

This report is public	
Cherwell Futures Programme	
<b>Committee</b>	Executive
<b>Date of Committee</b>	7 October 2025
<b>Portfolio Holder presenting the report</b>	Leader of the Council, Councillor David Hingley
<b>Date Portfolio Holder agreed report</b>	25 September 2025
<b>Report of</b>	Corporate Director Resources and Transformation, Stephen Hinds

## Purpose of report

To seek approval for the next phase of Transformation to transition to the Cherwell Futures Programme. Following a comprehensive review by the Executive and analysis of progress made in 2024-25, the programme's focus has been strategically narrowed to focus on three priority areas: Planning, Environmental Services, and Customer Engagement (Single Front Door).

This approach will provide clear assurance on targeted savings and establish a definitive means of implementation. Depending on the full scope of the project agreed, it is anticipated to achieve between £3 million and £4 million in savings per annum over the medium term (6-18 months) from approval.

The report asks the Executive to allocate an initial £400k in funding to enable work on the priority areas identified, and to agree that a further £1.1m can be accessed subject to strict governance and oversight procedures.

## 1. Recommendations

The Executive resolves:

- 1.1 To approve the Cherwell Futures Programme to prioritise the three key areas of Planning, Environmental Services, and Customer Engagement (Single Front Door), as the core focus for the next phase of work.
- 1.2 To approve the allocation from the Projects Reserve of £0.4 million to fund initial support and preparatory work required for the three prioritised areas noted in recommendation 1.1 above, together with transferring £1.1 million from the Projects Reserve to a new Cherwell Futures Reserve for

implementation and resource costs, subject to Executive approval, as required by the Council's Reserves Policy.

- 1.3 To approve the proposed delivery model referenced in section 4. This model aims to bring more project management in-house to reduce risk and maximise cost-effectiveness, using external support only where necessary.

## **2. Executive Summary**

- 2.1 Cherwell District Council is facing a projected funding gap of approximately £10.7 million by 2029/30, with savings of £3.8 million required in 2026/27. The Transformation Programme was launched to tackle these financial pressures and prepare the council for potential Local Government Reorganisation (LGR).
- 2.2 The Council has adopted a new Vision and Strategy for 2024, setting out a clear ambition to become a modern, high-performing authority delivering positive, lasting change. The goal is to improve outcomes for residents, communities, and places, while equipping the council to meet financial challenges and modernise its ways of working. This vision is being delivered through a refreshed transformation programme approach, combining bottom-up service reviews with a top-down Target Operating Model (TOM). The approach is designed to identify efficiencies, income opportunities, and potential service reductions, while also investing in new ways of working and a lower-cost operating model.
- 2.3 The initial phase of the program has already secured approximately £1.8 million in recurring savings for the 2025/26 financial year. Building on this success, the program is now proposed to be refocused to a targeted, phased approach prioritising three key projects that have the potential to deliver significant savings and service improvements in the short to medium term:

### **Planning, Environmental Services, and Customer Engagement.**

- 2.4 These three primary project areas have a combined estimated savings potential of approximately £2.8 million to £3 million. The review of additional potential savings initiatives may contribute a further £1 million in potential savings, bringing the total estimated savings to £3 million to £4 million over the medium term.
- 2.5 To prepare these projects for implementation, i.e. to be specified in sufficient detail for procurement, a targeted investment of £1.5 million is requested, subject to business cases being developed and approved by the Executive. This funding is split into two parts: £0.4 million for the 2025/26 revenue budget to fund preparatory work and essential interim support, and £1.1 million ring-fenced in reserves for implementation. Each project will require a separate business case and Executive approval before funds are released. This approach is intended to ensure robust governance and control of expenditure,

delivering a long-term strategy to build a more resilient organisation that can protect core services and improve efficiency.

- 2.6 Beyond the savings anticipated from this programme, the latest MTFS estimates that a further £6 million in savings will be required by 2029/30. Further investment to continue transformation efforts across other service areas may assist in closing this gap. Therefore, the council will continue to consider additional programmes of work to offset the need for likely service reductions that will be required to balance the budget over the medium term, pending the outcome of the Fair Funding Review and other government decisions on local authority funding.

