



**Cherwell**  
DISTRICT COUNCIL  
NORTH OXFORDSHIRE

# Cherwell Futures Programme Update

Overview & Scrutiny Committee

# Strategic Context and Vision

# Cherwell Futures

## A Modern, Resident-Focused, Financially Secure Council

### Strategic Vision and Principles

The programme focuses on strengthening services, ensuring financial sustainability, modernising structures, and enhancing transparency.

### Financial Challenges and Goals

Facing a funding gap, the council aims to achieve efficiency savings while improving service quality and freeing up funds to reinvest in the community.

### Resident-Focused Service Improvements

Residents will benefit from streamlined access, faster responses, and improved reliability in key services.

### Governance and Accountability

Clear governance structures ensure openness with regular reporting to the Executive and Scrutiny committees.



# The Need For Cherwell Futures

## Financial Pressures

Medium-term financial challenges require efficiency and structural savings in council operations to achieve the anticipated 3-4 million in savings.

## Resident Expectations

Residents demand seamless service delivery across digital and face-to-face channels to reduce inefficiencies and frustration.

## Preparing for Reorganisation

Transformation prepares the council for the upcoming local government reorganisation and changes in responsibilities.

## Empowering Staff

Enabling employees to thrive through support, development, and engagement.



# Governance and Delivery Model

# Transformation & Change Office

## Unified Governance Model

A single governance model applies to all change activities, ensuring consistent standards and accountability across projects.

## Portfolio Prioritisation

Resources are focused on initiatives with the greatest strategic impact through prioritisation at the portfolio level.

## Role of Transformation & Change Office

The TCO provides assurance, maintains standards, and offers coaching to build internal project management capabilities.

## Culture of Accountability

Embedding accountability and continuous improvement ensures effective and sustainable delivery of change initiatives.



# Governance Framework and Oversight

## Executive Review and Risk Management

Regular reviews with the Corporate Leadership Team maintain executive engagement and proactive risk management.

## Strategic Direction and Approval

The Transformation Board, led by the Chief Executive, guides strategy and approves major projects over £200,000.

## Portfolio and Delivery Oversight

Directorate Portfolio Boards manage delivery in service areas and escalate key issues to the corporate level.

## Programme Management Office Role

The Transformation & Change Office ensures standards, coordinates reports, and provides assurance across projects.





# Priority Programmes and Progress

# Customer Front Door

## Unified Service Access

A single-entry point replaces fragmented contact methods, streamlining resident interactions with council services.

## Efficiency and Savings

The initiative aims to save £1 million by simplifying processes and removing unnecessary steps, helping resolve resident enquiries more quickly and effectively.

## Advanced Technology Integration

Exploring Robotic Process Automation and AI to improve service delivery and reduce repeat contacts caused by unclear information or process gaps, freeing up staff to support vulnerable residents.

## Enhanced Customer Experience

We will build on the positive feedback already received from residents by enhancing consistency, reducing hand-offs, and improving response times across all channels.



# Planning Transformation

## Addressing Process Challenges

The programme is streamlining planning processes by tackling inefficiencies, simplifying digital systems, and removing barriers that slow down decision-making, helping deliver a smoother experience for residents, applicants and partners.

## System Upgrades and Integration

Modernising workflows and integrating planning systems will reduce delays, improve transparency, and enable easier information flow between teams and residents. This includes understanding how planning services connect with the Customer Front Door to improve every touchpoint.

## Performance and Customer Focus

Strengthening performance management supports a more consistent customer experience, ensuring residents and applicants receive clearer updates, quicker responses, and a more joined-up journey through the planning process

## Financial and Strategic Benefits

Projected savings of £550,000 to £800,000 (including income) reflect improved efficiencies and service quality. A key strategic benefit is the ability to release S106 funds more quickly, enabling communities to access investment sooner. Process improvements such as earlier validation, clearer responsibilities, and better workflow tracking will help accelerate S106 agreement management and delivery.



# Environmental Services Improvement

## Efficiency and Savings

This workstream aims to deliver £1 million in savings by redesigning key service processes, modernising systems, and eliminating avoidable manual effort, enabling staff to focus on higher-value work and improving the customer experience.

## Resource Optimisation and Scheduling

Modernising scheduling and resource allocation will reduce duplication, improve route and task planning, and deliver a more reliable service to residents.

## Benchmarking and Best Practice Review

We are actively reviewing different operational models and learning from best practices across other local authorities. This will help identify the strongest delivery approach for Cherwell, ensuring the service is resilient, efficient, and aligned to future local government arrangements. Working collaboratively with neighbouring authorities and proposed LGR areas ensures we understand potential future operating models. This protects our investment by designing improvements that will remain relevant regardless of future structural change.



# Risk Management and Assurance

## Governance Framework

Robust governance with escalation routes and stage-gate controls ensures effective risk mitigation.

## Financial Oversight

Mandatory business cases and benefits tracking strengthen financial control and value delivery.

## Workforce Capability

Targeted training in PRINCE2 and Agile enhances the team's project management skills.

## Change and Technology Risk

Careful planning and phased delivery help avoid disruption and reduce technology-related issues.

