

## **Cherwell District Council**

### **Executive**

Minutes of a meeting of the Executive held at 39 Castle Quay, Banbury, OX16 5FD, on 13 November 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 Ian Middleton, Portfolio Holder for Neighbourhood Services  
Councillor Robert Parkinson, Portfolio Holder for Safer Communities  
Councillor Rob Pattenden, Portfolio Holder for Healthy Communities

#### **Apologies for absence:**

Councillor Jean Conway, Portfolio Holder for Planning and Development Management  
Councillor Nick Cotter, Portfolio Holder for Housing

#### **Also Present:**

Councillor David Rogers, Deputy Leader of the Cherwell Conservative and Independent Alliance

#### **Also Present Virtually:**

Councillor Andrew Crichton, Deputy Leader of the Labour Group  
Councillor Les Sibley, Leader of the Independent Group

#### **Officers:**

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

### **Declarations of Interest**

There were no declarations of interest.

63 **Requests to Address the Meeting**

There were no petitions or requests to address the meeting.

The Chair welcomed Councillor Rogers, Deputy Leader of the Cherwell Conservative and Independent Alliance, Councillor Crichton, Deputy Leader of the Labour Group, and Councillor Sibley, Leader of the Independent Group, to the meeting.

64 **Chair's Announcements**

There were no Chair's announcements.

65 **Local Government Reorganisation - Full Proposal**

The Executive Director Resources submitted a report which summarised the Council's full proposal for two unitary councils in Oxfordshire for Local Government Reorganisation (LGR).

In introducing the report, the Leader of the Council thanked colleagues and officers for their diligent work and engagement on the proposals to date, including at Member briefing events held and the special Council meeting held earlier in the week.

The Leader added that across the four Oxfordshire Councils that had considered the proposals, 100 Councillors had voted in favour of the two unitary approach, with only six voting against.

Commenting on the proposals and comments made by the wider Council membership at the special Council meeting, Executive members echoed the thanks of the Leader to all those involved in the proposals so far.

Executive members highlighted that the two unitary proposal being put forward drew inspiration from the cultural, geographical and geological history of Oxfordshire. Prior to the 1974 Local Government Reorganisation, everything north of the River Thames had been Oxfordshire, with areas in the south part of Berkshire.

Regarding questions that had been raised by some residents of the District relating to the inclusion of Oxford in the northern Oxfordshire proposals, Executive members felt this was a positive opportunity but also highlighted that due to the size requirements set out by Government when LGR was announced, Cherwell and West Oxfordshire Districts together were too small to move forward.

Executive members also commented on the hope that as proposals were advanced once Government had made their decision, more integration of climate resilience, nature recovery and sustainable development could be added to the vision, collaborating with future partners accordingly.

Councillor Rogers, Deputy Leader of the Cherwell Conservative and Independent Alliance, offered support of both the Accounts, Audit & Risk and Overview & Scrutiny Committees in the monitoring of the legal, financial and risk elements of the proposal, and added to the thanks of the Executive.

In response to a query from Councillor Rogers regarding the total cost of the proposals so far, the Leader explained that £250,000 had been set aside in an earmarked reserve. The final cost wouldn't be known until later on in the process, but current estimates were in the range of £85,000 to £175,000, within the allocated budget.

Councillor Sibley, Leader of the Independent Group commented that the amount of support across the four councils for the two unitary proposal showed that everyone was speaking with one voice, and urged Executive to continue working in collaboration with the potential future partner councils whilst the Government decision was awaited.

The Chief Executive added his thanks to those mentioned by the Committee, specifically to Stephen Hinds, Nicola Riley, Michael Furness, Joanne Kaye, Julian Cotton, Shiraz Sheikh, Rakesh Kumar, Clare Addison, Emma Williams and Ian Boll.

## **Resolved**

- (1) That having given due consideration, the views of Council of 10 November 2025 on the final proposal be noted.
- (2) That the Council's final proposal for Local Government Reorganisation in Oxfordshire of a two-unitary model comprising One unitary authority covering the boundaries of Cherwell District Council, West Oxfordshire District Council, and Oxford City Council, with the working title 'Oxford & Shires', and a second unitary authority covering South Oxfordshire District Council, Vale of White Horse District Council, and West Berkshire Council, with the working title 'Ridgeway', be approved.
- (3) That it be agreed that the Leader submits the final proposal to government by the 28 November 2025 deadline.
- (4) That authority be delegated to the Executive Director of Resources, in consultation with the Leader of the Council, to make any final amendments to the full proposal and associated documentation prior to submission.

## **Reasons**

The report proposes the submission of a Full Proposal for a two unitary model based on one new unitary council covering the entire existing boundaries of South Oxfordshire and Vale of White Horse District Councils and West Berkshire Council, with the working title of 'Ridgeway', and a second new unitary council covering the entire existing boundaries of Cherwell and West

Oxfordshire District Councils and Oxford City Council, with a working title of 'Oxford & Shires'.

### **Alternative Options**

Option 1: Not to submit the Full Proposal.

This would be contrary to the direction issued by the Government and therefore not recommended.

Option 2: Other options contain the Full Proposal.

The other options are set out in the Full Proposal and rejected for the reasons provided within.

The meeting ended at 7.05 pm

Chair:

Date: