond in a timely and positive manner to the priorities of government direction on the establishment of a Mayoral Strategic Authority and the Oxford Growth Commission which are bringing renewed focus to strategic planning, future sustainable growth and the unlocking of current growth sites which require support.
- 3.4 The continued focus of the Regeneration & Growth team will be to deliver the Area Framework of priorities as set out in the November 2024 Executive report, the Area Oversight Groups, enabling, monitoring and delivery of the three Area Priority Plans and the UKSPF programme 2025/6.]

4. Details

- 4.1 In relation to the Councils vision & strategy for 2025-2030 which outlines the Corporate Strategic Priorities, the additional resources will also be delivering the outcomes set out in the Annual Delivery Plan (ADP) 2025 with a focus on:
- Economic prosperity – continued engagement with the business community, continued retention and attraction of business investment into the district, but also growing the engagement & support we provide to a wider business community.
 - Enabling and delivering projects to create vibrant town centres and deliver a new Economic Strategy for Cherwell, with specific plans for each of the growth areas.
 - Quality housing and place making - will be assisted through the delivery of the Garden Town programme in Bicester, especially progressing Northwest Bicester with the Atlas team from MHCLG & Homes England to enable over 5,000 new homes, the emerging Banbury masterplan with Oxfordshire County Council and working with the Developers & the community of Kidlington to enable the delivery of over 4,000 new homes.
 - Community leadership - the continued active participation in County wide partnerships and leadership forums including the newly developed Oxfordshire Growth Commission.
 - Environmental stewardship - continued engagement with the business community and working with them in partnership on helping to address the climate emergency and bring forward green economy initiatives as part of the UK Shared Prosperity Fund and possibly its successor.
- 4.2 The following is a brief summary of the activities also undertaken by the team to provide an understanding of the breadth and depth of team members required to deliver the Executive priorities.

- Regeneration & place-shaping – Bicester, Banbury, Kidlington currently; Heyford & Rural areas to be developed including housing enabling, viability, s106 negotiation and delivery (CQ project board).
- Development of appropriate plans and strategies to provide a framework for area enabling & delivery e.g. Area Framework documents and AOG meeting planning, attendance and management of process, and development of the new Cherwell Economic Development Strategy.
- Economic prosperity activities and engagement with the local business community to help retain existing businesses and develop new relationships. Eg Bicester Motion.
- Developing partnerships to help skills development and training opportunities and economic development e.g. Bicester Vision.
- Developing the visitor economy tourism e.g. working with Experience Oxfordshire.
- Involvement with strategic economic partnerships and initiatives including Oxford Growth Commission, (OxCam Arc) OxLEP, OXIS and other regional and sub-regional partnerships. Working with MPs.
- Working with stakeholders including Thames Water, SSEN, Network Rail, CRT, East West Rail on regeneration proposals and design work.
- Climate change and decarbonisation initiatives working closely with business – including working with SSEN on energy supply issues particularly in Bicester.

4.3 The Growth & Regeneration Service has had detailed dialogue with the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government (MHCLG) Atlas team who support councils in the delivery of complex development schemes. This has resulted in a grant offer in 2025/26 of £300k to be expended in year to support the service and to provide additional principal planning officer capacity funding in the Development Management Service to engage with developers associated with the North West Bicester housing allocations in the 2015 Cherwell Local Plan.

4.4 To continue the delivery of the above, this report recommends to Executive to accept the £300k of MHCLG funding which has been awarded to Biester and to allocate up to £600k of revenue funding across 2025/26 to 2027/28 to add capacity to the remaining Area Oversight Areas of Banbury and Kidlington (and the 4 surrounding parish areas of the Local Plan Partial Review 2020) to accelerate housing and employment delivery through the identified projects detailed in the report.

4.5 The in-year requirement for the use of reserves is forecast to be up to £100k, allowing for time to recruit and commission resources to develop full business cases to take forward for approval to Executive. Therefore, the remaining profile would be across 2026/7 and 2027/8. Once business cases are approved by Executive they will be monitored quarterly.

Outputs

4.6 The additional funding sought needs to be clearly measured against performance and output criteria, for the purposes of project management and change control, and to provide clearly defined deliverables against the funding sought. These are:

- The timely production of the Local Area Energy Plan

- Achievement of the project plan agreed with MHCLG ATLAS as part of the £300k grant funding criteria
- The production of regeneration plans for each of the three Area Oversight Area's
- Monitoring of the success of the Housing Delivery Action Plan
- Production of Area master plans, regeneration plans, economic development plans inc visitor economy.
- Delivery of S106 programmes through held S106 funds.
- Agreement of additional funding from external sources including MHCLG, OGC, accelerated infrastructure and the expenditure of agreed S106 programmes.

4.7 Further detail is provided in Appendix 1 which be used to create the indicative programme for future monitoring and reporting back to the Executive and through the Housing Delivery Action Plan (HDAP) which was approved February 2025.

5. Alternative Options and Reasons for Rejection

5.1 The following alternative options have been identified and rejected for the reasons as set out below.

Option 1: Do nothing.

This would severely limit the ability of the Growth and Regeneration Service to continue to support the Area Oversight Groups and to progress actions within the Housing Delivery Action Plan 2025 and the ADP. The £300k grant to MHCLG would be returned. S106 projects would not benefit from additional oversight or acceleration.

It is not recommended to select this option. Without progress on the key infrastructure projects to support allocated growth sites, the councils housing supply figures could worsen and growth across unallocated sites would likely be forthcoming at an increased rate.

Option 2: Only accept the MHCLG funding and await decision to invest council funding in continuation of the service for 2026/27 – 2027/28 until the Medium-Term Funding Strategy is set in February 2026.

This option would restrict investment in year to the MHCLG grant for Bicester only and would prevent the service from making early progress in recruiting and deploying resources until a decision is reached in February 2026 at the earliest.

This option is not recommended due to the urgency of the Housing Delivery Action Plan and the ongoing priorities associated with unlocking growth. With the government direction on Mayoral Strategic Authorities and strategic planning, it is anticipated that there will be a significant shortfall in resources to support priorities and waiting a further five months will compound this risk.

6 Conclusion and Reasons for Recommendations

6.1 Investing in capacity to support sustainable growth is a priority for the council as set out in the plans and strategies outlined in the report. The allocation of grant funding to provide further capacity shows that this is a priority understood by government.

6.2 It is recommended that:

1. The council accepts the award of £300k funding from MHCLG to be spend in 2025/26 on investment in capacity funding to support the acceleration of infrastructure and housing delivery in Bicester as part of the Bicester Garden Town Programme.
2. That the council allocates up to £600k revenue funding across 2025/26 – 2027/28 to add capacity to the Area Oversight Group areas of Banbury and Kidlington (and the 4 surrounding parish areas of the Local Plan Partial Review 2020) to accelerate housing and employment delivery through a series of identified projects detailed in the report.

6.3 To manage the programme and projects outlined in this report for the performance of delivery and the investment of additional funding it is further recommended that the programme management and change control of funding to meet the identified project outputs it is delegated to the Corporate Director Communities, in consultation with the Portfolio Holder for Finance, Property and Regeneration.

Decision Information

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

Document Information

Appendices	
Appendix 1	Example of planned workstreams and Cherwell Wide Stratagems
Background Papers	None
Reference Papers	None
Report Author	Ian Boll, Corporate Director Communities
Report Author contact details	Ian.Boll@Cherwell-dc.gov.uk
Corporate Director Approval (unless Corporate Director or Statutory Officer report)	N/A – report of Corporate Director