## Implications & Impact Assessments

Implications	Commentary
<b>Finance</b>	<p>The programme requests £1.5m to progress three priority projects (Customer Engagement/Single Front Door, Environmental Services operational improvement, Planning). This comprises a transfer from reserves of £0.4m revenue in 2025/26 for preparatory work and the creation of an earmarked reserve of £1.1m for implementation. Each draw-down from the £1.1m reserve will be subject to a separate business case and Executive approval.</p> <p>The transfer from reserves in 2025/26 is expected to fund the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Leadership: Programme Director</li> <li>• Delivery: 3 Programme Managers (IT/Digital, Environment, Planning)</li> <li>• Support: 2 Business Analysts, Comms/Marketing, Feasibility Assessment</li> <li>• Specialist Input: External resource for business case development</li> <li>• Methodology: Zero-Based Budgeting rollout</li> </ul> <p>Estimated savings potential across the three projects is ~£2.8m–£3.0m, with a further ~£1.0m potential in other initiatives (total ~£3.0m–£4.0m over 6–18 months). This may potentially contribute to the £10.7m MTFS gap by 2029/30 (pressure crystallising from 2026/27) but will not close the gap.</p> <p>If further transformation funding is not approved across other services, residual MTFS gap closure may require service reductions. Phasing, benefits tracking and gated approvals will manage non-delivery risk.</p>

	The transfer from reserves and the creation of the new earmarked reserve can be accommodated through realigning existing reserves to this strategic programme.  Joanne Kaye, Head of Finance (Deputy S151 Officer), 24 September 2025			
Legal	Best Value duty requires continuous improvement in the delivery of services.  The Council, as a best value authority, is under a legal obligation to make arrangements to secure continuous improvement in the way its functions are exercised. In doing so, it must have regard to a combination of economy, efficiency, and effectiveness. The Council is also obligated to demonstrate good governance across all its functions and to manage risk effectively. The guiding principles in delivering best value are continuous improvement, leadership, governance, culture, use of resources, service delivery, and partnerships and community engagement. This report outlines the Council’s transformation ambitions, focusing on key areas in fulfilling this duty and balanced budget, with member oversight at the heart of its delivery. There are no legal implications identified in this report.  Shiraz Sheikh, Assistant Director Law and Governance and Monitoring Officer, 29 September 2025			
Risk Management	Programme-level risks include: <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• benefits shortfall/non-delivery, mitigated by gated business cases, Executive oversight and a benefits tracker.</li><li>• capacity and change fatigue, mitigated by staged delivery and targeted external support.</li><li>• dependencies with LGR and county programme, managed through governance and SRO escalation.</li><li>• cost pressures in Environmental Services, addressed through a dedicated Programme Manager, route optimisation, and operational redesign.</li></ul> A programme risk register will be maintained, with exception reporting to the proposed Transformation Board.			
Impact Assessments	Positive	Neutral	Negative	Commentary
Equality Impact				N/A
A Are there any aspects of the proposed decision, including how it is	x			The Customer Engagement Front Door and wider service redesigns can improve access and consistency. However, if self-service channels are not complemented by assisted options, there is a

delivered or accessed, that could impact on inequality?			<p>risk of digital exclusion and differential impact on people with protected characteristics.</p> <p>We will complete proportionate Equality &amp; Climate Impact Assessments (ECIA) at the project level using the Council's template and involve user groups in co-design and testing. Mitigations will include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• assisted digital and telephone/face-to-face options.</li> <li>• accessibility by design (plain English, translation).</li> <li>• targeted engagement with disability, age and ethnicity networks.</li> <li>• active monitoring of outcomes.</li> </ul> <p>Potential if services were "digital-only". Mitigated via assisted channels, inclusive design, and targeted engagement.</p>
<b>B</b> Will the proposed decision have an impact upon the lives of people with protected characteristics, including employees and service users?	x		Potentially, depending on channel design and process changes, impacts will be assessed and mitigated in each project.
<b>Climate &amp; Environmental Impact</b>	x		<p>Projects align with the Council's ambition to achieve net zero for our own operations by 2030. In Environmental Services, operational redesign, route optimisation and better system integration can reduce fuel use per lift, while improved recycling/ "Simpler Recycling" readiness should increase resource recovery.</p> <p>Operational trade-offs (e.g., changes to collection patterns) may require carbon assessment at the business-case stage. The Customer Engagement shift to digital and process automation can reduce printing and staff travel. Each workstream will complete climate sections in the ECIA and quantify carbon impacts and mitigations.</p>
<b>ICT &amp; Digital Impact</b>	x		The Proposed Delivery is consistent with the Digital Futures Strategy, consolidating platforms, improving data flows, exploring RPA/automation, and strengthening cyber posture and user experience. Customer-facing changes will leverage our Microsoft 365 environment and existing integration patterns, with IT governance ensuring

