

## **Cherwell District Council**

### **Budget Council**

Minutes of a meeting of the Council held at 39 Castle Quay, Banbury, OX16 5FD, on 23 February 2026 at 6.30 pm

Present:

Councillor Dorothy Walker (Chair)  
Councillor Nigel Simpson (Vice-Chair)  
Councillor Fiaz Ahmed  
Councillor Tom Beckett  
Councillor Rebecca Biegel  
Councillor Gordon Blakeway  
Councillor Chris Brant  
Councillor Besmira Brasha  
Councillor John Broad  
Councillor Phil Chapman  
Councillor Mark Cherry  
Councillor Becky Clarke MBE  
Councillor Jean Conway  
Councillor Grace Conway-Murray  
Councillor Gemma Coton  
Councillor Dr Isabel Creed  
Councillor Andrew Crichton  
Councillor Dr Henry Elugwu  
Councillor Donna Ford  
Councillor Ian Harwood  
Councillor David Hingley  
Councillor Frank Ideh  
Councillor Kieron Mallon  
Councillor Nicholas Mawer  
Councillor Fiona Mawson  
Councillor Lesley McLean  
Councillor Zoe McLernon  
Councillor Ian Middleton  
Councillor Julian Nedelcu  
Councillor Dr Chukwudi Okeke  
Councillor Robert Parkinson  
Councillor Lynne Parsons  
Councillor Rob Pattenden  
Councillor Chris Pruden  
Councillor Edward Fraser Reeves  
Councillor David Rogers  
Councillor Alisa Russell  
Councillor Les Sibley  
Councillor Dom Vaitkus  
Councillor Linda Ward  
Councillor John Willett  
Councillor Douglas Webb

Councillor Barry Wood

Apologies for absence:

Councillor Nick Cotter  
Councillor Harry Knight  
Councillor Simon Lytton  
Councillor Amanda Watkins

Present Virtually (no voting rights):

Councillor Dr Kerrie Thornhill

Officers:

Gordon Stewart, Chief Executive  
Ian Boll, Executive Director Place & Regeneration  
Stephen Hinds, Executive Director Resources  
Nicola Riley, Assistant Director Wellbeing and Housing  
Michael Furness, Assistant Director Finance & S151 Officer  
Shiraz Sheikh, Assistant Director Law & Governance and Monitoring Officer  
Heidi Radcliffe Hill, Interim Head of Chief Executive's Office  
Joanne Kaye, Head of Finance and Deputy S151 Officer  
Denzil Turbevill, Head of Legal Services  
Lynsey Parkinson, Strategic Business Partner – Corporate  
Natasha Clark, Governance and Elections Manager

61 **Declarations of Interest**

There were no declarations of interest.

62 **Communications**

**Meeting Length and Etiquette**

The Chair referred to the email sent by the Monitoring Officer to all Members regarding budget setting at the Council meeting. It was the responsibility of all Members to ensure that the district council set a lawful budget at the meeting this evening.

The Chair asked Councillors to be respectful of each other when addressing the meeting. If necessary, the Chair would adjourn the meeting to allow for a comfort break at a suitable point.

**16 March Council meeting**

The Chair advised that the next scheduled Council meeting was on Monday 16 March. This meeting would include written questions and motions. The submission deadlines were set out on the agenda.

### **Chair's Charity Lunch, 7 March**

The Chair referred to her Charity Lunch which was taking place on 7 March which will support three truly worthy charities - Homeless Oxfordshire, Oxfordshire Homeless Movement, and Asylum Welcome. The Chair thanked those who had confirmed they were able to attend and looked forward to seeing them at the lunch. The Chair asked Members to speak directly to her or to her PA if they were unable to attend but would like to make a donation.

### **Members' Pigeon Holes**

Members were reminded to check their pigeon hole and take any post.

### 63 **Petitions and Requests to Address the Meeting**

There were no petitions or requests to address the meeting.

### 64 **Minutes of Council**

The minutes of the meeting held on 15 December 2025 were agreed as a correct record and signed by the Chair.

### 65 **Urgent Business**

There were no items of urgent business.

### 66 **Members' Allowance Scheme 2026/2027**

The Assistant Director Law & Governance and Monitoring Officer submitted a report for Council to determine the levels of the allowances to be paid to Members for the forthcoming 2026/2027 financial year and proposed changes to the Members' Allowance Scheme, following the consideration of the report of the Council's Independent Remuneration Panel.

#### **Resolved**

- (1) That having given due consideration, the following levels of allowance be included in the 2026/2027 Members' Allowance Scheme:
  - That the Basic Allowance be increased in in line with the 2026/2027 staff pay award, when agreed, rounded up to give 12 equal payments and backdated to 1 April 2026.
  - That the current combined Special Responsibility Allowance covering both the Chair of the Licensing Acts Committee and Chair of the General Licensing Committee end, and separate SRAs be introduced for the Chair of each Committee at the current combined SRA level.
  - That all Special Responsibility Allowances be increased in in line with the 2026/2027 staff pay award, when agreed, rounded up to give 12 equal payments and backdated to 1 April 2026.

- That the co-optees allowance be increased in in line with the 2026/2027 staff pay award, when agreed, rounded up to give 12 equal payments and backdated to 1 April 2026.
  - That the Independent Persons allowance be increased in in line with the 2026/2027 staff pay award, when agreed, rounded up to give 12 equal payments and backdated to 1 April 2026.
  - That Dependents' Carers' and Childcare Allowances remain at the current level, are paid on the basis of the actual costs incurred up to the maximum hourly rate set out below and to a maximum cap of 40 hours per month, subject to production of receipts and cannot be paid to a member of the claimant's household:
    - Childcare: £10 per hour
    - Dependent Relative care - £20 per hour
  - That mileage remain at the current level in line with HMRC approved mileage rates, and if any adjustments are implemented by HMRC then the revised rates should be applied to Members' travel allowances effective from the date of implementation by HMRC.
    - Bicycles: 20p per mile
    - Motorcycles (any cc) – 24p per mile
    - Motor Vehicles (any cc) – 45p per mile
    - Electric or similar specialised vehicles – 45p per mile
  - That the rates for subsistence allowance remain at the current level in line with the maximum staff subsistence levels, with claims permitted on approved duties of over 5 hours outside the district\*, subject to the submission of receipts (\*subsistence allowances cannot be claimed for any duties within the district as the basic allowance is deemed to cover all within district expenses).
    - Breakfast: £7.50
    - Lunch: £10.50
    - Tea / coffee: £4.00
    - Evening Meal: £12.50
  - That Democratic Services continue to book overnight accommodation if required.
  - That there be no change to the list of approved duties for which claims may be made.
  - That Non-Executive Director allowances be increased in in line with the 2026/2027 staff pay award, when agreed, rounded up to give 12 equal payments and backdated to 1 April 2026 and costs recharged to the relevant company.
- (2) That the Assistant Director Law and Governance be authorised to prepare an amended Members' Allowances Scheme, in accordance with the decisions of Council for implementation with effect from 1 April 2026.
- (3) That the Assistant Director of Law and Governance be authorised to take all necessary action to revoke the current (2025/2026) Scheme and to publicise the revised Scheme pursuant to The Local Authorities (Member's Allowances) (England) Regulations 2003 (as amended).

- (4) That the Independent Remuneration Panel (IRP) be thanked for its report and a fee of £300 be confirmed for each Panel Member for the work carried out on this review and authority be delegated to the Assistant Director Law & Governance to apply the same final percentage increase to the IRP member fee, in line with the staff pay award (when agreed), for any reviews carried out in 2026/2027.

67 **Budget Setting and Corporate Plan for 2026/2027 and the Medium-Term Financial Strategy up to 2030/2031**

Prior to consideration of the item, the Chair advised that the Cherwell Conservative and Independent Alliance had proposed an amendment to the budget which had been published as a supplement to the agenda. There were no amendments proposed by any other Political Group and no further amendments were now permitted.

The Chair explained that once the budget had been proposed and seconded, the Leader of the Cherwell Conservative and Independent Alliance, Councillor Reeves, would respond to the budget and propose the Group's amendment. Once seconded, the amendment would be debated and voted on.

The Chair reminded Members that the arrangements for debating the budget were set out in the meeting procedure rules. The proposer, when presenting the budget, and Group Leaders, when responding to the budget, may speak for up to 10 minutes. All other speakers had a three-minute time limit.

