

<b>This report is public</b>	
<b>Response to Motion: Planning Support for Town and Parish Councils</b>	
<b>Committee</b>	Executive
<b>Date of Committee</b>	4 December 2025
<b>Portfolio Holder presenting the report</b>	Portfolio Holder for Planning, Councillor Conway
<b>Date Portfolio Holder agreed report</b>	17 November 2025
<b>Report of</b>	Ian Boll, Executive Director Place and Regeneration

## **Purpose of report**

To agree the response to the motion raised at the Council meeting on 20 October with regard to planning support for Town and Parish Councils. To seek approval for the allocation of £15,000 to provide targeted support to parish and town councils (PCs/TCs) in responding effectively to large-scale planning applications.

## **1. Recommendations**

The Executive resolves:

- 1.1 To approve the in year funding of up to £15,000 for the funding of a support package to Parish Councils to respond to planning applications.
- 1.2 To approve the virement of £15k from Health and Wellbeing (this budget was originally intended for the heating hardship fund, however the Government reinstated the winter fuel allowance national scheme, so this is no longer required) to Planning and Development Management.

## **2. Executive Summary**

- 2.1 Parish councils play a vital role in shaping local planning outcomes, yet many lack the resources or expertise to respond confidently to complex, large-scale applications. To address this, it is proposed that a consultancy or support agency such as the Planning Advisory Service be commissioned to deliver a structured programme of advice, guidance, and training.
- 2.2 This initiative aligns with the Council's commitment to community engagement and improving the quality of local input into planning decisions.

## **Implications & Impact Assessments**

Implications		Commentary		
<b>Finance</b>		<p>£15,000 is available from the remaining underspend in Health and Wellbeing from the heating hardship fund budget. This budget is no longer required due to the Government reinstating the winter fuel allowance.</p> <p>However, there is no further funding available and therefore any support provided must be capped at £15,000.</p> <p>Michael Furness, Assistant Director of Finance (S151 Officer), 13 November 2025</p>		
<b>Legal</b>		<p>There are no Legal or Procurement implications arising from this report</p> <p>Shiraz Sheikh, Assistant Director Law and Governance 12.11.2025</p>		
<b>Risk Management</b>		<p>There are no direct risk implications associated with this report. The proposal proactively addresses the risk of Parish Councils lacking adequate representation by enhancing their ability to engage with large-scale planning applications and contribute meaningfully to the planning process.</p> <p>Celia Prado-Teeling, Performance Team Leader, 11 November 2025</p>		
<b>Impact Assessments</b>		Positive	Neutral	Negative
<b>Equality Impact</b>				
<b>A</b> Are there any aspects of the proposed decision, including how it is delivered or accessed, that could impact on inequality?			X	
<b>B</b> Will the proposed decision have an impact upon the lives of people with protected characteristics, including employees and service users?			X	
<b>Climate &amp; Environmental Impact</b>			X	
<b>ICT &amp; Digital Impact</b>			X	

<b>Data Impact</b>		X		N/A
<b>Procurement &amp; subsidy</b>		X		N/A
<b>Council Priorities</b>	Effective planning consultation responses helps meet all Council Priorities: Housing that meetings your needs Supporting environmental sustainability An enterprising economy with strong and vibrant local centres Healthy, resilient and engaged communities			
<b>Human Resources</b>	N/A			
<b>Property</b>	N/A			
<b>Consultation &amp; Engagement</b>	N/A			

## Supporting Information

### 3. Background

- 3.1 At the 20 October 2025 meeting of the Cherwell District Council the following motion was proposed:

*“Council notes with concern the significant development pressures arising from recent announcements, including: the proposed new town at Heyford Park, the Puy du Fou theme park, large-scale warehousing at Baynard’s Green, and the rail freight interchange.*

*Council recognises that these proposals will have far-reaching impacts on local communities, infrastructure, and the environment, and that Town and parish councils play a vital role in representing residents’ views. However, these councils often lack the specialist planning expertise and resources required to respond effectively to complex applications of this scale.*

*Council therefore resolves:*

- 1. To provide accessible planning-related advice and support to councils within the affected areas, ensuring they are equipped to understand, scrutinise, and respond to major development proposals.*
- 2. To establish a dedicated point of contact within the Planning Department for councils seeking guidance on strategic developments.*
- 3. To explore options for training sessions and briefing notes tailored to councils, delivered in advance of key planning consultations.*

*This Council believes that empowering town and parish councils with expert advice will strengthen democratic participation, improve the quality of local input into the*

*planning process, and help ensure that growth is managed responsibly and sustainably.*

*This officer-time could be funded from the unused heating fund which was in the Conservative budget amendment.”*

- 3.2 This report responds to the motion with a recommendation to fund a one of support package to provide training and support to parish councils (and others).

## **4. Details**

- 4.1 Parish councils play a vital role in shaping local planning outcomes, yet many lack the resources or expertise to respond confidently to complex, large-scale applications. To address this, it is proposed to develop a structured package of advice, guidance, and training.
- 4.2 This initiative aligns with the Council’s commitment to community engagement and improving the quality of local input into planning decisions. This will help parish councils to ensure that representations are effective and efficient and support the development management process.
- 4.3 Proposed Support Package: The £15,000 would fund a comprehensive support programme including:
- Existing Planning Advisory Support presentation: Adapted and delivered to suit local context.
  - Workshops: A full or half-day session in January 2026 for parish clerks and councillors, focusing on:
    - How to comment effectively on major applications.
    - Understanding highways implications.
    - Section 106 (S106) obligations – what is reasonable, what can and cannot be requested.
  - Development of a bespoke toolkit to guide responses.
- 4.4 This work is proposed to begin as soon as possible, with promotion at the Planning Liaison Meeting (PLM) on 12 November, and delivery in January 2026.

## **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. With a number of significant applications including nationally significant infrastructure projects, this option is not recommended as parish councils will not have access to make appropriate representations

## **6 Conclusion and Reasons for Recommendations**

- 6.1 That Executive approves the allocation of £15,000 to deliver the above support package, enabling parish councils to engage more effectively with large-scale planning applications and contribute meaningfully to the planning process.

## Decision Information

<b>Key Decision</b>	No
<b>Subject to Call in</b>	N/A
<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>	None
<b>Reference Papers</b>	None
<b>Report Author</b>	Paul Seckington, Head of Development Management
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<b>Executive Director Approval (unless Executive Director or Statutory Officer report)</b>	Executive Director for Place and Regeneration 14.11.2025