				security-by-design and resilience. Any system changes will pass through architecture, information security, and change control.
<b>Data Impact</b>		x		<p>Where personal data processing changes (e.g., SFD customer records, planning workflows), we will complete Data Protection Impact Assessments (DPIA), follow data-minimisation principles, update ROPAs and privacy notices, and apply Council cyber and information security policies.</p> <p>Information governance changes will be agreed with SIRO/IG leads before implementation.</p>
<b>Procurement &amp; subsidy</b>		x		<p>All procurements will follow Council processes (route to market, evaluation, contract management) via the Procurement Team, including compliance with current public procurement rules, transparency, and conflict management.</p> <p>Where projects modify existing contracts or grant/support arrangements, Legal/Procurement will advise on material change risk and subsidy control compliance; a proportionate subsidy assessment will be completed where relevant. Programme procurement will re-use corporate approaches to ensure value for money.</p>
<b>Council Priorities</b>	<p>The programme supports the Council's Vision "A modern council inspiring and enabling positive, lasting change" and four strategic priorities (2025–2030):</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Economic Prosperity,</li> <li>• Community Leadership,</li> <li>• Environmental Stewardship,</li> <li>• Quality Housing and Place Making.</li> </ul> <p>Customer Engagement improves customer outcomes and efficiency.</p> <p>Environmental Services improvements contribute to Environmental Stewardship.</p> <p>Planning transformation underpins quality housing/place-making; all three contribute to financial sustainability.</p>			
<b>Human Resources</b>	<p>Dedicated Programme Managers will be recruited for Environmental Services and Customer Engagement. Wider redesigns may change roles, structures, and skill requirements (e.g., digital capability, process ownership).</p> <p>HR and management will work with trade unions on consultation, organisational design, job evaluation, learning &amp; development, and equality considerations. Change impact assessments and</p>			

	<p>communications will accompany each business case. Relevant organisational policies will be adhered to.</p> <p>Claire Cox, Assistant Director of Human Resources, 26 September 2025</p>
<b>Property</b>	<p>Environmental Services work may have property/infrastructure implications, requiring separate capital planning, cost control caps and business cases.</p> <p>No immediate property implications arise from Customer Engagement/Planning readiness work, but any future changes to office/customer-facing footprints will return with specific proposals.</p> <p>Mona Walsh, Assistant Director Property, 29 September 2025</p>
<b>Consultation &amp; Engagement</b>	<p>The refined focus responds to Member feedback at the Executive BPM away day and subsequent discussions. Further engagement will continue via the Project Board and Transformation Board. Project-level consultation (staff, unions, service users, portfolio holders) and statutory consultations (where required) will be planned alongside ECIA/DPIA work as business cases come forward</p>

## Supporting Information

### 3. Background

#### Financial and Operational Context

- 3.1 Cherwell District Council, like local authorities across the country, is facing significant financial and operational pressures. Our latest medium-term financial projections indicate a funding gap, now estimated at approximately £10.7 million by 2029/30, with a substantial portion of this deficit anticipated to emerge by 2026/27. The funding gap is forecast primarily as a result of an expected reduction in resources available to the council as a result of the Government's anticipated Fair Funding Review 2.0 and associated Business Rates Reset.
- 3.2 Concurrently, the council is preparing for the complexities of Local Government Reorganisation (LGR), guided by Ministerial instructions to ensure a smooth transition and maintain long-term viability. The Transformation Programme, now the Cherwell Futures Programme, was developed as a direct response to these dual pressures, designed to deliver efficiency savings, minimise any impact on frontline services, and position the council as a resilient and effective organisation to prepare for LGR.

#### Progress to Date and Strategic Refinement

- 3.3 Over the past year, the council has comprehensively assessed its operating model, financial resilience, and service delivery. This work has included the development of a draft Case for Change and a new Target Operating Model (TOM), which was informed by a series of internal and external engagement exercises. The initial phase of this work has proven successful, with circa £1.8 million in savings already secured and approved in the current year's MTFS budget. This accomplishment demonstrates the council's capacity to deliver tangible results and provides a strong foundation for the next phase.
- 3.4 A clear timeline of events has guided the programme's delivery. The procurement process for a transformation partner began in June 2024, with a partner starting work in July 2024. This initial engagement focused on an analytical phase, including baselining and activity analysis (Phase 1) in August 2024, assessing effectiveness and pressures (Phase 2) in September/October 2024, and undertaking service-level work (Phase 3) in November 2024. These activities culminated in briefings to the Leader, Deputy Leader, and Portfolio Holder for Corporate Services in November 2024.
- 3.5 This foundational work and subsequent analysis led to a paper being presented to the Executive in January 2025 to summarise the work and seek approval for Phase 4. Following this, the continuation of transformation work, including process mapping and lean delivery, has been ongoing, with improved Phases 1, 2 and 3 work carried out across the council since April 2025. This progression demonstrates an evidence-based approach to the transformation process.

## **4. Details**

- 4.1 Feedback from the Executive on the transformation programme's progress provided a significant opportunity to reflect on the emerging proposals and to reframe work into a more focused programme that continues to deliver financial impact while building the foundation for longer-term improvements. The next phase is proposed to provide targeted outcomes grounded in evidence and shaped by the lessons of our work to date.
- 4.2 Three key areas are proposed to form the core of the Cherwell Futures programme from herein: Customer Engagement, Planning Service Improvements, and Environmental Services Improvements. Embedded across these three priority areas, digitalisation and a shift in culture will act as key enablers that will support all transformation efforts. By investing in automation, we can move administrative tasks to automation and reduce manual workflows, allowing officers to focus on value-added activities and decisions that require judgment. This will create efficiencies, improve effectiveness, and speed up the customer journey.
- 4.3 To successfully complete this work and maximise efficiencies, these projects must be underpinned by a comprehensive process review and organisational



redesign. Simply introducing new technology without first addressing existing processes and culture risks a lack of confidence in its effectiveness.

- 4.4 This strategy seeks to prepare for alignment with external Environmental Services transformation and ensure we are prepared for the future transition to a new unitary authority.

#### **A. Primary Transformation Projects: Focused Delivery for High-Impact Savings**

- 4.5 The three primary projects have been prioritised due to their potential to deliver significant savings and improvements. The approach to delivering these projects is tailored to their individual readiness and complexity, reflecting a prudent and pragmatic strategy.

#### **Customer Engagement (Single front door)**

- 4.6 The customer engagement door aims to make it easier for residents to access council services, while enabling staff to focus on the most vulnerable and complex cases. Although activities such as community engagement, place-making, and targeted communications are not within the scope of this programme, elements of this pre-work will continue to be delivered as part of normal service operations. These efforts add value by helping residents find their own solutions, build resilience, and reduce preventable demand, ultimately freeing up officer time for those who need it most.
- 4.7 When residents do need to contact the Council, a new digital front door will provide a single, accessible point of entry for all services. The Customer Engagement Door will bring together teams, enable process redesign, organisational redesign, and drive automation, digitalisation, and the introduction of robotics.
- 4.8 A new digital front door will provide a single, accessible entry point for all services. Simple requests and transactions will be automated wherever possible, but crucially, support will always be available for those who need it. Self-service will never mean digital exclusion: accessibility and inclusion are non-negotiable. The aim is to move administrative tasks to automation, so officers can focus on value-driven activity and decisions that require judgment.
- 4.9 The outlined approach ensures that the council maintains control over the project's scope and objectives, enabling a more targeted and cost-effective procurement process for a specialised external partner, rather than engaging a broad and potentially more expensive transformation partner. This model minimises risk and ensures value for money by allowing the council to define its needs before seeking external support.
- 4.10 The estimated savings from this project are £1 million. The £1 million savings estimate relates only to the front door element. Savings from “pre front door” activities, such as community engagement, place-making, and targeted communications, are not included in this figure.

## **Environmental Services (Operational Improvement)**

- 4.11 Environmental Services is currently projecting an overspend of £0.75 million for 2025/26, making operational transformation urgent. The plan is to recruit a dedicated Programme Manager to lead service redesign and operational improvement.
- 4.12 Key opportunities that have been identified and will be pursued by the Programme Manager include addressing the currently below-average recycling rate of 50.39%, implementing operational efficiencies such as a potential shift to a different collection model, and investing in digital integration of waste management systems to enable route optimisation and real-time monitoring.
- 4.13 The Programme Manager will also produce the business cases required for these changes, ensuring that all proposed initiatives are rigorously justified and aligned with the council's financial and strategic goals, with further assurance on savings, costs, ROI etc.
- 4.14 The estimated savings are £1 million, and the changes will help ensure the Council is ready for future structural changes.

## **Planning**

- 4.15 The transformation of Planning Services is not simply about implementing new processes or systems. It begins with a thorough understanding of the root causes of current challenges. Working closely with service teams, the Council has gathered a wealth of reports, self-improvement plans, and feedback. The next step is to move beyond piecemeal fixes and develop a holistic plan that addresses the underlying issues and delivers a long-term solution. This readiness assessment will identify what can be done immediately and what should be prioritised for future phases.
- 4.16 Some of the root causes we are addressing include:
- The need for a culture change programme
  - Process redesign and standard Operating Procedures to drive consistency
  - Reducing email workflows
  - Removing silo working
  - Optimising and automating CRM systems to improve efficiencies
  - Implementing a performance management system
  - Integration of systems and services
  - Restructuring of teams
  - S106 process

The aim is to avoid siloed interventions and instead create a joined-up approach that supports the organisation. Only by tackling the root causes can the Council ensure that transformation delivers lasting benefits for residents and staff.

- 4.17 The Planning service has an estimated saving potential of £800,000. The first step will be to complete an internal readiness assessment to understand the service's current state and capacity. A paper will follow this assessment for review, outlining the next steps and a clear critical path forward.
- 4.18 This phased approach prioritises internal readiness and assessment before committing to a full-scale programme. Before proceeding, it is designed to provide a clear and evidence-based understanding of the project's feasibility and scope. It aligns with the overall strategy of maximising cost-effectiveness by being more targeted with external partners, ensuring that any future engagement is based on a solid foundation of internal analysis.

## **B. The Foundational Pillars: Digitalisation and Culture Change**

- 4.19 The success of the three primary projects is contingent upon two underpinning foundational pillars.
- 4.20 **Digitisation** is the central enabler for the targeted Cherwell Futures programmes as highlighted above. The objective is not merely to introduce new technology but to fundamentally redesign services to be more efficient, accessible, and responsive. This involves mapping existing processes, identifying areas of duplication and inefficiency, and then leveraging digital solutions to streamline workflows and enhance the user experience.
- 4.21 **Culture change** is recognised as a critical component of successful transformation. The council's vision is to modernise its services to achieve maximum efficiencies and, where possible, with limited service reductions, to provide a best value service for residents and employees. This requires a fundamental shift in organisational culture, fostering an adaptable, innovative, and collaborative environment. A comprehensive workforce development programme will be essential to equip staff with the necessary skills and to align their capabilities with the new Target Operating Model (TOM), ensuring they feel empowered to deliver services effectively and efficiently within the new operational environment.

## **C. Financial Strategy and Phased Funding Request**

- 4.22 The council's financial projections indicate a significant funding gap of approximately £10.7 million by 2029/30. The Cherwell Futures Programme addresses this challenge by identifying and delivering efficiency savings and enhancing revenue generation.
- 4.23 The initial request for £1.5 million is a targeted investment to cover the costs of essential interim roles and specialist expertise. We are requesting £0.4 million for the 2025/26 revenue budget to fund preparatory work, and the remaining £1.1 million will be ring-fenced for future implementation, with strict governance controls in place requiring separate business cases for each expenditure, which will include detailed scope, risk assessments, and spend controls.

- 4.24 The estimated savings from the three priority projects: Customer Engagement Front Door (£1 million), Planning (£800,000), and Environment initiatives (estimated £1 million)—total approximately £2.8 million to £3 million, aligning with this projection. The review of additional identified potential savings initiatives may contribute a further £1 million in potential savings.
- 4.25 While this report outlines a low-risk, phased approach to transformation, it is important to recognise that this alone will not fully address the council's projected £10.7 million budget gap. To safeguard services in the longer term, further work across other service areas may be required, subject to future funding and political support
- 4.26 This report aims to provide the Executive with a balanced view of the risks and opportunities associated with continued investment in transformation. This will support informed decision-making on how best to strengthen organisational resilience and reduce the potential need for service reductions over the medium term.
- 4.27 Budget setting will continue as scheduled, with details shared and decision-making as per the timeline (including service level options, etc).

#### **D. Governance and Oversight**

- 4.28 Whilst the governance will develop as the programme progresses, the following will provide members with the necessary assurance and oversight

A Project Board will be established to oversee three priority areas. This board will be responsible for managing the full lifecycle of each project—from initial scoping through to business cases and implementation.

The Programme Board will be chaired by the Senior Responsible Officer (SRO) for Transformation (CD/ED) and will include relevant Portfolio Holders and officers. This structure ensures that Portfolio Holders are fully engaged in the delivery process and can provide strategic oversight. It also enables effective reporting to the Executive, alongside the SRO and supporting officers.

To support transparency and informed decision-making, members will receive regular project highlight reports. These reports will provide updates on progress, costs, and risks associated with each priority area, amongst other things.

The Programme Board will report updates to the Executive as part of the existing BPM agenda, and/or receive steers as appropriate through separate strategic-level sessions chaired by the Leader or Deputy Leader. Through these mechanisms, which will be fully determined in due course, relevant Portfolio Holders will be able to provide updates and receive input on the priority areas.

## 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.

### 5.2 **Option 1: Do Nothing**

This approach would involve taking no decisive action to address the council's financial and operational challenges. Maintaining the status quo would result in a projected cumulative deficit of around £46 million by 2029/30. This would inevitably lead to greater service provision cuts and compromise service effectiveness, statutory compliance, and public trust, while failing to address underlying operational inefficiencies. Savings will need to be delivered through traditional budget methods, likely leading to greater service provision cuts. The risks of inaction far outweigh the required initial investment.

### 5.3 **Option 2: Minimal or 'In-House Only' Delivery**

This model proposes that the council's internal teams lead and deliver the transformation programme without any external support. While the proposed plan for Phase Two brings more delivery in-house, a purely in-house model is not considered feasible to deliver the required scale of change and pace of delivery. The current lean change capacity within the organisation is not sufficient to deliver the programme's ambitious objectives and realise the extent of savings identified. Given the urgent need to address the projected funding gap and meet government expectations for financial sustainability ahead of Local Government Reorganisation, a solely in-house approach would not be able to deliver the savings in the required timeframe.

### 5.4 **Option 3: Full Partner Model**

A single transformation partner model was initially considered to accelerate delivery and achieve "Speed to Value" across the Council's savings proposals. While this approach offered potential for rapid impact, concerns were raised during the Executive in July regarding risk exposure and assurance of return on investment (ROI).

Further refinements to the model were explored and presented in August, but feedback from the Executive indicated continued reservations. These discussions highlighted the need for a more prudent and targeted strategy.

The revised approach now focuses on strengthening internal delivery capability and engaging external partners only where there is a clear, evidence-based need. This ensures a lower-risk, cost-effective model with stronger ROI assurance, supported by internal readiness assessments and robust business cases. Future partner engagement will be highly selective, designed to maximise value and align with organisational priorities.

### 5.5 **Option 4: Achieve Savings Through Service Cuts**

This option, which involves directly reducing or eliminating council services to achieve the required financial savings, is not recommended as the primary strategy for achieving savings. A strategy based on widespread service cuts would be detrimental to the community, directly impacting frontline service

delivery, potentially compromising the council's ability to meet its statutory duties and significantly harming public satisfaction. While some service consolidation may be necessary in the future, the recommended approach of transformation seeks to improve efficiency and generate new income, thereby protecting core services rather than cutting them.

## **6 Conclusions and Reasons for Recommendations**

- 6.1 The refined Cherwell Futures programme represents a strategic and forward-thinking approach to service excellence, efficiency, and readiness for organisational change. The council has demonstrated its ability to deliver tangible results, with £1.8 million in savings already secured and approved. The proposed Phase Two represents a deliberate, low-risk pathway to build on this success and provides a credible roadmap to achieving between £3 million and £4 million in additional savings over the medium term.
- 6.2 The proposed initial allocation of £400k plus an additional earmarked £1.1 million is a critical and prudent investment. It will enable the council to initiate and drive the delivery of three high-priority projects, each with a clear potential for significant savings and service improvements. The robust governance structure and phased delivery model will ensure that public funds are managed responsibly and that the Executive retains control over the programme's direction, safeguarding service delivery through the need for a business case at each appropriate stage.
- 6.3 By approving this report and funding the next phase of the Cherwell Futures Programme, the Executive will enable the council to proactively address its financial challenges, protect essential services for residents, and prepare for a sustainable future within the new unitary authority framework, as a result of Local Government Reorganisation. .

## **Decision Information**

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

## **Document Information**

<b>Appendices</b>	
<b>Appendix 1</b>	None
<b>Background Papers</b>	<a href="#"><u>Phase 1-3 Report – Executive January 2025</u></a>
<b>Reference Papers</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Draft Case For Change</li> <li>• Target Operation Model</li> <li>• Environmental Services Summary</li> <li>• Procurement Timeline</li> <li>• Letter from Jim McMahon and Summarisation of Ministerial Documents</li> <li>• Phase 4 Summary Report</li> </ul>
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<b>Corporate Director Approval (unless Corporate Director or Statutory Officer report)</b>	Report of Corporate Director for Resources and Transformation