The Chair also reminded Members that it was required in legislation that the vote on any motion on or amendment to the budget and council tax setting reports must be a recorded vote. This would be taken at the appropriate time.

The Assistant Director of Finance (Section 151 Officer) submitted a report for Council to consider and agree the Budget Setting for 2026/27 and MTFS 2030/31.

In introducing the report, the Portfolio Holder for Finance, Property and Regeneration, Councillor McLean, explained that the report was the culmination of the Budget and Business Planning process for 2026/27 to 2030/31 and set out the Executive's proposed Corporate Plan and related revenue budget for 2026/27, medium term financial strategy to 2030/31, capital programme to 2030/31 and all supporting policies, strategies, and information which had been recommended to Council by Executive at their 3 February 2026 meeting.

The proposed net budget for the council was £32.3m, an increase of £6.1m from 2025/26. The council planned to fund £1.9m of service investments and would set aside £1.3m of Development Funds for Strategic Development (£0.4m) and Local Area Development (£0.9m). The council would also deliver £2.3m of savings proposals and operational efficiencies as part of the 2026/27 budget. A Band D Council Tax of £163.50 was proposed for the year which is

an increase of £5 compared to 2025/26. The Capital Programme for the period 2026/27 – 2030/31 was proposed to be £31.6m.

The Portfolio Holder for Finance, Property and Regeneration thanked to Budget Planning Committee for their review of the the revenue budget savings proposals, service investments, capital bids and fees and charges and subsequent comments and the Accounts, Audit and Risk Committee for considering and recommending the Capital and Investment and Treasury Management Strategies.

The Portfolio Holder for Finance, Property and Regeneration also thanked all respondents to the public consultation. In finalising the proposals, the Executive has taken into consideration feedback from the public consultation on the proposed Vision and Strategy, capital and revenue budget proposals and Council Tax increase.

The Portfolio Holder for Finance, Property and Regeneration, Councillor McLean, paid tribute to the Assistant Director of Finance and the finance team for their hard work on the budget process.

Having presented the report, Councillor McLean proposed the recommendations. Councillor Hingley seconded the proposal.

Councillor Reeves, Leader of the Cherwell Conservative and Independent Alliance, addressed Council in response to the budget and proposed the Group's amendment to the budget (annex to the Minutes as set out in the Minute Book). Councillor Rogers seconded the amendment.

The amendment having been proposed and seconded was debated by Council. As required in legislation, a recorded vote on the amendment was taken. Members voted as follows:

Councillor Fiaz Ahmed	For
Councillor Tom Beckett	Against
Councillor Rebecca Biegel	Against
Councillor Gordon Blakeway	Against
Councillor Chris Brant	Against
Councillor Besmira Brasha	Against
Councillor John Broad	Against
Councillor Phil Chapman	For
Councillor Mark Cherry	Against
Councillor Becky Clarke MBE	Against
Councillor Jean Conway	Against
Councillor Grace Conway-Murray	Against
Councillor Gemma Coton	Against
Councillor Dr Isabel Creed	Against
Councillor Andrew Crichton	Against
Councillor Dr Henry Elugwu	Against
Councillor Donna Ford	For
Councillor Ian Harwood	For
Councillor David Hingley	Against

Councillor Frank Ideh	Against
Councillor Kieron Mallon	For
Councillor Nicholas Mawer	For
Councillor Fiona Mawson	Against
Councillor Lesley McLean	Against
Councillor Zoe McLernon	For
Councillor Ian Middleton	Against
Councillor Julian Nedelcu	Against
Councillor Dr Chukwudi Okeke	For
Councillor Robert Parkinson	Against
Councillor Lynne Parsons	Against
Councillor Rob Pattenden	Against
Councillor Chris Pruden	Against
Councillor Edward F Reeves	For
Councillor David Rogers	For
Councillor Alisa Russell	Against
Councillor Les Sibley	For
Councillor Nigel Simpson	For
Councillor Dom Vaitkus	Against
Councillor Dorothy Walker	Against
Councillor Linda Ward	Against
Councillor Douglas Webb	For
Councillor John Willett	Against
Councillor Barry Wood	For

The vote on the amendment was lost with 14 votes in favour, 29 votes against and 0 abstentions.

The Chair confirmed that as the motion had been lost, Council was now debating the original motion as proposed by Councillor McLean and seconded by Councillor Hingley.

Councillor Crichton, Leader of Labour Group, addressed Council in response to the budget.

Councillor Middleton, Leader of the Green and Independent Alliance Group, addressed Council in response to the budget.

Councillor Sibley, Leader of the Independent Group, addressed Council in response to the budget.

The motion having been debated, as required in legislation, a recorded vote was taken, and Members voted as follows

Councillor Fiaz Ahmed	Against
Councillor Tom Beckett	For
Councillor Rebecca Biegel	Abstain
Councillor Gordon Blakeway	For
Councillor Chris Brant	For
Councillor Besmira Brasha	Abstain
Councillor John Broad	For

Councillor Phil Chapman	Against
Councillor Mark Cherry	Abstain
Councillor Becky Clarke MBE	Abstain
Councillor Jean Conway	For
Councillor Grace Conway-Murray	For
Councillor Gemma Coton	For
Councillor Dr Isabel Creed	Abstain
Councillor Andrew Crichton	Abstain
Councillor Dr Henry Elugwu	Abstain
Councillor Donna Ford	Against
Councillor Ian Harwood	Against
Councillor David Hingley	For
Councillor Frank Ideh	For
Councillor Kieron Mallon	Against
Councillor Nicholas Mawer	Against
Councillor Fiona Mawson	For
Councillor Lesley McLean	For
Councillor Zoe McLernon	Against
Councillor Ian Middleton	For
Councillor Julian Nedelcu	For
Councillor Dr Chukwudi Okeke	Against
Councillor Robert Parkinson	For
Councillor Lynne Parsons	Abstain
Councillor Rob Pattenden	For
Councillor Chris Pruden	For
Councillor Edward F Reeves	Against
Councillor David Rogers	Against
Councillor Alisa Russell	For
Councillor Les Sibley	For
Councillor Nigel Simpson	Against
Councillor Dom Vaitkus	Abstain
Councillor Dorothy Walker	For
Councillor Linda Ward	For
Councillor Douglas Webb	Against
Councillor John Willett	For
Councillor Barry Wood	Against

The vote on the motion was carried with 21 votes in favour, 13 votes against and 9 abstentions.

**Resolved**

- (1) That, having due regard, the statutory report of the Chief Finance Officer (Section 25 report) (Annex to the Minutes as set out in the Minute Book) be noted.
- (2) That the proposed Fees and Charges schedule for 2026/27 (Annex to the Minutes as set out in the Minute Book) be approved and it be noted that statutory notices would be placed where required.

- (3) That, having given due consideration, the Equality Impact Assessments of the Budget be noted.
- (4) That the Corporate Plan Vision and Strategy (Annex to the Minutes as set out in the Minute Book) be noted.
- (5) That the Annual Delivery Plan (Annex to the Minutes as set out in the Minute Book) be approved.
- (6) That, in relation to the Revenue Budget Strategy and Medium-Term Financial Strategy (MTFS), the following net directorate revenue budgets for the financial year commencing on 1 April 2026 be agreed.

Directorate	Net budget 2026/27 £m
Chief Executive's Office	2.402
Resources	9.978
Neighbourhood Services	8.888
Place and Regeneration	0.865
<b>Service Sub-total</b>	<b>22.133</b>
Corporate Costs	6.655
Policy Contingency	2.179
Development Funds	1.300
<b>Net Cost of Services</b>	<b>32.267</b>

- (7) That the Medium Term Financial Strategy and Revenue Budget 2026/27, including the Savings Proposals and Investments (Annex to the Minutes as set out in the Minute Book) be approved.
- (8) That an increase in the Basic Amount of Council Tax for Cherwell District Council for the financial year beginning on 1 April 2026 of £5, resulting in a Band D charge of £163.50 per annum, be approved.
- (9) That, following consultation undertaken in November and December 2024 which showed 88% support for the introduction, the implementation from 1 April 2027 of a premium (second homes premium) of 100% for dwellings that are no one's sole or main residence and are substantially furnished be approved.
- (10) That it be approved that the mandatory notice of 12 months to all owners of second homes that a premium will commence from 1 April 2027 be issued.
- (11) That it be approved that relevant exceptions be applied as set out by Government guidance (Annex to the Minutes as set out in the Minute Book).
- (12) That it be noted that that the Council Tax Base 2026/27 was determined at the Executive meeting held on 6 January 2026:

- a) for the whole Council area as 60,654.5 [item T in the formula in Section 31B of the Local Government Finance Act 1992, as amended (“the 1992 Act”)].
  - b) For dwellings in those parts of its area to which a Parish Precept relates (Annex to the Minutes as set out in the Minute Book).
- (13) That it be agreed that the Council Tax requirement for the Council’s own purposes for 2026/27 (excluding Parish Precepts and Special Expenses) is £9,917,011.
- (14) That the following amounts be calculated for the year 2026/27 in accordance with Sections 31 to 36 of the 1992 Act:
- a) £162,009,253 being the aggregate of the amounts which the Council estimates for the items set out in Section 31A (2) of the 1992 Act, taking into account all precepts issued to it by Parish Councils and any additional special expenses.
  - b) £145,153,645 being the aggregate of the amounts which the Council estimates for the items set out in Section 31A (3) of the 1992 Act.
  - c) £16,855,608 being the amount by which the aggregate at 3(a) above exceeds the aggregate at 3(b) above, calculated by the Council, in accordance with Section 31A (4) of the 1992 Act, as its Council Tax requirement for the year (Item R in the formula in Section 31B of the 1992 Act).
  - d) £277.90 being the amount at 3(c) above (Item R), all divided by Item T (1(a) above), calculated by the Council, in accordance with Section 31B of the 1992 Act, as the basic amount of its Council Tax for the year (including Parish Precepts and Special Expenses).
  - e) £6,938,598 being the aggregate amount of all special items (Parish Precepts and Special Expenses) referred to in Section 34(1) of the 1992 Act (as set out in the Annex to the Minutes as set out in the Minute Book).
  - f) £163.50 being the amount at 3(d) above less the result given by dividing the amount at 3(e) above by Item T(1(a) above), calculated by the Council, in accordance with Section 34(2) of the 1992 Act, as the basic amount of its Council Tax for the year for dwellings in those parts of its area to which no Parish Precept or special item relates.
- (15) That it be noted that for the year 2026/27 the Oxfordshire County Council and the Police and Crime Commissioner for Thames Valley have issued precepts to the Council, in accordance with Section 40 of

the 1992 Act, for each category of dwellings in the Council's area as indicated below:

<b>Valuation Band</b>	<b>Oxfordshire County Council</b>	<b>Police and Crime Commissioner for Thames Valley</b>
	£	£
<b>A</b>	1,337.85	198.85
<b>B</b>	1,560.83	232.00
<b>C</b>	1,783.80	265.14
<b>D</b>	2,006.78	298.28
<b>E</b>	2,452.73	364.56
<b>F</b>	2,898.68	430.85
<b>G</b>	3,344.63	497.13
<b>H</b>	4,013.56	596.56

- (16) That the Council, in accordance with Sections 30 and 36 of the 1992 Act, hereby sets the amounts as set out in the Annex to the Minutes (Annex to the Minutes as set out in the Minute Book) as the amounts of Council Tax for the year 2026/27 for each part of its area and for each of the categories of dwellings.
- (17) That the Council has determined that its relevant basic amount of Council Tax for 2026/27 is not excessive in accordance with principles approved under Section 52ZB of the 1992 Act.
- (18) That the Capital Bids and Capital Programme (Annex to the Minutes as set out in the Minute Book) be approved.
- (19) That the Capital and Investment Strategy 2026/27, including the Minimum Revenue Provision (MRP) Policy (Annex to the Minutes as set out in the Minute Book), be approved.
- (20) That the Treasury Management Strategy, including the Prudential Indicators, and Affordable Borrowing Limit for 2026/27 (Annex to the Minutes as set out in the Minute Book) be approved.
- (21) That a minimum level of General Balances of £8.011m be approved.
- (22) That the Reserves Policy (Annex to the Minutes as set out in the Minute Book) be approved.
- (23) That the Medium-Term Reserves Plan (Annex to the Minutes as set out in the Minute Book) be approved.
- (24) That the Pay Policy Statement (Annex to the Minutes as set out in the Minute Book), as required by the Localism Act 2010, be approved.

- (25) That a Pension Fund prepayment for the years 2026/27 – 2028/29 of £5.028m be approved.

The meeting ended at 8.55 pm

Chair:

Date: