



Council Minute Book

Monday 16 March 2026

Executive

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Accounts Audit and Risk Committee

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6. Minutes of meeting Tuesday 9 December 2025 of Budget Planning Committee (Pages 49 - 56)
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9. Minutes of meeting Tuesday 11 November 2025 of Overview and Scrutiny Committee (Pages 67 - 76)
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Personnel Committee

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Cherwell District Council

Executive

Minutes of a meeting of the Executive held at 39 Castle Quay, Banbury, OX16 5FD, on 2 December 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 Jean Conway, Portfolio Holder for Planning and Development Management
Councillor Nick Cotter, Portfolio Holder for Housing
Councillor Ian Middleton, Portfolio Holder for Neighbourhood Services
Councillor Robert Parkinson, Portfolio Holder for Safer Communities
Councillor Rob Pattenden, Portfolio Holder for Healthy Communities

Also Present:

Councillor David Rogers, Deputy Leader Cherwell Independent and Alliance; and, Chair, Overview and Scrutiny Committee

Also Present Virtually:

Councillor Amanda Watkins, 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
David Peckford, Assistant Director Planning
Heidi Radcliffe Hill, Interim Head of Chief Executive's Office
Natasha Clark, Governance and Elections Manager

Officers Attending Virtually:

Mona Walsh, Assistant Director - Property
Richard Smith, Head of Housing
Christina Cherry, Planning Policy, Conservation & Design Manager
Emma Faulkner, Principal Officer - Scrutiny and Democratic Lead

66 **Declarations of Interest**

There were no declarations of interest.

67 **Petitions and Requests to Address the Meeting**

There were no petitions or requests to address the meeting.

The Chair welcomed Councillor Rogers, Chair of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee and Deputy Leader of the Cherwell Conservative and Independent Alliance, who, as proposer of the motion, would be speaking in respect of item 7, Response to Motion: Planning Support for Town and Parish Councils; Councillor Watkins, Leader of the Labour Group; and, Councillor Sibley, Leader of the Independent Group.

68 **Minutes**

The minutes of the meeting held on 4 November 2025 and the special meeting held on 13 November 2025 were agreed as correct records and signed by the Chair.

69 **Chair's Announcements**

The Chair referred to the illegal landfill in Kidlington and advised that the previous week a joint letter from himself and the Leader of Oxfordshire County Council had been sent to the Prime Minister making it clear on behalf of the Councils that it was very important that the site was cleared as soon as possible. The Councils could not for the criminal investigation. It was very important that it was dealt with, as residents expect, so the Environment Agency and partners were being encouraged to move forward quickly. The Government was being called on to release forward funding to enable the clearance to take place.

The Chair confirmed that the council's proposal for local government reorganisation had been submitted to the Government last Thursday ahead of the deadline. The proposal had been submitted jointly with South Oxfordshire, Vale of White Horse, West Oxfordshire and West Berkshire Councils. Feedback from the Government on the proposal was expected next year.

70 **Urgent Business**

There were no items of urgent business.

71 **Response to Motion: Planning Support for Town and Parish Councils**

Executive Director for Place and Regeneration 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.

Councillor Rogers, proposer of the motion, addressed Executive and commented that he was very pleased with the response, which acknowledged the importance of engaging and working with Town and Parish Councils.

Resolved

- (1) That the in-year funding of up to £15,000 for the funding of a support package to Town and Parish Councils to respond to planning applications be approved.
- (2) That the virement of £15,000 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 be approved.

Reasons

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.

Alternative options

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.

72 **Executive Response to Overview and Scrutiny Recommendations**

The Assistant Director Law and Governance and Monitoring Office submitted a report to present the draft Executive responses to four sets of recommendations from Overview and Scrutiny Committee, following the presentation of the scrutiny reports to the Executive on 7 October 2025.

The Chair congratulated Councillor Rogers on his recent appointment as Chair of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee.

Resolved

- (1) That the Executive Responses to the Overview and Scrutiny Recommendations in respect of Planning Application Appeals, Climate Action, Equalities, Diversity and Inclusion (EDI) and the Cherwell Safer Communities Partnership be agreed.

Reasons

The recommendations ensure both Overview and Scrutiny Committee and Executive comply with requirements as detailed in Section 9F of the Local Government Act 2000.

Alternative options

Option 1: Not to provide an Executive response. This is rejected, as it would be contrary to Section 9FE of the Local Government Act 2000. Regardless of Executive's decision relating to the various recommendations, a response must be submitted to the Overview and Scrutiny Committee.

73

Infrastructure Funding Statement 2024-2025

The Head of Development Management submitted a report to seek approval of the Council's Infrastructure Funding Statement (IFS) 2024-25 for publication by 31 December 2025.

In considering the report, Executive members sought clarification as to why there were no funds in 2024/25 for green infrastructure and, in respect of s106 obligations delivered, the annual variation between funds received and funds spent.

The Assistant Director Planning explained that the IFS gave a picture over a period of time. In particular for larger strategic developments, there were trigger points which may kick in over a period of years. It could therefore be some years before some of the triggers were reached and funds received and then a further period of time before funds were spent. The Assistant Director Planning undertook to liaise with the Head of Development Management who would provide a more response incorporating more detail behind the figures.

Resolved

- (1) That approve the Infrastructure Funding Statement 24-25 be approved for publication by 31 December 2025, subject to any final changes considered to be necessary by the Head of Development Management to secure accuracy in consultation with the Portfolio Holder for Planning and Development Management.

Reasons

The publication of an Infrastructure Funding Statement (IFS) is a statutory requirement that provides transparency and accessibility to information about

developer contributions secured by the Council through Section 106 Agreements.

The report has been produced in collaboration with Financial Services and the information contained within it is considered to represent the most robust data available at this time.

Alternative options

Option 1: Not to bring forward and Infrastructure Funding Statement. This is not a lawful option and would leave the Council in breach of its statutory duty.

Option 2: Seek review of the key statistics and proposed Infrastructure Funding Statement. Officers consider that this is not required as the information is the most accurate and available at this time.

74

Annual Monitoring Report (Planning) 2025

The Assistant Director Planning submitted a report to seek approval for publication of the 2025 Annual Monitoring Report (AMR) which included a five-year housing land supply update (as at 31 October 2025). The report also sought approval of the accompanying updates to the Local Plan's Infrastructure Delivery Plan and Brownfield Land Register update (December 2025) and the Regulation 10A review of the adopted policies in the Cherwell Local Plan 2011 – 2031 (Part 1) Partial Review – Oxford's Unmet Housing Need. (The Partial Review).

In considering the report, Executive members noted that 11,000 homes had been granted permission but were, as yet, unbuilt and these figures were not taken into account by the Government when assessing housing delivery, which resulted in an inaccurate picture of local performance and put pressure on the council to approve planning developments.

In response to a query regarding what the council could do to hold developers accountable and put pressure on developers to bring developments forward, the Portfolio Holder for Planning and Development Management explained that the Area Oversight Groups (AOGs) played an important role, Developer Forums were being organised, PR8 was coming forward and the Oxford Growth Commission was also doing work on this.

The Portfolio Holder for Finance, Regeneration and Property reminded Members that Executive had agreed funding for the AOGs, that would allow them to identify issues with housing land supply and housing delivery. This had resulted in some additional support and external funding from the Ministry for Housing, Communities and Local Government in relation to the delivery of housing locally and finding the barriers to ensuring developments could be delivered.

Whilst noting the action the council was taking, at the request of Executive, the Chair, as Leader of the Council, undertook to write to Minister for Housing

setting out the predicament and put pressure on the Government to recognise the situation as well as request that they speed up their infrastructure, including Highways England as appropriate infrastructure was essential alongside any housing development.

Resolved

- (1) That the 2025 Annual Monitoring Report (AMR), including a Housing Land Supply Statement and 2024/25 Infrastructure Delivery Plan update be approved for publication.
- (2) That the 2024/25 Brownfield Land Register be approved for publication.
- (3) That the review of the adopted policies in the Cherwell Local Plan 2011 – 2031 (Part 1) Partial Review – Oxford's Unmet Housing Need under Regulation 10A of the Town and Country Planning (Local Planning) (England) Regulations 2012 be approved.
- (4) That the Assistant Director Planning be authorised to approve the final presentation of the AMR and Brownfield Land Register and to make any necessary minor administrative amendments and corrections to them prior to formal publication and in consultation with the Portfolio Holder for Planning and Development Management.

Reasons

The Annual Monitoring Report provides important information to measure the effectiveness of planning policies and to assist policy making and development management decision making. It is the statutory mechanism for monitoring housing delivery.

Its most significant conclusions are that Cherwell continues to deliver homes and employment land, albeit its land supply position continues to be challenging following the outcome of a planning appeal requiring combined assessment of the positions for Cherwell's and Oxford's needs and also due to the dependency on the rate of housebuilding. Affordable housing completions have decreased slightly although significantly more social rented homes were provided. Although the district has a high level of planning permission, officers will continue to pursue the objectives of the Housing Delivery Action Plan previously approved by the Executive.

Alternative options

Option 1: Deferment to seek significant amendment of the: 2025 Annual Monitoring Report, Infrastructure Delivery Plan, Brownfield Land Register or Regulation 10A Review.

The documents presented comprise technical documents which would support future decision making. They have been prepared to comply with planning legislation and guidance. Professional planning judgement and legal advice has informed the policy review. Monitoring is informed by factual

reporting and updating against relevant indicators and requirements, supported by data and research.

Option 2: Not to approve the documents for publication

Production of an Authorities Monitoring Report is a statutory requirement and the AMR's wider information supports the Local Plan implementation and review. Updating the Brownfield Land Register is also a statutory requirement. The Infrastructure Delivery Plan is required to monitor and support delivery of the adopted Cherwell Local Plan 2011-2031 and its Partial Review. The Regulation 10A review is also a statutory requirement as the Partial Review Plan is now five years' old.

75

Flexible Home Improvement Loans Limited - Future of Company

The Interim Executive Director Neighbourhood Services submitted a report to update the Executive on Flexible Home Improvement Loans Limited (FHIL) and its status, the alternative governance structures proposed for the company and to agree the preferred model as stated within the recommendations.

In response to a question regarding the benefits of the scheme to the council, the Head of Housing explained that numerous councils in England were involved in similar projects. Following the receipt of grant funding, FHIL had been established in 2008 as a not-for-profit company, limited by guarantee, to administer home improvement loans on behalf of its local authority members. FHIL currently had twelve members, including Cherwell District Council. Local authorities assisted residents to apply for the scheme but did not provide the loans.

The Head of Housing confirmed that all twelve partners were considering a similar report, and it was anticipated that all would agree the recommendations. The Interim Executive Director Neighbourhood Services confirmed that two thirds of the

If response to a query regarding how Cherwell residents had benefited from the scheme and how many legacy loans there were in the district, the Head of Housing undertook to provide the information to Executive members after the meeting.

Resolved

- (1) That authority be delegated to the Executive Director Neighbourhood Services to enter into negotiations to form a consortium with other Local Authority members.
- (2) That authority be delegated to the Executive Director Neighbourhood Services to engage with the procurement of a Financial Conduct Authority (FCA) regulated provider to undertake loan administration services on behalf of the consortium.

- (3) That the Executive Director Neighbourhood Services be authorised to engage with the winding up of Flexible Home Improvement Loans Limited once the net assets have been transferred with the appropriate safeguards.
- (4) That authority be delegated to the Executive Director Neighbourhood Services, in consultation with the Monitoring Officer and Section 151 Officer, to negotiate and agree new contracts pertaining to the future of Flexible Home Improvement Loans Limited on behalf of the Council.

Reasons

The future of Flexible Home Improvement Loans Limited needs to be decided given the intentions of the host authority, Royal Borough of Windsor and Maidenhead. The decisions made need to give account to our legal obligations. Both within the Memorandum of Association and in accordance with Companies Act, due to Flexible Home Improvement Loans Limited being a Limited Company of which the Council has an appointed Director.

Alternative options

Option 1: Another member council, including Cherwell DC, takes over the role of managing Flexible Home Improvement Loans Limited (FHIL). This option is not considered viable as there are no other authorities willing to host FHIL. Cherwell DC does not have the capacity or expertise to host the limited company.

Option 2: Each Council administers its own loans. This option is not considered viable as if a local authority ceases to be a member, it is not permitted to take any funds out of the available fund for its own benefit. When borrowers pay back a loan, councils must ensure that the loan is paid back to the central lending fund.

Option 3: Do nothing. This option is not viable due to Royal Borough of Windsor and Maidenhead (RBWM) signalling its intentions in not being willing to be the host authority. RBWM considers the hosting of FHIL an unnecessary burden in time, effort and resource. This is stated in its Cabinet report.

76

Thames Valley Devolution Expression of Interest Endorsement

The Executive Director Place and Regeneration submitted a report which sought endorsement of an Expression of Interest (EOI) to be made by Oxfordshire County Council to Government. This was in response to the Government's devolution policy and sought to position our region in the next round of devolution for the purpose of creating a Mayoral Strategic Authority (MSA).

Resolved

- (1) That the benefits from the proposed devolution of powers and functions be endorsed and it be agreed to continue building on the collaborative approach across the region to date.
- (2) That the Expression of Interest (EOI) to be submitted by Oxfordshire County Council as the upper-tier authority to Government be endorsed, noting that the EOI is designed to proactively position our region for early consideration in the next wave of the Devolution Programme.
- (3) That the Expression of Interest be acknowledged as an initial invitation to Government, opening further dialogue and engagement, and not a decision to establish a Strategic Authority.
- (4) That it be agreed that a further report will be brought to Executive prior to any final decision by the County Council as upper-tier authority on the creation of a Strategic Authority.
- (5) That it be noted that the informal Devolution Programme Board will oversee discussions with Government, ensuring robust governance and stakeholder engagement by elected members throughout this process.

Reasons

Opting to begin further discussions with Government on devolution would allow the Council to lead the definition of the strategic authority for our region. This will provide choice over the geography and the ability to determine the key priorities for our area.

Should this Council endorse a Mayoral Strategic Authority at a future meeting, it would have a seat at the Council of Nations and the Regions influencing government policy and ensuring local community voice is heard.

Alternative options

The White Paper is clear that the Government intends that all of England be devolved by default and is committed to ending the deals-based approach. The Government will also legislate for a ministerial directive, which will enable it to directly create Strategic Authorities in any places where local leaders in that region have not been able to agree how to access devolved powers. Therefore the “do nothing” option could mean Government legislating on our behalf for devolution.

77

Council Tax Reduction Scheme 2026-2027

The Assistant Director Finance (Section 151 Officer) submitted a report to enable Executive to consider the proposed banded scheme for Council Tax Reduction (CTR) for 2026/2027.

In response to a query if pension credit was also applicable as a passported benefit as was not listed, the Assistant Director Finance (Section 151 Officer) understood to clarify after the meeting.

Resolved

- (1) That the report and any financial implications for the Council be noted.
- (2) That the comments of Budget Planning Committee, who considered the report at their 8 July 2025 meeting and recommended that the current scheme (adjusted for inflationary purposes be retained for 2026/27, be noted.
- (3) That Council be recommended to retain the current scheme for 2026/27.

Reasons

The current scheme is understood by customers and has enabled them to budget for their council tax payments. One of the main advantages of the banded scheme is that it reduces the number of changes that the customer will experience enabling more effective personal budgeting. There is still a lot of financial uncertainty for many customers and in the current financial climate with the ongoing cost of living crisis it is therefore recommended that the existing scheme should be retained for 2026/27.

Budget Planning Committee considered the proposed CTRS scheme for 2026/27 at its meeting on 8 July 2025 and resolved that the Executive be recommended to agree that the current scheme (adjusted for inflationary purposes) be retained for 2026/27.

Alternative options

The alternative option is to undertake a review of the current CTRS scheme but the rationale for not taking this course of action is set out under “reasons”.

78

Finance Monitoring Report October 2025

The Assistant Director Finance (Section 151 Officer) submitted a report to the Executive the council's forecast year-end financial position as at the end of the October 2025.

Resolved

- (1) That the council's financial management report as at the end of October 2025 be noted.
- (2) That the Use of Reserve and Grant Funding Requests (Annex to the Minutes as set out in the Minute Book) be approved.

- (3) That Council be recommended approve the allocation of £1.65m capital budget to undertake roof replacement works at Castle Quay.

Reasons

The report updates the Committee on the projected year-end financial position of the council for 2025/26. Regular reporting is key to good governance and demonstrates that the council is actively managing its financial resources sustainably.

Alternative options

Option 1: This report summarises the council's forecast revenue financial position up to the end of March 2026, therefore there are no alternative options to consider.

79 **Exclusion of the Press and Public**

Resolved

That, under Section 100A of the Local Government Act 1972, the public and press be excluded from the meeting for the following item of business on the ground that, if the public and press were present, it would be likely that exempt information falling under the provisions of Schedule 12A, Part 1, Paragraph 3 would be disclosed to them, and that in all the circumstances of the case, the public interest in maintaining the exemption outweighs the public interest in disclosing the information.

80 **Approval to Appoint a Contract for the Provision of the Council's External Print and Mail (Hybrid Mail)**

The Assistant Director Finance (Section 151 Officer) submitted an exempt report which sought approval to award a contract for the provision of the Council's external printing and postage, also referred to as Hybrid Mail Solution to Financial Data Management following a competitive procurement process.

Resolved

- (1) That the contract for external print and mail contract be awarded to the successful bidder, as set out in the exempt decisions.
- (2) That authority be delegated to Assistant Director Law & Governance & Monitoring Officer, in consultation with the Section 151 Officer, to enter into a contract with the successful bidder.

Reasons

Hybrid Mail is an effective cost saving and efficient solutions to manage both digital and physical mail, it offers significant benefits, such as reducing operational costs, saving time, improving quality and consistency, enhancing security and compliance and providing detailed tracking and reporting.

Alternative options

Option 1: The current revenues and benefits mail contract has expired, and we are in standard terms and conditions. The Council could decide to do nothing and continue to use the more traditional services for external print and posting. However, by doing so, it would not realise the potential cost savings of using a hybrid mail solution.

The meeting ended at 7.55 pm

Chair:

Date:

Cherwell District Council

Executive

Minutes of a meeting of the Executive held at 39 Castle Quay, Banbury, OX16 5FD, on 6 January 2026 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 Jean Conway, Portfolio Holder for Planning and Development Management
Councillor Nick Cotter, Portfolio Holder for Housing
Councillor Ian Middleton, Portfolio Holder for Neighbourhood Services
Councillor Rob Pattenden, Portfolio Holder for Healthy Communities

Apologies for absence:

Councillor Robert Parkinson, Portfolio Holder for Safer Communities

Also Present:

Councillor David Rogers, Chair, Overview and Scrutiny Committee
Councillor Dr Kerrie Thornhill
Councillor John Broad

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
Ed Potter, Assistant Director Environmental Services
David Peckford, Assistant Director Planning
Heidi Radcliffe Hill, Interim Head of Chief Executive's Office
Tim Hughes, Head of Regulatory Services & Community Safety
Natasha Clark, Governance and Elections Manager

81 **Declarations of Interest**

There were no declarations of interest.

82 **Petitions and Requests to Address the Meeting**

There were no petitions or requests to address the meeting.

The Chair welcomed Councillor Dr Thornhill, who, as proposer of the motion, would be speaking in respect of item 7, Response to Motion: Supporting Young Women's Community Action for Safe Public Spaces; Councillor Rogers, Chair of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee and Deputy Leader of the Cherwell Conservative and Independent Alliance; Councillor Crichton, Deputy Leader of the Labour Group; Councillor Sibley, Leader of the Independent Group; and Councillor Broad.

83 **Minutes**

The minutes of the meeting held on 2 December 2025 were agreed as a correct record and signed by the Chair.

84 **Chair's Announcements**

There were no Chair's announcements.

85 **Urgent Business**

There were no items of urgent business.

In response to a question from Councillor Rogers regarding the letter from the Minister of State for Local Government and Homelessness to Leaders of councils with elections in May 2026 where proposals for reorganisation have been submitted and decisions not yet taken inviting views on the postponement of the elections, the Chair (Leader of the Council) advised that the letter set out certain criteria which, subject to further discussion with Group Leaders and other Members, he did not consider the council met and would therefore not be requesting a postponement.

86 **Response to Motion: Supporting Young Women's Community Action for Safe Public Spaces**

The Head of Regulatory Services and Community Safety submitted a report to respond to the motion raised at full council in October 2025 requesting

Executive to consider supporting young women's community action for safe public spaces.

Councillor Dr Thornhill, proposer of the motion, thanked Executive for the response both at this meeting and the October Council meeting as which the motion was presented. The motion was designed to foster collaboration and problem solving across all kinds of political backgrounds and the response reflected this. Councillor Dr Thornhill also thanked officers involved in producing the report and the action that had been taken by the Community Safety Team. Whilst it was acknowledged that Cherwell was generally safe, crime statistics were only a small part and not all crimes were reported or didn't meet the crime reporting threshold, it was important to have these initiatives and hoped that it would move forward with a strong sense of commitment.

In response to Councillor Dr Thornhill's comments, the Chair advised that Executive took the content of the motion seriously as it was a very important issue and invited Councillor Dr Thornhill to put forward any further comments to ensure benefit from her expertise.

Resolved

- (1) That the principles identified in the motion be supported.
- (2) That it be agreed to continue to support the initiatives identified in the motion through the Community Safety Team, through partnerships such as the Cherwell Community Safety Partnership and the area oversight groups, through engagement with organisers of community initiatives, specifically those referenced in the motion, and by using our communication channels to promote and support these initiatives.

Reasons

To respond to the motion raised at full council in October 2025 requesting Executive to consider supporting young women's community action for safe public spaces.

The council recognises the value and importance of community led initiatives in this space and will provide advice and networking opportunities for groups to benefit from as needed. Contact will be made with the organisers of the initiatives referred to in the motion to see how support might be provided. The promotion of the work already underway to make it more visible and easier to connect with for voluntary schemes or businesses will highlight the depth and consistency of the work already delivered by the Community Safety Team.

Alternative options

No alternative options have been identified.

The Interim Executive Director Neighbourhood Services submitted a report regarding mental health provision for young people in the district.

Following a motion agreed at Council in July 2024 to look at increasing spending in mental health initiatives from policy contingency budget for young people, it was subsequently agreed at the November 2024 Executive that the next step was for an increase in mental health provision within the Youth Activator team along with a research paper to be carried out by external provider to assess the needs of young people in Cherwell around mental wellbeing. The report outlined the key findings from the research paper “*Unmet Mental Health & Wellbeing Need in Primary School - Aged Children*” that was delivered by MIND and sought Executive agreement of the next steps to address findings.

Resolved

- (1) That the research paper “*Unmet Mental Health & Wellbeing Need in Primary School - Aged Children*” in Cherwell be endorsed.
- (2) That the key findings in the research paper be noted and it be agreed agree to deliver a pilot movement and psychological support programme for a year for 8 – 11 year-olds in fifteen targeted schools through £50,000 Public Health funding and Wellbeing Team staff time to coordinate.

Reasons

Option 3 (access and deliver the £55,000 of Public Health funding to deliver a year-long pilot (April 2026–March 2027) across 15 Cherwell schools. The intervention will combine movement activities with evidence-based psychological strategies, coordinated by a current member of the Wellbeing Team, utilising existing hours to provide 18.5 hours per week for implementation in the targeted schools) is the most cost-effective approach, as it fully utilises the £55,000 Public Health funding without requiring additional internal budget. By reallocating existing Wellbeing Team hours to provide 18.5 hours per week for coordination, this option avoids extra staffing costs while still ensuring dedicated support for delivery.

The intervention combines movement activities with evidence-based psychological strategies, directly improving pupil wellbeing and resilience. Targeting 15 as a pilot in Cherwell schools and communities means that pupils can benefit first from provision along with measuring impact, and a scalable model for future expansion into more schools and communities.

Alternative options

Option 1: Do not access and deliver the £55,000 funded intervention from Public Health targeting 15 schools piloted first in Cherwell for a year April 2026-March 2027 combining movement activities with evidence-based psychological strategies alongside not providing a wellbeing worker for 18.5

hours a week to coordinate the work in the targeted schools. Has been rejected due to it would mean not taking up the £55,000 Public Health-funded intervention, resulting in no pilot across 15 Cherwell schools, no integration of movement activities with psychological strategies along with coordination.

Option 2: Access and deliver the £55,000 of Public Health funding to deliver a year-long pilot (April 2026–March 2027) across 15 Cherwell schools. The intervention will combine movement activities with evidence-based psychological strategies, coordinated by a Wellbeing Worker employed for 18.5 hours per week, funded from the policy contingency budget, to ensure effective implementation and support in the targeted schools and communities settings. Rejected because, although it secures £55,000 of Public Health funding for a year-long pilot across 15 Cherwell schools, it requires additional funding from the policy contingency budget to cover the Wellbeing Worker's 18.5 hours per week.

88

Simpler Recycling

The Assistant Director Environmental Services submitted a report which set out the possible options and the proposed recommendation for the waste collection service, following new requirements driven by The Environment Act.

Resolved

- (1) That the completion of a TEEP (Technically, Environmentally & Economically Practical) assessment covering paper & cardboard until the implications of DRS on the kerbside recycling service is fully understood be approved.
- (2) That a review of the frequency of residual waste collection be supported.
- (3) That it be approved that any changes in the waste collection service should involve consultation with our Waste & Environmental Services Project (WESP) partners.

Reasons

The decision to introduce glass recycling from the kerbside in January 2026 was made by Executive in November 2025. To fully comply with Simpler Recycling by 31 March 2026 either paper & cardboard needs to be collected separately at the kerbside or a TEEP (Technically, Environmentally & Economically Practical) assessment carried out. It is recommended a TEEP assessment is carried out and the decision to move to collect Paper & cardboard separately is delayed until the financial implications are fully understood when DRS operations become clear.

Plastic film needs to be introduced into kerbside collections before 31 March 2027. The decision on when to commence collections cannot be made until our processing recycling contractor indicates what plastic film is acceptable

and what is unacceptable. This information is likely to be forthcoming before the summer of 2026.

Alternative options

Option 1: Implement separate collection of paper & cardboard as soon as possible. This has been dismissed due to the uncertain financial impact – investing capital of £1.5 million plus and a great uncertainty about the impact on revenue costs

Option 2: Implement collection of plastic film as soon as possible. This has been rejected because our recycling processor, N&P, have yet to set out their specification regarding plastic film.

89

Cotswolds National Landscape Management Plan 2025 – 2030

The Assistant Director Planning submitted a report to consider and endorse the Cotswolds National Landscape Management Plan 2025 – 2030.

In considering the report, Executive members welcomed the Plan and commented on the need for greater protection of the rural landscape. The Portfolio Holder for Planning and Development Management endorsed a request from Executive members for officers to consider working with officers at the Cotswold National Landscape to discuss ideas around potentially extending the protected landscape extending the national landscape around the north and eastern parts of the district.

Resolved

- (1) That the Cotswolds National Landscape Management Plan 2025-2030 be endorsed.

Reasons

The Cotswolds National Landscape Management Plan 2025-2030 is a key mechanism for achieving the purposes of conserving and enhancing the natural beauty of the CNL and increasing the understanding and enjoyment of the CNL's special qualities. It is a legal requirement for a National Landscape to have a management plan under Section 89 of the Countryside and Rights of Way Act 2000 and Conservation Boards are required to review their Management Plan before the end of a period of no more than five years. Officers consider that it will assist in conserving and enhancing that small part of the National Landscape within the district and recommend its endorsement.

Alternative options

Option 1: Not to endorse the Management Plan. This is not recommended as the Management Plan will assist in meeting the statutory purpose of the National Landscape; it has been prepared with the benefit of the Council's representation; and it will be helpful guidance to the Council.

90

Climate Action Update

The Climate Change Programme Manager submitted a report to update Executive on progress made across Council and District Climate Programmes, including delivery against the Climate Action Plan (CAP), Performance KPIs, and Annual Development Plan (ADP) targets.

In considering the report, Executive members commented that there had been significant action towards achieving a net zero Cherwell by 2030 and this was a priority for the administration.

In response to comments from Councillor Broad who highlighted the positive work of the former Climate Change Overview and Scrutiny Committee Working Group which was referenced in the report, but considered that more action could have been taken by this stage although acknowledged some actions were being picked up in the new Local Plan, the Portfolio Holder for Greener Communities explained that the administration was doing as much as it could within its power to be able to move forward the climate change agenda but there were many things which were outside of the administration's control.

Resolved

- (1) That the progress achieved against the Climate Action Plan (CAP), Performance KPIs, and Annual Development Plan (ADP) targets between April 2024 and September 2025 be noted and it be further noted that as a part of periodic updates, the Climate Team will submit an annual update to Executive.

Reasons

The Executive is recommended to acknowledge the progress outlined in this report and accept the update as part of ongoing climate programme governance.

Alternative options

Option1: Do not note the report. This option is not applicable as this is an update report.

Option 2: Delay consideration of report. This option is not applicable as this is an update report.

91

Council Tax Base 2026/2027

The Assistant Director Finance (Section 151 Officer) submitted a report to provide the Council tax Base for 2026/27.

Resolved

- (1) That the report of the Assistant Director of Finance for the calculation of the Council's Tax Base for 2026/27 be approved.
- (2) That it be agreed that, in accordance with the Local Authorities (Calculation of Council Tax Base) (England) Regulations 2012, the amount calculated by Cherwell District Council as its Council Tax Base for the year 2026/27 shall be **60,654.5**.
- (3) That it be agreed for the parishes which form part of its area shown in the Annex to the Minutes (as set out in the Minute Book), the amount calculated as the Council Tax Base for the year 2026/27 in respect of special items shall be as indicated in the column titled Tax Base 2026/27.
- (4) That it be agree for the Flood Defence Areas which form part of its area, the amount calculated as the Council Tax Base for the year 2026/27 for the purposes of levies on Oxfordshire County Council by River Authorities, shall be:
 - Thames Flood Defence Area: 58,217.8
 - Anglian (Great Ouse) Flood Defence Area: 1,965.2
 - Severn Regional Flood Defence Area: 471.5
 - Total: 60,654.5

Reasons

The Council must legally set a tax base for the following year by 31 January. This will allow the Council to notify its preceptors of the taxbase in order for them (and the Council) to set their budgets for 2026/27.

Alternative options

There are no alternative options. The Council has to set a tax base in order to set its council tax for 2026/27.

92

Finance Monitoring Report November 2025

The Assistant Director Finance (S151 Officer) submitted a report which updated the Executive on the council's forecast year-end financial position as at the end of November 2025.

Resolved

- (1) That the council's financial management report as at the end of November 2025 be noted.
- (2) That the release of £0.060m from Policy Contingency for development resource required for property projects, associated planning advisors,

consultancy and initial ground condition reports, as well as information on flooding be approved.

- (3) That the proposed write offs be approved.

Reasons

The report updates Executive on the projected year-end financial position of the council for 2025/26. Regular reporting is key to good governance and demonstrates that the council is actively managing its financial resources sustainably.

Alternative options

Option 1: This report summarises the council's forecast revenue financial position up to the end of March 2026, therefore there are no alternative options to consider.

93 **Exclusion of the Press and Public**

There being no questions on the exempt appendix, it was not necessary to exclude the press and public.

94 **Finance Monitoring Report November 2025 - Exempt Appendix**

There being no specific questions on the exempt appendix, it was considered and agreed as set out under Minute 92.

The meeting ended at 7.34 pm

Chair:

Date:

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Cherwell District Council

Executive

Minutes of a meeting of the Executive held at 39 Castle Quay, Banbury, OX16 5FD, on 3 February 2026 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 Jean Conway, Portfolio Holder for Planning and Development Management
Councillor Nick Cotter, Portfolio Holder for Housing
Councillor Ian Middleton, Portfolio Holder for Neighbourhood Services
Councillor Rob Pattenden, Portfolio Holder for Healthy Communities

Apologies for absence:

Councillor Chris Brant, Portfolio Holder for Corporate Services

Also Present Virtually:

Councillor Amanda Watkins, Leader of the Labour Group
Councillor Les Sibley, Leader of the Independent Group
Councillor David Rogers, Chair, Overview and Scrutiny Committee

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
Heidi Radcliffe Hill, Interim Head of Chief Executive's Office
Tim Hughes, Head of Regulatory Services & Community Safety
Denzil Turbervill, Head of Legal Services
Natasha Clark, Governance and Elections Manager

Officers Attending Virtually:

Mona Walsh, Assistant Director - Property
Richard Smith, Head of Housing

95 **Declarations of Interest**

There were no declarations of interest.

96 **Petitions and Requests to Address the Meeting**

There were no petitions or requests to address the meeting.

The Chair welcomed Councillor David Rogers, Chair of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee and Deputy Leader of the Cherwell Conservative and Independent Alliance; Councillor Amanda Watkins, Leader of the Labour Group; and, Councillor Les Sibley, Leader of the Independent Group, to the meeting and invited them to indicate if they wished to speak.

97 **Minutes**

The minutes of the meeting held on 6 January 2026 were agreed as a correct record and signed by the Chair.

98 **Chair's Announcements**

Councillor Parkinson

The Chair advised that Councillor Parkinson had taken the decision to step down from the Executive for personal reasons. The Chair thanked Councillor Parkinson for his hard work as Portfolio Holder for Safer Communities and everything he has contributed to Executive and the Council as a member of the Executive. Councillor Parkinson's insights had been of great value and he would be missed on the Executive.

The Chair advised that for the remainder of this municipal year Councillor Parkinson's portfolio of safer communities would be overseen by Councillor Pattenden in a "healthy and safe communities" portfolio. The Chair thanked Councillor Pattenden for taking on those responsibilities.

Devolution Expression of Interest Update

The Chair referred to the Thames Valley Devolution Expression of Interest that Executive had endorsed in December 2025 and subsequently been sent to the Government by the County Council in conjunction with authorities in Berkshire and advised that a response had been received from the Government. The response had commended Oxfordshire and Berkshire on its interest in the programme and indicating a willingness to discuss this further. Council Leaders would be meeting next week to discuss the evolution going forward.

Local Government Reorganisation Government Consultation

The Chair advised that the Government's consultation on Local Government Reorganisation would commence on Thursday and would run for a seven week period.

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

The Assistant Director Finance (Section 151 Officer) submitted a report to consider and recommend the Budget Setting for 2026/27 and Medium Term Financial Strategy (MTFS) 2030/31.

In introducing the report, the Portfolio Holder for Finance, Regeneration and Property advised that the proposed net budget of the Council was £32.3 million, an increase of £6.1 million from 2025/2026. It was planned to fund £1.9 million of service improvements and £1.3 millions of development funds would be set aside for strategic development and local area development. £2.3 million of savings proposals and operational efficiencies would be delivered as well as a capital programme of £31.6 million, of which £17.9 million was expected to be spent in 2026/2027, including significant investment in homeless provision.

Over the last two years, there had been significant engagement with the Government on the potential impacts of the fair funding review and the business rates reset which could have had a detrimental effect for Cherwell. The Government's provisional financial settlement resulted in the council receiving £4.4 million additional funding in 2026/2027 compared to what it had anticipated it would receive at the time of the public consultation on the budget.

The Portfolio Holder for Finance, Regeneration and Property confirmed that, in addition to the balanced budget for 2026/2027, as legally required, based on current estimates, including growth in business rates and council tax, there would be a balanced budget over the next three years.

In seconding the report, the Chair thanked all respondents to the public consultation for their comments and feedback, which had been taken in consideration when setting the budget.

Councillor Watkins, Leader of the Labour Group, addressed the meeting commenting that she was pleased and appreciated that Executive had considered and acted upon the consultation feedback in respect of proposed changes to the funding of Banbury Museum.

Resolved

- (1) That the budget proposal be recommended to Council, and the summary of consultation responses be noted.
- (2) That authority be delegated to the Section 151 Officer (S151), following consultation with the Leader of the Council and Portfolio Holder for Finance, Regeneration and Property to complete the legal Council Tax calculations once all the information required has been received and submit as appendices to the budget report to Council.

- (3) That authority be delegated to the S151, following consultation with the Leader of the Council and Portfolio Holder for Finance, Regeneration and Property to make appropriate changes to the proposed budget to Council including policies and plans.
- (4) That Council be recommended to approve the proposed Fees and Charges schedule for 2026/27 (Appendix 7 to the report) and statutory notices be placed where required.
- (5) That Council be recommended to consider and note the Equality Impact Assessments of the Budget (Appendix 8 to the report).
- (6) That Council be recommended to note the Corporate Plan Vision and Strategy (Appendix 1 to the report).
- (7) That Council be recommended to approve the Annual Delivery Plan (Appendix 2 to the report).
- (8) That, in relation to the Revenue Budget Strategy (Section 4.2 of the report) and Medium-Term Financial Strategy (MTFS) (Section 4.6 of the report), Council be recommended to approve:
 - i. The net revenue budget for the financial year commencing on 1 April 2026 (Table 4.2.1 of the report) and further analysed in the Budget Book (Appendix 12 to the report).
 - ii. The MTFS and Revenue Budget 2026/27 (Sections 4.6 and 4.2 respectively of the report), including the Savings Proposals and Investments included at Appendices 4 and 5 respectively.
- (9) That, in relation to Council Tax (Section 4.2.49 of the report), Council be recommended to approve:
 - i. 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.
 - ii. From 1 April 2027 the implementation of a premium (second homes premium) of 100% for dwellings that are no one's sole or main residence and are substantially furnished, following consultation undertaken in November and December 2024 which showed 88% support for the introduction.
 - iii. That the mandatory notice of 12 months to all owners of second homes that a premium will commence from 1 April 2027 be issued.
 - iv. That relevant exceptions be applied as set out by Government guidance (Appendix 22 to the report).
- (10) That, in relation to the Capital Programme and related strategies (Section 4.3 of the report), Council be recommended to approve:

- i. The Capital Bid(s) and Capital Programme at Appendices 17 and 18 of the report respectively.
 - ii. The Capital and Investment Strategy 2026/27 (Appendix 19 to the report), including the Minimum Revenue Provision (MRP) Policy.
 - iii. The Treasury Management Strategy, including the Prudential Indicators, and Affordable Borrowing Limit for 2026/27 (Appendix 21 the report).
- (11) That, in relation to reserves (Section 4.4 of the report), Council be recommended to approve:
- i. A minimum level of General Balances of £8.011m as supported by Appendix 15 of the report.
 - ii. The Reserves Policy (Appendix 14 of the report).
 - iii. The medium-term reserves plan described in Appendix 16 of the report.
- (12) That Council be recommended to approve The Pay Policy Statement, as required by the Localism Act 2010, detailed in Appendix 9 to the report.
- (13) That, in relation to the Pension Fund (Section 4.5 of the report), Council be recommended to approve a pension fund prepayment for the years 2026/27 – 2028/29 of £5.028m.

Reasons

This report provides information around the various building blocks that make up the proposed budget for 2026/27 and beyond, allowing members to consider and scrutinise the elements of the budget and provide advice and guidance to council to help further shape both budget setting for 2026/27 and the MTFs up to 2030/31.

Alternative options

It is a legal requirement to set a balanced budget and the recommendations as outlined set out a way to achieve this. The following alternative option has been identified and rejected for the reasons set out below.

Option 1: To reject the current proposals and make alternative recommendations. Members will not be aware of the medium-term financial forecast or implications of alternatives if they choose to take this option.

The Assistant Director of Finance (Section 151 Officer) and Interim Head of Chief Executive's Office submitted a report to update Executive on the council's forecast year-end financial, performance and risk position as of the end of Quarter 3 2025/2026.

Resolved

- (1) That the council's finance, performance, and risk management report as at Quarter 3 be noted.
- (2) That the approval of £0.010m from Policy Contingency for the Climate Change Action Plan for 2025/26, approved within S151 delegations be noted.
- (3) That the reprofiling of projects in the capital programme (Annex to the Minutes as set out in the Minute Book) be approved.
- (4) That the following budgets approved under S151 delegations within in the capital programme be noted.

S151 Officer Approved Grant Funded Budgets - Q3	2025/26 £m	2026/27 £m
Disabled Facilities Grants	0.186	
Burnehyll - Bicester Country Park	0.025	
UKSPF Rural Fund	0.147	
S106 - Banbury Cricket Club Pavilion Project	0.011	
S106 - Yarnton Village Hall Project		0.023
S106 - Bloxham Bowls Club Roofing Contribution	0.014	
S106 – Fritwell Playing Fields Equipment Contribution	0.067	
Grand Total	0.450	0.023

Reasons

The report updates Executive on the projected year-end financial position of the council for 2025/26, Quarter 3 performance position and updated Leadership Risk Register. Regular reporting is key to good governance and demonstrates that the council is actively managing its financial resources sustainably.

Alternative options

Option 1: This report summarises the council's forecast financial position up to the end of End of Year 2026, and a snapshot of our Performance and Risk position for Quarter 3 2025-26, therefore there are no alternative options to consider.

101

Air Quality Update

The Head of Regulatory Services and Community Safety submitted a report to request Executive approval to confirm the revocation of the Air Quality Management Area (AQMA) in Bicester.

Resolved

- (1) That the Air Quality Management Area (AQMA) No.4 (Kings End/Queens Avenue, Bicester) be revoked.

Reasons

In AQMA No.4 (Kings End/Queens Avenue, Bicester) the measured levels of nitrogen dioxide have been below the air quality objective of 40µg/m³ for the last five years. The guidance from DEFRA is that revocation of an AQMA should be considered following three consecutive years of compliance with the relevant objective, and where there have been no exceedances for the past five years, the AQMA must be revoked. The Executive is therefore recommended to approve the revocation of this AQMA.

Alternative options

Option 1: To not revoke AQMA No.4 (Kings End/Queens Avenue, Bicester). This option was rejected because local authorities are required to revoke AQMAs where there have been no exceedances of the relevant objective for the past five years.

102 **Exclusion of the Press and Public**

Resolved

That under Section 100A of the Local Government Act 1972, the public and press be excluded from the meeting for the following items of business on the ground that, if the public and press were present, it would be likely that exempt information falling under the provisions of Schedule 12A, Part 1, Paragraph 3 would be disclosed to them, and that in all the circumstances of the case, the public interest in maintaining the exemption outweighs the public interest in disclosing the information.

103 **Approval to Appoint a Contract for the Provision of Temporary Accommodation for Homeless Households**

The Interim Executive Director Neighbourhood Services submitted an exempt report to seek approval to appoint a contract for the provision of temporary accommodation for homeless households.

Resolved

- (1) As set out in the exempt Minutes.

Reasons

As set out in the exempt Minutes.

Alternative options

As set out in the exempt Minutes.

104 **Adoption of an Agency Model for the Leisure Centre Service Delivery**

The Interim Executive Director Neighbourhood Services submitted an exempt report to adopt an agency model for the Leisure Centre service delivery.

Resolved

- (1) As set out in the exempt Minutes.
- (2) As set out in the exempt Minutes.
- (3) As set out in the exempt Minutes.

Reasons

As set out in the exempt Minutes.

Alternative options

As set out in the exempt Minutes.

105 **Proposed New Lease to Banbury Young Homeless Project (BYHP)**

The Assistant Director Property submitted an exempt report to approve a proposed new lease to Banbury Young Homeless Project (BYHP)

Resolved

- (1) As set out in the exempt Minutes.
- (2) As set out in the exempt Minutes.
- (3) As set out in the exempt Minutes.
- (4) As set out in the exempt Minutes.
- (5) As set out in the exempt Minutes.

Reasons

As set out in the exempt Minutes.

Alternative options

As set out in the exempt Minutes.

106 **Sale of Bodicote House Site, White Post Road, Bodicote, OX15 4AA**

The Assistant Director Property submitted an exempt report in respect of the sale of the Bodicote House site, White Post Road, Bodicote.

Resolved

- (1) As set out in the exempt Minutes.
- (2) As set out in the exempt Minutes.
- (3) As set out in the exempt Minutes.
- (4) As set out in the exempt Minutes.
- (5) As set out in the exempt Minutes.

Reasons

As set out in the exempt Minutes.

Alternative options

As set out in the exempt Minutes.

107 **Approval to Appoint a Contract for the Provision of the Council's Revenues and Benefits Software**

The Assistant Director Finance (Section 151 Officer) submitted an exempt report to seek approval to appoint a contract for the provision of the Council's Revenues and Benefits software.

Resolved

- (1) As set out in the exempt Minutes.
- (2) As set out in the exempt Minutes.

Reasons

As set out in the exempt Minutes.

Alternative options

As set out in the exempt Minutes.

108 **Urgent Business**

There were no items of urgent business.

The meeting ended at 7.36 pm

Chair:

Date:

Council

Record of Portfolio Holder Decisions for the period 6 December 2025 to 6 March 2026

Portfolio Holder	Decision Subject Matter	Decision Date
Portfolio Holder for Housing	Cherwell District Council Allocations Scheme	30 December 2025

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Cherwell District Council

Accounts, Audit and Risk Committee

Minutes of a meeting of the Accounts, Audit and Risk Committee held at 39 Castle Quay, Banbury, OX16 5FD, on 19 November 2025 at 6.30 pm

Present:

Councillor Simon Lytton (Chair)
Councillor David Rogers (Vice-Chair)
Councillor Besmira Brasha
Councillor Frank Ideh
Councillor Robert Parkinson
Councillor Dom Vaitkus
Sarah Thompson, Independent Person, no voting rights

Apologies for absence:

Councillor Nicholas Mawer
Councillor Ian Middleton

Also Present:

Councillor Lesley McLean, Deputy Leader and Portfolio Holder for Finance, Property & Regeneration

Also Present Virtually:

Ed Lambert-Martin, Internal Audit - Veritau
Sarah Butler, Internal Audit, Veritau
Craig Sullivan, External Audit, Bishop Fleming
Mark Bartlett, External Audit, Bishop Fleming

Officers:

Michael Furness, Assistant Director Finance & S151 Officer
Joanne Kaye, Head of Finance and Deputy S151 Officer
Patrick Davis, Democratic and Elections Officer

Officers Attending Virtually:

Ed Potter, Assistant Director Environmental Services
Ruth Wooldridge, Health and Safety Manager

48

Declarations of Interest

There were no declarations of interest.

49 **Minutes**

The Minutes of the meeting of the Committee held on 24 September 2025 were agreed as a correct record and signed by the Chair.

50 **Chair's Announcements**

There were no Chair's announcements.

51 **Requests to Address the Meeting**

There were no requests to address the meeting.

52 **Urgent Business**

There were no items of urgent business.

53 **Internal Audit Progress Report 2025/26**

The Assistant Director of Finance (Section 151 Officer) submitted a report that provided the Committee with an update on the delivery of the internal audit work programme for 2025/26.

In introducing the report, Ed Lambert-Martin, Internal Audit Manager at Veritau reported that four internal audits had been completed since the last report was submitted to the Committee. Two had been rated as substantial assurance; Governance and decision making, and Treasury management, and two at reasonable assurance; Risk Management, and Performance Management Framework.

The Committee was assured that although there were fourteen overdue actions, these were largely due to the timings of the follow up work following the change in internal auditors last year and these were being addressed by the relevant officers in liaison with Veritau.

Resolved

- (1) That the progress made in delivering the 2025/26 internal audit work programme be noted.

54 **Counter Fraud Progress Report**

The Assistant Director of Finance (Section 151 Officer) submitted a report which presented an update on counter fraud work undertaken so far in 2025/26.

In response to a question regarding the remedies sought from claimants who had made fraudulent or erroneous claims, it was confirmed that the values involved related to the repayments of the over provision rather than through legal action undertaken by the Council.

Resolved

- (1) That the counter fraud progress report be noted.

55

External Audit Reports 2024/25

The Assistant Director of Finance (Section 151 officer) submitted a report on the External Audit 2024/25 for the Committee to receive the auditors' Audit Completion Report for 2024/25, the draft Annual Auditor's Report and draft Letter of Representation.

In introducing the report, Craig Sullivan Partner at Bishop Fleming and Mark Bartlett Director at Bishop Fleming, updated the Committee on the progress of the Audit Completion Report and the Auditors Annual Report. Both reports were still in draft format but no significant issues had been identified to date. It was anticipated that final versions would be issued in December.

Members were also provided with an update on the timetable and mechanisms for building back assurance in the financial statements following the disclaimed opinion provided by the previous external auditor due to it not undertaking the 2022/23 external audit as a consequence of resourcing constraints.

In response to a query regarding one of the unadjusted items in the Auditors Annual Report, the Director at Bishop Fleming confirmed that the figure of £687,000 was an extrapolated estimate based on the potential impact of the error across the full population rather than an actual value.

Resolved

- (1) That the contents of the Audit Completion Report for 2024/25 from the council's external auditors, Bishop Fleming be noted.
- (2) That the contents of the draft Auditor's Annual Report for 2024/25) be noted.
- (3) That the draft Letter of Representation for 2024/25 be noted.
- (4) That once the final audit opinion for 2024/25 was received, the Assistant Director of Finance (S151 Officer), in consultation with the Chair of the Accounts, Audit and Risk Committee (or Vice Chair in their absence), be authorised to make any further changes to the accounts agreed with the auditors and sign the accounts and it be noted any further changes would be brought to the Committee's attention at its next meeting following the signing.

- (5) That the Assistant Director of Finance (S151 Officer), in consultation with the Chair of the Committee (or Vice Chair in their absence), be authorised to make any further changes to the Letter of Representation agreed with the auditors that may arise during completion of the audit and it be noted that any further changes will be brought to the Committee's attention at its next meeting following the signing.

56 **Risk Monitoring Report Quarter 2 2025-26**

The Assistant Director of Finance (S151 Officer) submitted a report to update the Committee on how well the Council was managing its strategic risks.

In introducing the report, the Performance Team Leader confirmed that the Leadership Risk Register remained stable. The only change was the decrease in the score for risk L05 – Planning Applications for Major Developments, from 16 (High) to 12 (Medium) due to the service implementing an action plan following receipt of the Planning Advisory Service report earlier in the year.

In response to a question regarding risk L01 – Financial Resilience and whether any work was underway to affect a change on the rating score for this, the Committee was advised that this risk derived from the proposed changes in the way funding was allocated to councils by Central Government and as such was outside of the council's control. The Assistant Director of Finance assured the Committee that appropriate mitigations had been implemented where possible but as details of the new funding model were unknown there was a limit as to what the council was able to do at this stage. It was anticipated that more information would be made available to the council towards the end of the year.

Resolved

- (1) That the Risk Monitoring Report for Quarter 2 2025 – 26 be noted.

57 **Risk Management Strategy and Guidance**

The Assistant Director of Finance (S151 Officer) submitted a report that proposed a new Risk Management Strategy and Guidance, that aimed to ensure the council's effective and compliant risk management.

In introducing the report, the Performance Team Leader explained that the updated guidance had been developed following an internal audit and ensured that the council incorporated best practice from within the local government organisation sector in its Risk Management Strategy.

In response to Committee comments the Performance Team Leader clarified the mechanisms for identifying new risks and agreed to update the Guidance to ensure these were clearly set out.

Resolved

- (1) That the proposed Risk Management Strategy and Guidance be endorsed.

58 **Health and Safety Report Quarter 2 Report**

The Assistant Director Human Resources submitted a report that provided the Committee with the Council's Health and Safety performance for Quarter 2 of the 2025/26 financial year.

In introducing the report, the Health and Safety Manager explained that the majority of accidents and incidents recorded, involved Environmental Services as this was the highest risk service area for the Council as it operated in locations where there was not complete control over the working environment.

The Assistant Director, Environmental Services outlined the measures taken to reduce the number of incidents including the use of four-way cameras on all vehicles to assist in reversing manoeuvres. The Committee was advised that there was a correlation between the number of accidents and the experience of drivers. Over 50% of accidents involved drivers who had worked for the council for less than two years. To mitigate the high level of incidents, various measures had been implemented including an increase in the number of inspections alongside more regular team briefings. The Committee requested that year-on-year comparative data be included in future reports.

In response to a request for an update on the outstanding actions from the Veritau audit of Environmental Services, the Assistant Director, Environmental Services confirmed that the main outstanding items related to how the online iHasco training staff were required to complete, could be adapted to meet the requirements of Environmental Services and a solution to enable staff to access training material electronically. It was anticipated that both issues would be resolved imminently.

Resolved

- (1) That the Health and Safety Report performance for Quarter 2 of the 2025/26 financial year be noted.

59 **Treasury Management Report - Mid-year review 2025/26 (September 2025)**

The Assistant Director of Finance (S151 Officer) submitted a report that updated the Committee on treasury management performance and compliance with treasury management policy for 2025-26 as required by the Treasury Management Code of Practice.

In introducing the report, the Portfolio Holder for Finance, Property and Regeneration advised that as at the end of Quarter 2 2025-26, the Council had borrowing of £171M and investments of £41M, which resulted in a net borrowing position of £130M.

Resolved

- (1) That the Treasury Management mid-year review 2025-26 be noted and Council be recommended to receive the report.

60 **Financial Management Code - Forecast Self-Assessment Update 2025/26**

The Assistant Director of Finance (S151 Officer) submitted a report which updated the Committee on the results of the Council's forecast self-assessment position as at February 2026 against the requirements of CIPFA's Financial Management Code.

In introducing the report, the Head of Finance advised the Committee that the Financial Management Code was the minimum that Local Authorities had to do to comply with Section 151 of the Local Government Act to meet its financial responsibilities and that this was the responsibility of the Section 151 officer, Corporate Leadership team and the Executive.

The Committee was advised that the self-assessment showed continued strong compliance. It was green in all areas of the Financial Management Code which demonstrated a resilient and sustainable approach to managing the Council's finances.

Resolved

- (1) That the Council's forecast self-assessment position of strong compliance at February 2026 against the requirements of CIPFA's Financial Management Code be noted.

61 **Review of Committee Work Programme**

The Committee considered its work plan and had no queries or additional items for the Committee Work Plan.

Resolved

- (1) That the work programme update be noted.

The meeting ended at 7.48 pm

Chair:

Date:

Cherwell District Council

Accounts, Audit and Risk Committee

Minutes of a meeting of the Accounts, Audit and Risk Committee held at 39 Castle Quay, Banbury, OX16 5FD, on 14 January 2026 at 6.30 pm

Present:

Councillor Simon Lytton (Chair - from agenda item 7, minute 67)
Councillor David Rogers (Vice-Chair, in the Chair for agenda items 1 to 6, minutes 62 - 66)
Councillor Frank Ideh
Councillor Ian Middleton
Councillor Robert Parkinson
Councillor Dom Vaitkus
Nelly Lukwo, Independent Person, no voting rights
Sarah Thompson, Independent Person, no voting rights

Apologies for absence:

Councillor Besmira Brasha
Councillor Nicholas Mawer

Also Present:

Councillor Lesley McLean, Deputy Leader and Portfolio Holder for Finance, Property & Regeneration
Councillor Chris Brant, Portfolio Holder for Corporate Services

Also Present Virtually:

Ed Lambert-Martin, Internal Audit - Veritau

Officers:

Shiraz Sheikh, Assistant Director Law & Governance and Monitoring Officer
Joanne Kaye, Head of Finance and Deputy S151 Officer
Patrick Davis, Democratic and Elections Officer

Officers Attending Virtually:

Claire Cox, Assistant Director Human Resources
Ruth Wooldridge, Health and Safety Manager
Mary Denedo, Strategic Finance Business Partner

62

Declarations of Interest

There were no declarations of interest.

63 **Minutes**

The Minutes of the meeting of the Committee held on 19 November 2025 were agreed as a correct record and signed by the Chair.

64 **Chair's Announcements**

There were no Chair's announcements.

65 **Requests to Address the Meeting**

There were no requests to address the meeting.

66 **Urgent Business**

There were no items of urgent business.

(The Chair joined the meeting and took the Chair from the Vice-Chair).

67 **Annual Governance Statement 2024/2025 – Update on Actions**

The Assistant Director Law and Governance and Monitoring Officer submitted a report to consider an update on actions from the Annual Governance Statement 2024/2025.

In introducing the report, the Assistant Director Law & Governance and Monitoring Officer advised the Committee that the Annual Governance Statement was a key part of the Council's governance framework as it helped to identify areas that required improvement and ensured transparency and compliance with good governance principles.

In response to a query regarding the status of the implementation of the strategic site management tool the Committee was informed that although the project was behind schedule good progress was now being made on this as part of the Council's transformation plan.

The Head of Finance undertook to provide more information regarding the mid-point in the financial year forecast overspends in Property, Housing and Wellbeing and Environmental Services.

Resolved

- (1) That the update on the actions arising from the Annual Governance Statement 2024/2025 be noted.

68 **Local Code of Corporate Governance**

The Assistant Director Law & Governance and Monitoring Officer submitted a report to review the Local Code of Corporate Governance. The code was part of the overall system of internal control at the Council and supported the provision of the Annual Governance Statement (AGS) which was approved annually by the Accounts, Audit and Risk Committee.

In introducing the report, the Assistant Director Law & Governance and Monitoring Officer advised the Committee that although it was not a legal requirement, it was best practice for local authorities to have a Local Code of Corporate Governance based on the CIPFA / Solace Framework for Corporate Governance in Local Government. The Code set out and described the Council's commitment to corporate governance and identified arrangements that would ensure its effective implementation and application in all aspects of the Council's work.

Resolved

(1) That the Council's Local Code of Corporate Governance be approved.

69 **Health and Safety Security at Castle Quay Offices**

The Assistant Director Human Resources submitted a report that outlined the new draft Security at Castle Quay Office policy. The policy set out the proposed response to any events occurring in or around the council office at Castle Quay and ensured compliance with current health and safety regulations along with the Terrorism Bill (Martyn's Law).

In introducing the report, the Portfolio Holder for Corporate Services explained the policy had been drafted to reflect new legislation and good practice. It was expected that the policy would be rolled out to Council staff in early 2026.

In response to a question regarding the inclusion of committee meetings in the policy, the Health and Safety Manager agreed that procedures covering all public meetings or events the council holds would be added to the policy. Members were also assured that out of hours first aid was available at the council offices.

Resolved

(1) That the Security at Castle Quay Offices Policy be approved for implementation.

70 **Draft Capital and Investment Treasury Management Strategies 2025/26**

The Assistant Director of Finance (Section 151 Officer) submitted a report for the Committee to consider the draft Capital and Investment Strategy and Treasury Management Strategy for 2026-27 and recommend to Executive.

In introducing the report, the Portfolio Holder for Finance, Property and Regeneration advised that the Strategies were reviewed annually as part of the budget setting process and submitted to the Committee for review, comment and recommendation to the Executive. As part of the 2026-27 review, it was proposed that the operational boundary for debt be reduced from £200M to £199M to reflect a more realistic estimate of the maximum external debt. The updated Capital and Investment Strategy now included the implementation of a Carbon Impact Assessment as part of the appraisal of capital proposals.

In response to a request for an explanation of the affordability ratio, the Committee was advised that this was a comparison between the Ratio of Financing Costs (looking at how much the Council was spending on interest payable and Minimum Revenue Provision charges compared to taxation income streams) and the Ratio of Service Investment Income (which took into account the income received from investments).

In response to a question regarding the use of the Carbon Assessment Matrix in the decision making process for capital projects, the Head of Finance explained that although this was an important factor that would be taken in to account when reviewing proposals, there could potentially be scenarios where a project was given the go ahead despite having a Negative Impact Score (red), for example, if a project was considered critical to the Council or its residents.

In response to a request for treasury management training to be made available to all Councillors, the Monitoring Officer agreed to review this as part of the member training programme.

Resolved

- (1) That the draft Capital and Investment Strategy for 2026-27 and draft Treasury Management Strategy for 2026-27 be recommended to Executive

71 **Review of Committee Work Programme**

The Committee considered its work plan and had no queries or additional items for the Committee Work Plan.

Resolved

- (1) That the work programme update be noted.

The meeting ended at 7.30 pm

Chair:

Date:

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Cherwell District Council

Budget Planning Committee

Minutes of a meeting of the Budget Planning Committee held at 39 Castle Quay, Banbury, OX16 5FD, on 9 December 2025 at 6.30 pm

Present:

Councillor Edward Fraser Reeves (Chair)
Councillor Dom Vaitkus (Vice-Chair)
Councillor Tom Beckett (also, Portfolio Holder for Greener Communities)
Councillor Gordon Blakeway
Councillor Frank Ideh
Councillor Zoe McLernon
Councillor Robert Parkinson (also, Portfolio Holder for Safer Communities)
Councillor Rob Pattenden (also, Portfolio Holder for Healthy Communities)
Councillor Les Sibley
Councillor Barry Wood

Substitute Members:

Councillor Amanda Watkins (In place of Councillor Mark Cherry)

Apologies for absence:

Councillor Mark Cherry
Councillor Andrew Crichton

Also Present:

Councillor David Hingley, Leader of the Council
Councillor Lesley McLean, Deputy Leader and Portfolio Holder for Finance, Regeneration and Property
Councillor Chris Brant, Portfolio Holder for Corporate Services
Councillor Jean Conway, Portfolio Holder for Planning and Development Management
Councillor Nick Cotter, Portfolio Holder for Housing
Councillor Ian Middleton, Portfolio Holder for Neighbourhood Services
Councillor John Broad

Officers:

Nicola Riley, Interim Executive Director Neighbourhood Services
Michael Furness, Assistant Director Finance & S151 Officer
David Peckford, Assistant Director Planning
Joanne Kaye, Head of Finance and Deputy S151 Officer

Matt Swinford, Democratic and Elections Officer
Natasha Clark, Governance and Elections Manager

Officers Attending Virtually:

Gordon Stewart, Chief Executive
Stephen Hinds, Executive Director Resources
Ed Potter, Assistant Director Environmental Services
Mona Walsh, Assistant Director - Property
Tim Hughes, Head of Regulatory Services & Community Safety
Heidi Radcliffe Hill, Interim Head of Chief Executive's Office
Richard Smith, Head of Housing
Tom Darlington, Kidlington Area Lead Officer

20 **Declarations of Interest**

There were no declarations of interest.

21 **Minutes**

The Minutes of the meeting of the Committee held on 16 September 2025 were agreed as a correct record and signed by the Chair.

22 **Chair's Announcements**

There were no Chair's announcements.

23 **Requests to Address the Meeting**

There were no requests to address the meeting.

24 **Urgent Business**

There were no items of urgent business.

25 **Budget Proposals 2026/27 - 2030/31**

The Assistant Director of Finance (S151 Officer) submitted a report that set out the capital bids, investments, efficiencies and income charges for Cherwell District Council for the period 2026/27 to 2030/31.

In introducing the report, the Portfolio Holder for Finance, Regeneration and Property explained that uncertainties around government funding (anticipated business rates reset and fair funding proposals that changed the core funding

that the Council receive), rising costs, and growing demands on services had made planning for the 2026/27 budget and updated Medium Term Financial Strategy (MTFS) very challenging.

The Government's Policy Statement on local government funding for 2026/27 to 2028/29 had been published on 20 November 2025. Whilst it provided an outline of the policy settings that would be used, details of the provisional settlement would not be announced until the week commencing 15 December 2025. At the time of publishing the report, all funding forecasts were based on modelling provided by the council's funding advisors. To balance the budget, consultation on £1.8 million of new savings proposals and operational efficiencies for next year to help mitigate the impact of the funding changes, was underway.

In February 2026, as part of their proposed budget for 2026/27, the Executive would consider feedback from Budget Planning Committee on the budget proposals and consider feedback from the public on the budget consultation. In determining which of the budget proposals would be included in the proposed budget for 2026/27, the Executive would also consider the outcome of the Provisional Local Government Finance Settlement and other resources available through Council Tax and Business Rates.

The Assistant Director of Finance gave a presentation which provided an update on the council's Medium Term Financial Strategy (MTFS). When the current budget had been agreed in February 2025, there was an identified funding gap for 2026/27 of £5 million. Calculating over the MTFS period, the annual ongoing gap of the budget identified £16 million savings would need to be identified.

The Assistant Director of Finance advised that the Council had received confirmation that the grant for 2026/2027 would be of £1.7million, £300k more than was budgeted for in the previous. It was anticipated that this amount would be received on an ongoing basis and £1.7million would therefore be built into the budget and MTFS for future years.

Throughout the year, figures had been revised to reflect improvements, investment proposals and the efficiencies that were currently being consulted on, as well as confirmation in the Government Fairer Funding consultation that a number of grants the council previously received would be rolled into the overall funding to the council. There was a £1.8million improvement in 2026/27 compared to the position in February 2025 and an ongoing impact of £7million.

In response to a question regarding how the council would use any additional monies, if received, under the retained pooling income, the Portfolio Holder for Finance, Regeneration and Property advised that not all information had yet been received. Once the Government had concluded its consultation and finalised and published all information, it would then be know what the financial position would look like for the council and a strategy would be made accordingly.

Executive Portfolio Holders, gave an overview of the pressures, proposed savings, and capital bids by service area within each directorate and answered questions from the Committee, supported by officers.

In response to a question in relation to the Housing capital bid of £3million (CAP2607) to acquire property to serve as temporary accommodation, the Interim Executive Director Neighbourhood Services explained confirmed that this accommodation would not count towards housing revenue account because it would be temporary and no occupancy rights given. Rather occupants would move on to social or private rented accommodation.

In considering Regulatory Services saving of £19k, ERG2061- Regulatory Services Resource Optimisation, which related to work the service had been undertaking to streamline processes and use digital solutions for efficiencies which would result in a saving without any reduction in the service provided to customers and the public, the Portfolio Holder for Safer Communities agreed that a written response with further information on the changes would be provided to Committee members.

In response to a Committee query on the proposed saving in Environmental Services (EEV12601) to explore moving to a three-weekly green bin (residual waste) collection, the Portfolio Holder for Neighbourhood Services confirmed that further benchmarking would be undertaken. The saving would arise from a reduced amount of waste passed to Oxfordshire County Council (OCC) as disposal authority. This would save OCC money on emissions trading and it was hoped that OCC would give CDC money back. Agreement had not yet been reached on this but other Oxfordshire authorities were also considering the same process.

In considering the saving proposal, Committee members noted that whilst it was included in the budget consultation, there should also be a standalone consultation. The Committee commented that it would be useful to have further information on £265k saving.

It was proposed by Councillor Reeves and seconded by Councillor McLernon that the Executive be requested to give consideration to carrying out a specific consultation on the proposed move to a three-weekly residual waste bin collection. On being put to the vote, the motion was carried.

It was proposed by Councillor Reeves and seconded by Councillor Vaitkus that the Executive provide further information to the Committee regarding how the £265k saving (EEV12601, Three-weekly residual waste collections) nets out and was profiled over the MTFS. On being put to the vote, the motion was carried.

In response to queries on the proposal to close the toilets at Pioneer Square, Bicester (EV12605) which were in a convenient location for persons visiting the town, the Assistant Director of Environmental Services advised that toilet facilities in Bicester Town Centre at Claremont car park would be retained and these met Changing Places standards.

In considering Environmental Services saving proposal EEV22601, Reduced frequency of OCC highway verge mowing in Banbury, Bicester and Kidlington, it was proposed by Councillor Wood and seconded by Councillor Sibley that the Executive be requested to give consideration to the amount contributed by Town/Parish Councils, which supplemented the funding provided by the OCC Agency Agreement Grant. On being put to the vote, the motion was carried.

Resolved

- (1) That, having given due consideration, the Budget Planning Committee provide the following feedback to Executive on the capital bids, investments, efficiencies and income changes in the 2026/27 budget proposal.
 - That the Executive be requested to give consideration to carrying out a specific consultation on the proposed move to a three weekly residual waste (green bin) collection (saving reference EEV12601, Three-weekly residual waste collections).
 - That the Budget Planning Committee be provided with further information on how the 265k saving (reference EEV12601, Three-weekly residual waste collections) nets out and is profiled over the MTFS.
 - That the Executive be requested to give consideration to the Town/Parish Council contribution in regard to the proposed saving of reduced frequency of Oxfordshire County Council highways verge mowing (saving reference EEV22601, reduced frequency of OCC highway verge mowing in Banbury, Bicester & Kidlington).

26

Fees and Charges Benchmarking 2026/27

The Assistant Director of Finance (S151 Officer) submitted a report to provide information to the Committee on proposed Fees and Charges as compared to some other districts to feed back to the Executive as part of the 2026/27 Budget and Business Planning Process.

In response to a question on the proposed percentage increase for table and chairs consent, the Head of Regulatory Services and Community Safety advised that a consultation was underway on the new Policy, including the fees. The Leader of the Council confirmed that he would ask the Portfolio Holder would investigate further with officers. The Portfolio Holder for Finance, Regeneration and Property subsequently clarified that the higher uplift was a result of calculating differently,

In response to a comment from the Committee that the proposed car parking fee increase was above inflation (CPI) and query if consideration could be given to providing free parking for up to two hours in council operated car parks, in particular in Bicester, potentially through money earmarked for the market square project, the Portfolio Holder for Finance, Property and Regeneration advised that the market square funding was fairly specific but undertook to look into the matter. The Portfolio Holder for Finance, Property

and Regeneration highlighted that two hours free parking was already available at the Sainsburys car park for in Bicester. Executive would nonetheless consider consultation responses in respect of this, however should any action be taken, there would be an impact on other services as funds would need to be found.

It was proposed by Councillor Sibley and seconded by Councillor Wood that the Executive be requested to give consideration to reducing the proposed increase in car parking fees. On being put to the vote, the motion was lost and subsequently fell.

27

October Monthly Performance Report 2025-2026

The Assistant Director of Finance (Section 151 Officer) submitted a report to update the Committee on the council's financial positions at the end of the financial year 2025/2026 as at 31 October 2025.

In introducing the report, the Portfolio Holder for Finance, Property and Regeneration advised that the year-end revenue position for 2025/26 at the end of October was a projected overspend of £0.400m.

Since September, the overall position had worsened by £0.292m, which was mainly due to increased pressures in Resources of £0.102m and Neighbourhood Services of £0.162m, which reflected rising operational costs and demand pressures. Offsetting these overspends were significant and stable underspends in Executive Matters (£1.269m), Policy Contingency (£1.100m), which together provided a strong mitigating effect against directorate-level increases.

Resolved

- (1) That the report be noted

28

Review of Committee Work Plan

The Committee considered its work plan. Following the discussion under agenda item 8 (Minute 26) on car parking fees Cherwell District Council (CDC) operated car parks, Councillor Sibley requested that an item detailing revenue from car parking fees in CDC operated car parks be submitted to the 10 March 2026 meeting. The Chair and Vice-Chair undertook to liaise with officers to agree the scope of the item.

Resolved

That, subject to a Committee request for an additional item, a report on the fee revenue from Cherwell District Council operated car parks to the 10 March 2026 meeting, the work programme be noted.

The meeting ended at 8.51 pm

Chair:

Date:

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Cherwell District Council

Budget Planning Committee

Minutes of a meeting of the Budget Planning Committee held at 39 Castle Quay, Banbury, OX16 5FD, on 20 January 2026 at 6.30 pm

Present:

Councillor Edward Fraser Reeves (Chair)
Councillor Dom Vaitkus (Vice-Chair)
Councillor Tom Beckett
Councillor Mark Cherry
Councillor Andrew Crichton
Councillor Frank Ideh
Councillor Robert Parkinson
Councillor Rob Pattenden
Councillor Les Sibley
Councillor Barry Wood

Substitute Members:

Councillor David Rogers (In place of Councillor Zoe McLernon)

Apologies for absence:

Councillor Gordon Blakeway
Councillor Zoe McLernon

Also Present:

Councillor Lesley McLean, Deputy Leader and Portfolio Holder for Finance, Regeneration and Property

Officers:

Michael Furness, Assistant Director Finance & S151 Officer
Joanne Kaye, Head of Finance and Deputy S151 Officer
Matt Swinford, Democratic and Elections Officer

29 **Declarations of Interest**

There were no declarations of interest.

30 **Minutes**

The Minutes of the meeting of the Committee held on 9 December 2025 were agreed as a correct record and signed by the Chair.

31 **Chair's Announcements**

There were no Chair's announcements.

32 **Requests to Address the Meeting**

There were no requests to address the meeting.

33 **Urgent Business**

There were no items of urgent business.

34 **Capital and Investment Strategy 2026-27**

The Assistant Director of Finance (S151 Officer) submitted a report for the Committee to consider the draft Capital Strategy and Investment strategy for 2026-27 and recommend to the Executive.

In introducing the report, the Portfolio Holder for Finance, Property and Regeneration advised the Committee that the Capital Strategy and Investment Strategy must be approved by Full Council annually and must satisfy the requirements of government legislation and CIPFA guidance.

The Portfolio Holder for Finance, Property and Regeneration gave an overview of the key changes in the 2026-27 Strategy, explaining that the annual Minimum revenue provision statement had been expanded in line with new statutory guidance and the operation boundary had been reviewed and reduced from £200m to £199m.

In response to a question from the Committee on the reported spend of £3m to purchase temporary accommodation, the Assistant Director of Finance explained that the local authorities were seeing a trend in increased need for temporary accommodation and the proposal would help reduce potential pressures in future years. This indicated there was a clear business case for the purchase of property to be used for temporary accommodation.

The Assistant Director of Finance (S151 Officer) responded to a question from the Committee regarding the revised CIPFA Prudential Code for Capital Finance which stated that the Council cannot borrow for commercial purposes. This meant that the Council may only borrow funds for purposes that clearly demonstrated that it was linked with the priorities of the Council.

Resolved

- (1) That the Committee recommends the draft Capital and Investment Strategy for 2026/27 to the Executive.

35 **Review of Reserves**

The Assistant Director of Finance (S151 Officer) submitted a report to update the Committee on the review of reserves that had taken place in preparation of the budget for 2026/27 and the Medium-Term Financial Strategy (MTFS) 2025/26 – 2030/31.

In introducing the report, the Portfolio Holder for Finance, Property and Regeneration advised the Committee that an annual review of the council's reserves was undertaken as part of the budget setting process to ensure the council maintained a prudent level of reserves over the medium term. Following assessment by the Chief Finance Officer, the Council's General Fund Reserve was proposed to be increased from £7.852m to £8.011m for 2026/27.

In response to a question from the Committee regarding funds that may need to be used for possible planning appeals in the future, the Portfolio Holder for Finance, Property and Regeneration confirmed that the Executive were mindful of possible financial challenges from future planning appeals and were in conversation with officers involved regarding mitigation.

Resolved

- (1) That the outcome of the review of reserves and the forecast over the Medium-Term Financial Strategy period be noted.
- (2) That Executive be advised that the Committee supports the draft reserve allocations.

36 **November Monthly Performance Report 2025-2026**

The Assistant Director of Finance (S151 Officer) submitted a report which updated the committee of the council's financial position at the end of the financial year 2025/2026 as at November 2025.

In introducing the report, the Portfolio Holder for Finance, Regeneration and Property advised the Committee that the year-end forecast position for 2025/26 was projected to be an overspend of £0.609m. This was an increase of £0.209m compared to the year-end forecast at Period 7.

The Portfolio Holder for Finance, Regeneration and Property explained that the largest variances were within Neighbourhood Services which included Environmental Services, Wellbeing and Housing.

In response to a question from the Committee in relation to the increase of the forecast overspend and if the budget was optimistic when set, the Assistant Director of Finance explained that ideally there would not be an overspend however, in reality, the situation arises and therefore mitigation measures were being explored.

Resolved

(1) That the report be noted.

37 **Exclusion of Press and Public**

There being no questions on the exempt appendix, it was not necessary to exclude the press and public.

38 **November Monthly Performance Report 2025-2026 - Exempt Appendix**

There being no specific questions on the exempt appendix, it had been noted as part of agenda item 9 (Minute 36).

39 **Readmittance of the Public and Press**

This item was not required as the press and public had not been excluded from the meeting.

40 **Review of Committee Work Plan**

In considering the Committee Work Plan, no queries were raised or additional items put forward.

Resolved

(1) That the work programme be noted.

The meeting ended at 7.18 pm

Chair:

Date:

Cherwell District Council

General Licensing Committee

Minutes of a meeting of the General Licensing Committee held at 39 Castle Quay, Banbury, OX16 5FD, on 22 October 2025 at 6.30 pm

Present:

Councillor Rebecca Biegel (Chair)

Councillor Nick Cotter

Councillor Dr Henry Elugwu

Councillor Lesley McLean

Councillor Ian Middleton

Councillor Chris Pruden

Councillor Douglas Webb

Councillor John Willett

Councillor Barry Wood

Substitute Members:

Councillor Simon Lytton (In place of Councillor Robert Parkinson)

Councillor David Rogers (In place of Councillor Fiaz Ahmed)

Apologies for absence:

Councillor Fiaz Ahmed

Councillor Phil Chapman

Councillor Robert Parkinson

Officers:

Jan Southgate, Health Protection, Compliance & Licensing Manager

Christine Pegler, Lead Licensing Enforcement Officer

Amanda Ward, Licensing Enforcement Officer

Sian Parsons, Licensing Technical Officer

Saba Ahmed, Trainee Solicitor

Aaron Hetherington, Principal Officer - Electoral Services Lead

Patrick Davis, Democratic and Elections Officer

Officers Attending Virtually:

Denzil Turbervill, Head of Legal Services

3 Declarations of Interest

There were no declarations of interest

4 **Minutes**

The Minutes of the meetings of the Committee held on 15 April 2025 and 21 May 2025 were agreed as correct records and signed by the Chair.

5 **Chair's Announcements**

There were no Chair's Announcements.

6 **Urgent Business**

There were no items of urgent business.

7 **New Cherwell District Council Taxi Licensing Policy**

The Health Protection, Compliance and Licensing Manager submitted a report to seek approval from the General Licensing Committee for the New Cherwell District Council Taxi Licensing Policy.

In introducing the report, the Health Protection, Compliance and Licensing Manager outlined the changes that has been made to the policy following the outcome of the initial consultation.

In introducing the report, the Health Protection, Compliance and Licensing Manager explained that the new draft policy introduced changes which were designed to bring the Council's policy more in-line with the current Department of Transport guidance, improve safety, inclusion, compliance and enhance incentives for cleaner vehicles. A consultation had taken place in the summer and all feedback considered which resulted in several changes to the draft policy.

In response to questions regarding wheelchair accessible vehicles, the Committee was advised that there were currently fifty wheelchair accessible vehicles registered and the Council was trying to increase this number by offering incentives such as longer vehicle age limits.

In the course of the discussion, Committee members queried the status of vehicles operating in the Cherwell area that were licensed by other local authorities which would have different policies and standards. The Health Protection, Compliance and Licensing Manager explained that legislation did not prevent this and it was not just an issue in the Cherwell district. The Committee requested that, if possible, their concerns were relayed to the relevant Central Government departments.

In response to concerns raised by the Committee relating to the increase in the age limit for vehicles, it was explained that Department of Transport best practice recommended removing vehicle age limits altogether which meant the Council's policy was stricter than national guidance.

Following a question regarding the potential use of video capture or CCTV systems in vehicles, the Committee was advised that this was not a requirement of the new policy as it was difficult to implement the sealed systems that were compliant with legislation to prevent tampering of evidence. The Committee was assured that the current vetting system of drivers was extremely robust.

In response to a question regarding the fee to process taxi licences across different councils, the Health Protection, Compliance and Licensing Manager explained that Cherwell's fees were based on cost recovery and were similar to other councils in Oxfordshire. Whilst some local authorities did charge less, it was not possible to comment on the rationale applied by these authorities.

Following questions surrounding the process of revoking licences, the Health Protection, Compliance and Licensing Manager clarified the process and advised that details of revoked licences was shared with other authorities via a national database to ensure a driver could not obtain a licence in another local authority area. The council's internal points system was being tightened so that points remained on the driver's record for three years rather than the current one year period.

Resolved

- (1) That the post consultation Cherwell District Council Taxi Licensing Policy be approved for adoption by Cherwell District Council.

8 New Cherwell District Council Street Trading Policy

The Health Protection, Compliance and Licensing Manager submitted a report for the Committee to consider and agree a draft Street Trading Policy for consultation with Oxfordshire Country Council as the Highways Authority, Thames Valley Police, Environmental Health, Fire Authority, along with other Stakeholders including Current Licensees, Local Ward Councillors, and Parish and Town councils. Following consultation and any changes deemed necessary, the Policy would be submitted to the Committee for approval.

In introducing the report, the Health Protection, Compliance and Licensing Manager explained that the current Street Trading Policy was last reviewed in 2019. A new draft Street Trading Policy had been produced which was more comprehensive, reflected changes in legislation, guidance issued to local authorities and incorporated new standard conditions. The new draft Street Trading Policy also removed pavement licensing as this was now covered by different legislation. A draft Pavement Licence Policy would be considered at the next agenda item.

In response to a question, the Health Protection, Compliance and Licensing Manager confirmed that the Street Trading Policy applied to both static and mobile street traders. As part of the application process, the new policy

contained a requirement for consultation with businesses and residents within 100 metres of where the proposed trading would take place.

Resolved

- (1) That the new draft Cherwell District Council Street Trading Policy be approved for consultation with the trade and members of the public.

9

New Cherwell District Council Pavement Licence Policy

The Health Protection, Compliance and Licensing Manager submitted a report which presented a draft Pavement Licence Policy for consultation with Oxfordshire County Council as the Highways Authority, Thames Valley Police, Environmental Health, Fire Authority, along with other Stakeholders including Current Licensees, Local Ward Councillors, and Parish and Town councils. Following consultation and any changes deemed necessary, the Policy would be submitted to the Committee for approval.

In introducing the report, the Licensing Enforcement Officer explained that whilst there was no statutory requirement to have a Pavement Licensing Policy, having a transparent Policy was good practice. The Council's current Pavement Permits (Tables & Chairs) policy was part of the combined Street Trading Policy and had last been reviewed in 2019. The new draft Pavement Licence Policy was a standalone policy that reflected current legislation. A review of the fee structure had also been undertaken.

In response to a question regarding the proposed new fees that would be applicable from the 2026/27 financial year, the Licensing Enforcement Officer explained that fees were set locally, and it was for each licensing authority to determine the charge. Fees were capped at a maximum charge of £500 for first time applications and £350 for renewal applications. The Licensing Authority had reviewed costs associated with granting Pavement Licences for a maximum of two years resulting in the proposed fees based on cost recovery, £242.50 for new applications and £182.50 for renewals. The fees would be consistent for all applicants.

In response to Members' comments regarding the use of vapes which was not included in the draft Pavement Licence Policy, the Committee was advised that regulations relating to the use of vapes were not explicitly included in the existing smoke free legislation and could therefore not be included in the Policy.

In response to a question relating to how the space requested for outdoor seating was defined, the Licensing Enforcement Officer explained that the application process required submission of a site plan with clear measurements showing the relevant boundaries for which consent was sought.

Resolved

- (1) That the new draft Pavement Licensing Policy be approved for consultation to ensure that it reflects the current Government guidance, and input from relevant consultees.

The meeting ended at 8.10 pm

Chair:

Date:

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Cherwell District Council

Overview and Scrutiny Committee

Minutes of a meeting of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee held at 39 Castle Quay, Banbury, OX16 5FD, on 11 November 2025 at 6.30 pm

Present:

Councillor Phil Chapman (Vice-Chair in the Chair, minute 29)
Councillor David Rogers (Chair, minute 30 onwards)
Councillor Dr Isabel Creed (Vice-Chair minute 31 onwards)
Councillor John Broad
Councillor Gemma Coton
Councillor Frank Ideh
Councillor Simon Lytton
Councillor Lynne Parsons
Councillor Dom Vaitkus

Substitute Members:

Councillor Fiaz Ahmed (In place of Councillor Barry Wood)

Apologies for absence:

Councillor Gordon Blakeway
Councillor Harry Knight
Councillor Barry Wood

Also Present:

Councillor David Hingley, Leader of the Council
Councillor Rob Pattenden, Portfolio Holder for Healthy Communities

Also Present Virtually:

Councillor Robert Parkinson, Portfolio Holder for Safer Communities

Officers:

Nicola Riley, Interim Executive Director Neighbourhood Services
Michael Furness, Assistant Director Finance & S151 Officer
Ed Potter, Assistant Director Environmental Services
Tim Hughes, Head of Regulatory Services & Community Safety
Celia Prado-Teeling, Performance Team Leader
Neil Whitton, Environmental Protection and Enforcement Manager
Emma Faulkner, Principal Officer - Scrutiny and Democratic Lead
Martyn Surfleet, Democratic and Elections Officer

Officers Attending Virtually:

Susan Asbury, Safeguarding Officer

29 **Appointment of Chair**

It was proposed by Councillor Lytton and seconded by Councillor Creed that Councillor Rogers be elected Chair of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee for the remainder of the municipal year 2025/2026.

There were no further nominations.

Resolved

- (1) That Councillor David Rogers be elected Chair of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee for the remainder of the 2025/2026 Municipal Year.

30 **Appointment of Vice-Chair (if required)**

Councillor Phil Chapman resigned the role of Vice-Chair, and the committee were asked to nominate a new Vice-Chair for the remainder of the municipal year.

It was proposed by Councillor Creed and seconded by Councillor Vaitkus that Councillor Creed be elected Vice-Chair of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee for the remainder of the 2025/2026 Municipal Year.

There were no further nominations.

Resolved

- (1) That Councillor Dr Isabel Creed be elected Vice-Chair of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee for the remainder of the 2025/2026 Municipal Year.

31 **Declarations of Interest**

There were no declarations of interest.

32 **Minutes**

The Minutes of the meeting of the Committee held on 09 September 2025 were agreed as a correct record and signed by the Chair.

33 **Chair's Announcements**

There were no Chair's announcements.

34 **Urgent Business**

There were no items of urgent business.

35 **Performance Monitoring Report Quarter 2 2025 - 2026**

The Committee considered a report from the Assistant Director – Finance that detailed the council's performance position at the end of quarter 2 2025-2026.

In introducing the report, the Portfolio Holder for Corporate Services advised that the Council was performing well against its quarter 2 objectives, with 89% of measures on target or within tolerance.

Out of the 36 total measures, 4 reported red, 13 were amber and 19 were green. On the annual delivery plan there were 18 milestones to deliver in quarter 2, 8 of which had been achieved or were within the agreed tolerance, and 10 slightly behind target.

Members were also advised that of the 11 targeted corporate key performance indicators, 5 achieved their Q2 target or reported within the agreed tolerance, and 2 reported slightly behind target, and 4 were red.

In response to a question regarding indicator BP1.2.10, % of major planning applications overturned at appeal, and what work the Executive were doing to address the Council's high percentage of appeals, the Assistant Director Planning reminded the Committee of the spotlight scrutiny working group that had met at the start of the calendar year. A full response was due for consideration by the Executive shortly and would then be reported to this Committee. Members were also reminded that the Planning Advisory Service had reviewed the council's decision making in May and a report had been received in August. The report would be published in due course.

The Assistant Director Planning also explained to Members that work was due to commence to rectify how the data within the performance report was presented regarding % of major applications overturned at appeal, due to complications regarding the reporting periods. Performance of planning applications was monitored nationally over a two financial year period, with an additional 9 months added to allow for appeal decisions to come through. This meant that the Council was currently being monitored for the periods April 2023 to March 2025, April 2024 to March 2026, and April 2025 to March 2027. Officers were discussing how best to present the information to accurately reflect the performance over the national monitoring period.

In response to a question regarding paragraph 4.4.1 - average time to process new Housing Benefit claims and Council Tax Reduction applications,

and how many applications exceeded the 18 day maximum, the Assistant Director of Finance agreed to circulate a detailed response after the meeting. Members were advised that officers monitored claims on a monthly basis, and any that were over and above the 18 day maximum were investigated to understand what had caused the delays.

In response to a further question regarding paragraph 4.4.1 - agreements for lease for two new lettings at Castle Quay, and how many units remain unoccupied, the Assistant Director of Finance explained that they did not currently have those figures to hand and that officers would follow up with a written response to members.

In response to a question regarding BP1.2.05, % of Homelessness cases successfully prevented, indicator reporting as red, and what measures were in place to improve this measure, the Interim Executive Director Neighbourhood Services explained that the council reported 50% of successful preventions against a target of 60%. The Interim Executive Director Neighbourhood Services agreed to provide further written detail after the meeting regarding the number of residents that had been taken on as part of the Council's statutory homelessness duty during the quarter.

In response to a question regarding paragraph 4.3.3 - Net Additional Housing Completions to meet Cherwell needs, and what percentage of the housing yet to be delivered comprised of affordable housing, and whether priority could be given to the delivery of affordable housing, the Assistant Director Planning explained that as the Council was half way through its reporting period and as the data had yet to be reconciled they were not able to comment on the current amount of affordable housing completions.

In response to a question regarding housing delivery and the Council's 5 year housing supply and what steps were being taken to ensure that housing completions were achieved, the Assistant Director Planning explained that the Council's delivery figures reflected national trends and the health of the housing market. The Assistant Director Planning reassured the Committee that there were currently 11,000 homes with planning permission, which indicated the issue was with building the homes rather than land being released for development. The Council had a Housing Delivery Action Plan and a new Local Plan that was due for examination, and both would help alleviate the pressures on housing delivery in the district.

Resolved

- (1) That having given due consideration, the Council's Performance Monitoring Report Quarter 2 2025 - 2026 performance be noted, and no comments be submitted for Executive consideration.

Cherwell District Council Safeguarding Self-Assessment

The Committee considered a report from the Interim Executive Director Neighbourhood Services detailing the progress made on safeguarding measures and activity across Cherwell District Council.

In introducing the report, the Portfolio Holder for Healthy Communities advised members that this was an annual report that highlighted the Council's dedication to providing rigorous and thorough training to staff that encouraged professional curiosity and aided members and officers to report situations that required further investigation.

Members then considered a presentation from the Deputy Designated Safeguarding Lead further detailing the Safeguarding Self-Assessment and changes to the Safeguarding Partnership. Members were advised that as a result of these changes, the Safeguarding Self-Assessment was put on hold for 2025, whilst in its place a Professional Curiosity Survey was undertaken, and feedback from the Learning From Reviews workshop documents were reviewed.

In response to a question regarding multi-organisational involvement in complex safeguarding cases and the potential for individuals to be overlooked by the system, the interim Executive Director Neighbourhood Services explained that Oxfordshire as a whole was confident in its processes for responding and learning from such cases. Members were advised that the Safeguarding Partnership focused on a family approach to ensure that cases were handled with consideration to the wider family unit and encompassed a multifaceted approach from organisations within the partnership.

In response to a question regarding the Oxfordshire Annual Safeguarding Report and the next steps to tackle the higher demand and growing complexity of issues as a result of a more rigorous reporting process, and targeted mental health support for those in need, the interim Executive Director Neighbourhood Services explained that, the Oxfordshire annual safeguarding report was a report of the safeguarding partnership to which the Council was a part of and provided input. Members were also advised that the Council was focused on a unilateral approach to safeguarding and that the Council worked closely with the Health and Wellbeing Board, the Health Improvement Board as well as the Integrated Care Board to provide support to ensure the wellbeing of residents.

In response to a question regarding the link between children and adults social care and the associated safeguarding concerns that were linked to the transition between them at the age of 18, the interim Executive Director Neighbourhood Services explained that now that the Council was focused on a one partnership practice, this would lead to a more cohesive approach to the bridge between child and adult social care.

In response to a question regarding the increase in reports of domestic violence and what protocols were in place to handle this rise, the interim Executive Director Neighbourhood Services explained that the figures

represented the total reports made by officers via the See it, Report it system, where they had concerns about possible domestic violence incidents. Not all reports made were subsequently reported to Thames Valley Police for a variety of reasons, and in some instances the cases reported via the SIRI system were not domestic violence.

It was suggested by the interim Executive Director Neighbourhood Services and endorsed by members that the following actions would be proposed for future Safeguarding briefings:

- To provide continued opportunities for staff learning and member development around safeguarding.
- To provide further details on safeguarding data either within the quarterly performance report or as a separate report should that be necessary.

Resolved

- (1) That having given due consideration, the Council's Report on Safeguarding and the annual return be noted.
- (2) That the proposed actions for future Safeguarding briefings for Members be supported;
 - i. Provide continued opportunities for staff learning and member development around safeguarding.
 - ii. To provide further details on safeguarding data either within the quarterly performance report or as a separate report should that be necessary.

37

Kerbside Glass Collection Service

The Committee considered a report from the Assistant Director Environmental Services and Corporate Director Communities detailing options for Kerbside glass collection, and other new requirements driven by the Environment Act.

In introducing the report, the Leader of the Council & Portfolio Holder for Strategic Leadership, highlighted that he was delighted to announce that the Executive was supporting the introduction of kerbside glass recycling collection, fulfilling a long term desire from residents of the district.

In further introducing the report, the Assistant Director Environmental Services explained that due to legislative changes, by April 2026 councils were required to provide residents kerbside collections of paper, cardboard, cans, plastic bottles, and glass.

Members were also advised of the Deposit Return Scheme and the Extended Producer Responsibility scheme, which would introduce refundable deposits for drinks containers, as well as greater responsibility for packaging producers to reimburse councils for collection and treatment costs.

Members were also advised of the Emissions Trading Scheme that would target energy from waste plants and would pose increased costs for processing of non-recyclable waste, and therefore an emphasis would be placed on encouraging and facilitating recycling practices for residents and businesses in the district.

In response to a question regarding kerbside collection of glass, and whether residents would be able to place glass in their blue bins or would they require a dedicated glass bin, the Assistant Director Environmental Services explained that there was a potential for residents to require an additional separate receptacle for some recycled items in the future, however initially glass could go in the existing blue bin. As recycling trends shift going forward due to initiatives such as the Deposit Return Scheme, the amount and type of material residents had to recycle could change. More detail on the various schemes was expected during 2026, which would help the Council plan to meet those needs.

In response to a question regarding what the Council was doing to encourage positive behavioural changes in residents regarding waste collection, the Assistant Director Environmental Services explained that ongoing consultation with members and residents was needed over the next 18 months regarding the format of waste collection services. Possible changes in residual waste collection would potentially encourage further usage of recycling services, as well as the food waste collection service.

In response to a question regarding plans for the bottle banks in the wake of kerbside collection of glass recycling, and whether the relation between bottle banks and fly tipping had been considered, Assistant Director Environmental Services explained that bottle banks would be removed from problem areas first, and then from other areas across the wider district. Specific timeframes for the removal of all banks wasn't currently known, as it would depend on how quickly people altered their habits with disposing of glass. The Assistant Director Environmental Services confirmed that associated signage and communications with residents would be used to notify of the changes.

In response to a question regarding whether consideration was given to the impact of the removal of bottle banks on other collection banks such as textile and charity collections at the same locations, the Assistant Director Environmental Services explained that it was highly likely that other collection banks would be removed alongside the bottle banks due to issues with collection and associated fly tipping.

Regarding whether the Council had made plans relating to publicity for textile recycling if specific collection banks were removed, the Assistant Director Environmental Services explained that as the Council had made efforts to expand its collection services in the past to include batteries and small

electrical items, it was not unlikely that if there was a need for kerbside textile collection then it could be considered.

In response to a question regarding the potential loss of income resulting from the lack of separation of more valuable coloured glass at bottles banks, the Assistant Director Environmental Services explained that prices for glass fluctuate and that there would be repercussions from no longer colour separating glass. However, glass would be separated by colour at processing centres and there would still be an income for the Council. On the whole the glass industry was positive about the changes being made to glass recycling.

In response to a question regarding the value of the potential loss of income, the Assistant Director Environmental Services explained that as the wholesale prices for glass was set by global trends that it was subject to change, and in recent years had fluctuated from £20 to £100 per tonne. On average glass collection within the district was currently around 3,500 tonnes and the current value was £70 per tonne.

In response to a question regarding the potential lack of uptake of the Deposit Return Scheme with residents as a result of low deposits not being perceived as worthwhile, the Assistant Director Environmental Services explained that the uptake would very much depend on the value of the deposits set, and a higher value would incentivise returns of recyclable goods under the scheme.

Resolved

- (1) That having given due consideration, the Kerbside Glass Collection Service report be noted.

38

Flytipping Presentation

The Committee considered a presentation from the Head of Regulatory Services and Community Safety and the Environmental Protection and Enforcement Manager that detailed issues related to fly tipping in Cherwell and how the Council responded to and investigated cases of fly tipping.

In introducing the presentation, the Head of Regulatory Services and Community Safety explained that fly tipping was handled by both Regulatory Services and Environmental Enforcement teams, and that as well as fly tipping reports they also investigated issues with commercial and domestic waste accumulation, dog fouling and abandoned vehicles.

Members were advised that fly tipping was a national issue, that was on an upward trend, but comparatively Cherwell was trending below average against other comparable Councils. National reports of fly tipping had increased by 6% in 2023-24, going from 1.085 million to 1.15 million instances in 2022/23. 60% of those reported fly tips, 688,000, involved household waste, an increase of 5% on the 2022/23 figures of 654,000

Members were also advised that the Council and its officers employed a range of responses to fly tipping offences, from fixed penalty notices to community protection notices and out of court settlements. The Council were operating a proactive approach to deterring and preventing incidences of fly tipping, by means of increased officer presence, use of CCTV cameras to catch and deter, improvements to reporting software and channels as well as the removal of bottle banks which were often targets for such activities. It was also mentioned that efforts to educate residents and businesses of the available waste collection services as well as the implications of fly tipping and illegal waste disposal.

In response to a question regarding the recent report of a very large incident of fly tipping on the River Cherwell in Kidlington and what measures were being taken to deal with it, the Environmental Protection and Enforcement Manager explained that due to the scale and nature of the case that it was being treated as an illegal land fill site and that investigations were ongoing alongside the Environment Agency Officers would provide a written update to members after the meeting detailing the situation and progress so far.

In response to a question regarding fly tipping on roadsides and who was responsible for the clearances in such areas, the Environmental Protection and Enforcement Manager explained that waste deposited on County Council roads was handled by Cherwell District Council, but waste on motorways such as the M40 was handled by contractors on behalf of the Highways Agency.

In response to a question regarding the prioritisation of urban versus rural fly tipping and whether priority was given to known areas prone to frequent incidents of illegal waste disposal, the Environmental Protection and Enforcement Manager explained that work was underway to analyse incidents on a ward by ward basis to identify target areas, with efforts being given to improving reporting software to enable an emphasis on an evidence led approach that would be needed to ensure that data was being collated to assist in identifying and prosecuting offenders.

In response to a question regarding business waste removal licenses and whether all businesses within the district held the appropriate licenses, the Environmental Protection and Enforcement Manager explained that licenses relating to the collection, processing and disposal of waste were issued and managed by the Environment Agency, and that also extended to any enforcement powers under those licences.

In response to a question relating to bulky waste amnesties and collection events and whether or not they were successful in tackling illegal dumping of waste, the Head of Regulatory Services and Community Safety explained that such events were of mixed success and often resulted in encouraging fly tipping in the areas holding the events and causing more costs for the removal of said waste.

In response to a question regarding whether increasing the volume of public bins would help with the issue of littering, the Environmental Protection and Enforcement Manager explained that public bins were the responsibility of

Town and Parish Councils, and that the collection was often undertaken by the Cherwell District Council, but the issue of littering was a behavioural issue and that providing more bins would be costly and not necessarily fix the issue.

In response to a question regarding officer attendance at Parish Liaison meetings, and whether that would be a good route for dissemination of information relating to waste disposal, the Head of Regulatory Services and Community Safety said the team would look into attending going forward.

In a response to a question regarding the role of Town and Parish Councils in aiding in reporting of fly tipping, the Head of Regulatory Services and Community Safety explained that any form of additional reporting would be welcomed and that building relationships with Town and Parish Councils was a priority in tackling localised fly tipping.

Resolved

- (1) That having given due consideration, the Fly tipping presentation be noted.

39 **Work Programme Update**

The Principal Officer - Scrutiny and Democratic Lead provided an update on the Committee's Work Programme 2025 – 2026.

Members were advised that the Cherwell Futures Programme had been moved from the December meeting to January 2026, to allow for full consideration of the Police and Crime Commissioner and Chief Constable Thames Valley Police Attendance scheduled for the December meeting.

Members were also advised that the recommendations from the Working Groups from the last municipal year had been formally submitted to the Executive in October, and that the Executive would be considering the responses at their December meeting. The responses would be submitted to the January meeting of the Overview and Scrutiny committee.

Resolved

- (1) That having given due consideration, the Work Programme 2025 – 2026 update be noted.

The meeting ended at 8.45 pm

Chair:

Date:

Cherwell District Council

Overview and Scrutiny Committee

Minutes of a meeting of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee held at 39 Castle Quay, Banbury, OX16 5FD, on 16 December 2025 at 6.30 pm

Present:

Councillor David Rogers (Chair)

Councillor Gordon Blakeway

Councillor John Broad

Councillor Gemma Coton

Councillor Frank Ideh

Councillor Simon Lytton

Councillor Lynne Parsons

Councillor Dom Vaitkus

Apologies for absence:

Councillor Dr Isabel Creed (Vice-Chair)

Councillor Phil Chapman

Councillor Harry Knight

Also Present:

Councillor Robert Parkinson, Portfolio Holder for Safer Communities

Matthew Barber, Thames Valley Police and Crime Commissioner

Chief Constable Jason Hogg, Thames Valley Police

Chief Superintendent Ben Clarke, Thames Valley Police

Also Present Virtually:

Councillor Barry Wood

Councillor Ian Middleton, Portfolio Holder for Neighbourhood Services

Councillor Julian Nedelcu

Councillor Alisa Russell

Councillor Les Sibley

Officers:

Gordon Stewart, Chief Executive

Shiraz Sheikh, Assistant Director Law & Governance and Monitoring Officer

Nicola Riley, Interim Executive Director Neighbourhood Services

Tim Hughes, Head of Regulatory Services & Community Safety

Emma Faulkner, Principal Officer - Scrutiny and Democratic Lead

Martyn Surfleet, Democratic and Elections Officer

40 **Declarations of Interest**

There were no declarations of interest.

41 **Minutes**

The Minutes of the meeting of the Committee held on 11 November 2025 were agreed as a correct record and signed by the Chair.

42 **Chairman's Announcements**

There were no Chair's announcements.

43 **Urgent Business**

There were no items of urgent business.

44 **Crime and Disorder Scrutiny - Cherwell Safer Communities Partnership and Thames Valley Police**

The Chair welcomed the Police and Crime Commissioner for Thames Valley, Matthew Barber, Chief Constable Jason Hogg and Superintendent Ben Clark, Thames Valley Police, to the meeting.

The committee considered a presentation from the Head of Regulatory Services and Community Safety on the Cherwell Community Safety Partnership (CCSP) detailing its duties and responsibilities. Members were informed of the make-up of the partnership and its six statutory partners as well as other permanent members.

The presentation also provided an overview of the Safer Oxfordshire Partnership (SOP), and the Strategic Needs Assessment of the CCSP.

Members were updated on the CCSP's for 2025-2026 that identified six priority areas;

- Antisocial behaviour
- Modern slavery and exploitation
- Violence against women and girls (VAWG)
- Serious violence
- Domestic abuse
- Retail crime

Members were also updated on activities and interventions of the CCSP and Office of the Police and Crime Commissioner (OPCC) within Cherwell and Oxfordshire as a whole detailing the multi-agency partnership working undertaken to tackle issues such as domestic abuse, antisocial behaviour, and safeguarding children.

The Police and Crime Commissioner began his presentation by referencing the recent Government announcement regarding the planned abolishment of the Police and Crime Commissioner role, and assured members that work would continue for the remainder of the term of office.

Members were advised that police staffing numbers had increased significantly due to a successful and ongoing recruitment drive, with a focus on neighbourhood policing having trebled officer numbers over a 3 year period.

Members were advised that increased funding for services was being sought to bolster and maintain this growth in employment of police officers. As government funding was directed to recruiting police officers, pressures still remained with regards to other back of house and front line staff such as call handlers and Police Community Support Officers (PCSOs).

Members were advised of the work to reduce call wait times for non-emergency calls to 101 as part of the Crime Fighters Strategy, taking an average of 7-8 Minutes to answer calls to a new average of 1 minute53 seconds within the previous 6 months, and as of November being reported as low as 46 seconds.

Members attention was drawn to the new introduction of a new A.I. chat bot "Bobbi" launched on the UK Police website with the aim to provide advice and support to the public for non-emergency police inquiries. And that this was part of a wider initiative regarding digital reporting of incidents such as anti-social behaviour that may fall between organisations, with the aim to improve and streamline public engagement with both the Police and Councils through a dedicated case management software.

In response to a question regarding the enforcement of speed restrictions within the County, and the increase in fixed camera offences contrasted by the reduction in mobile enforcement actions leading to the potential for reduced enforcement overall, the Police and Crime Commissioner explained that the enforcement of speed restrictions was an operational matter for the Police, and that enforcement took a multiple approach strategy that incorporated a variety of enforcement activities across the police service.

In response to a question regarding rural crime and the theft of GPS units on farm equipment and whether any progress had been made in reducing incidents, the Police and Crime Commissioner explained that legislative changes were needed for the enforcement of such crimes, and that the Equipment Theft (Prevention) Act 2023 had been introduced to tackle the issue, but broader measures were being sought to strengthen enforcement powers.

The Chief Constable gave a presentation which provided more details on neighbourhood policing, focusing on workforce statistics, stating that the Thames Valley Police were fully staffed but were still behind on officers per population figures, and that this was a national trend. Members were also

advised that as a result of targeted recruitment schemes 48% of the workforce were women, and that 45% of new recruits were female leading to workforce more representative of its community.

The Chief Constable highlighted to members the results of the force review restructure a cost saving scheme that resulted in the creation of five local command units for Oxfordshire resulting in clear lines of accountability, more resilient commands from dedicated Chief Superintendent oversight, and more dynamic deployment of resources across the region.

The Chief Superintendent provided the Committee with more details on some of the operations currently taking place to reduce hate crime, anti-social behaviour, and retail theft in the Cherwell district. The Committee was advised that modern crime had evolved in the wake of digital innovations, and that emphasis was being placed on targeting online retail scams, sale of stolen items and wider misinformation and cyber harassment and often involved a highly targeted approach working with other agencies and partners.

In response to a question regarding whether TVP were in discussions to legalise E-Scooters and recognise E-Bikes as mopeds to bring both into the legal framework, the Police and Crime Commissioner explained that TVP were in consultation with industry partners as well as the Department for Transport on ways to regularise public use of private E-bikes and E-Scooters in a safe and legal way.

In response to a question regarding data on how many vehicles and goods had been recovered to their rightful owners, the Chief Superintendent explained the recovery and reuniting of goods with their original and rightful owners was complicated due to many factors such as no claimants coming forward or identifying which particular retail store goods were taken from. Members were advised that the police database did log instances of recoveries of property, it was not a data set widely published by forces nationwide and that more detailed information on vehicle recoveries were provided by the Motor Insurance Bureau.

In response to a question regarding how, in light of recent public scandals within the Metropolitan Police, Thames Valley Police managed staff conduct, and internal scrutiny of professional practices, with particular reference to the influx of new officers from the rise in recruitment, the Chief Constable explained that the force focused on a robust internal reporting system and infrastructure where staff were supported and encouraged to challenge and report problematic behaviour. Members were also advised that dismissals of officers for poor conduct were taken seriously and handled on a regular basis to ensure a high standard of conduct within the force.

The Chairman thanked the Head of Regulatory Services and Community Safety, the Police and Crime Commissioner, the Chief Constable and Superintendent for their attendance and presentations.

Resolved

- (1) That having given due consideration, the presentations of the Cherwell Safer Communities Partnership, the Police and Crime Commissioner, and Thames Valley Police be noted.

45 **Work Programme Update**

The Committee considered the indicative work programme for the remainder of the 2025-2026 Municipal Year.

It was proposed by Councillor Rogers and seconded by Councillor Broad and agreed that an item relating to lessons learned from the illegal landfill at Kidlington, be included in the Work Programme 2025 – 2026.

Resolved

- (1) That, subject to the inclusion of an item relating to lessons learned from the illegal landfill at Kidlington, the Work Programme 2025 – 2026 be approved.

The meeting ended at 8.09 pm

Chair:

Date:

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Cherwell District Council

Personnel Committee

Minutes of a meeting of the Personnel Committee held at 39 Castle Quay, Banbury, OX16 5FD, on 21 November 2025 at 9.30 am

Present:

Councillor Amanda Watkins (Chair)

Councillor Chris Brant
Councillor Phil Chapman
Councillor Chris Pruden

Apologies for absence:

Group Leaders had agreed to reduced attendance for this Special Personnel Committee meeting. Attendees as set out above with apologies as set out below:

Councillor Gemma Coton
Councillor Rebecca Biegel
Councillor Harry Knight
Councillor Nicholas Mawer
Councillor Fiona Mawson
Councillor Lynne Parsons
Councillor Rob Pattenden
Councillor Barry Wood

Officers:

Gordon Stewart, Chief Executive
Claire Cox, Assistant Director Human Resources
Natasha Clark, Governance and Elections Manager

16 **Declarations of Interest**

There were no declarations of interests.

17 **Chair's Announcements**

There were no Chair's announcements.

18 **Exclusion of the Public and Press**

Resolved

That, in accordance with Section 100A(4) of the Local Government Act 1972, the press and public be excluded from the meeting for the following item of business, on the grounds that it could involve the likely disclosure of exempt information as defined in paragraphs 1, 2, 3 and 4 of Schedule 12A of that Act.

(The Governance and Elections Manager let the meeting at the conclusion of this item)

19 **Interviews for Post of Executive Director Neighbourhood Services**

The Committee saw each of the short listed applicants for the post of Executive Director Neighbourhood Services in turn and asked them a number of questions.

The Committee was supported by the Chief Executive and the Assistant Director Human Resources.

Following the interviews the Committee evaluated the applications and considered the supporting information from the external recruitment company in reaching their recommendation on appointment.

Resolved

- (1) That an appointment to the post of Executive Director Neighbourhood Services be made subject to all necessary procedural steps having been complied with.

The meeting ended at 2.15 pm

Chair:

Date:

Cherwell District Council

Personnel Committee

Minutes of a meeting of the Personnel Committee held at 39 Castle Quay, Banbury, OX16 5FD, on 3 December 2025 at 6.30 pm

Present:

Councillor Amanda Watkins (Chair)
Councillor Gemma Coton (Vice-Chair)
Councillor Rebecca Biegel
Councillor Chris Brant
Councillor Lynne Parsons
Councillor Chris Pruden
Councillor Barry Wood

Apologies for absence:

Councillor Phil Chapman
Councillor Harry Knight
Councillor Nicholas Mawer
Councillor Fiona Mawson
Councillor Rob Pattenden

Officers:

Claire Cox, Assistant Director Human Resources
Susan Blunsden, HR Manager
Martyn Surfleet, Democratic and Elections Officer

20 **Declarations of Interest**

There were no declarations of interests.

21 **Minutes**

The Minutes of the meeting of the Committee held on 17 September 2025 were agreed as a correct record and signed by the Chair.

22 **Chair's Announcements**

There were no Chair's announcements.

23 **Requests to Address the Meeting**

There were no requests to address the meeting.

24 **Urgent Business**

There were no items of Urgent Business.

25 **Policy Review Updates**

The Assistant Director Human Resources submitted a report to seek approval from the Personnel Committee on proposed changes to eight HR policies: Grievance Policy; Sickness Absence Policy and Procedure; Maternity Leave Policy; Adoption Leave Policy; Parental Leave Policy; Shared Parental Leave Policy; Time off for Dependants; and Domestic Abuse Policy.

In introducing the report, the Portfolio Holder for Corporate Services, explained that the Policies were part of a rolling programme of updates that aimed to review policies on a 3-year cycle to ensure that they remained compliant and reflected current practices.

Members were advised that the following updates had been made The Grievance Policy now included protection for third party harassment providing clear protection and a strong framework for protection; the Sickness Absence Policy had been updated to include support for Neurodivergent staff, enabling an inclusive and supportive environment through reasonable adjustments; the Maternity, Adoption and Parental Leave Policies were updated to reflect changes to the EV Salary Sacrifice Scheme; The Domestic Abuse Policy had been updated following details and feedback from the Councils Lived Experiences Group.

No significant changes had been made to the Shared Parental Leave Policy and the Time off for Dependants Policy.

Resolved

- (1) That, having given due consideration, the following policies be approved for implementation: Grievance Policy; Sickness Absence Policy and Procedure; Maternity Leave Policy; Adoption Leave Policy; Parental Leave Policy; Shared Parental Leave Policy; Time off for Dependants; and Domestic Abuse Policy.

26 **Workforce Profile Statistics - Quarter 2 of 2025-26**

The Assistant Director Human Resources submitted a report to update the Committee on Cherwell District Council's (CDC) workforce as at the end of quarter 2 of 2025/26, including measuring staff well-being and highlighting the actions officers were taking to address any issues.

In introducing the report, the Portfolio Holder for Corporate Services, advised that there were no issues, risks or concerns to highlight.

In response to a question regarding the upward trend of staff sickness within quarter 2 and whether measures were in place to address this increase, the Assistant Director Human Resources explained that a similar trend was reflected within the same quarter of the previous year. Measures were in place to assess members of staff that may need ongoing support to ensure that they were able to return to work as soon as practicable.

In response to a question regarding Covid-19 related staff sickness and whether staff were still reporting that as a reason for absence, the Assistant Director Human Resources explained that as testing for Covid-19 was no longer mandatory, it was hard to pinpoint individual cases, and that due to similar symptoms instances may be reported as cold and flu.

In response to a question regarding changes to Government Levy funding for apprenticeships and the impact on apprenticeship opportunities for staff, the Assistant Director Human Resources explained that officers had been aware of the proposed changes to apprenticeship funding and had been monitoring the budgets to ensure that sufficient funding was available.

Resolved

- (1) That the workforce profile statistics for quarter 2 of 2025/26 (financial year dates) be noted.

The meeting ended at 6.59 pm

Chair:

Date:

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Cherwell District Council

Personnel Committee

Minutes of a meeting of the Personnel Committee held at 39 Castle Quay, Banbury, OX16 5FD, on 10 December 2025 at 9.30 am

Present:

Councillor Amanda Watkins (Chair)
Councillor Gemma Coton (Vice-Chair)
Councillor Rob Pattenden
Councillor Barry Wood

Apologies for absence:

Group Leaders had agreed to reduced attendance for this Special Personnel Committee meeting. Attendees as set out above with apologies as set out below:

Councillor Rebecca Biegel
Councillor Chris Brant
Councillor Phil Chapman
Councillor Harry Knight
Councillor Nicholas Mawer
Councillor Fiona Mawson
Councillor Lynne Parsons
Councillor Chris Pruden

Officers:

Gordon Stewart, Chief Executive
Stephen Hinds, Executive Director Resources
Claire Cox, Assistant Director Human Resources
Natasha Clark, Governance and Elections Manager

27 Declarations of Interest

There were no declarations of interests.

28 Chair's Announcements

There were no Chair's announcements.

29 **Exclusion of the Public and Press**

Resolved

That, in accordance with Section 100A(4) of the Local Government Act 1972, the press and public be excluded from the meeting for the following item of business, on the grounds that it could involve the likely disclosure of exempt information as defined in paragraphs 1, 2, 3 and 4 of Schedule 12A of that Act.

(The Governance and Elections Manager let the meeting at the conclusion of this item)

30 **Interviews for Post of Director of Transformation (Cherwell Futures)**

The Committee saw each of the short listed applicants for the post of Director of Transformation (Cherwell Futures) and asked them a number of questions.

The Committee was supported by the Chief Executive, Executive Director Resources and the Assistant Director Human Resources.

Following the interviews the Committee evaluated the applications and considered the supporting information from the external recruitment company in reaching their recommendation on appointment.

Resolved

- (1) That an appointment to the post of Director of Transformation (Cherwell Futures) be made subject to all necessary procedural steps having been complied with.

The meeting ended at 5.00 pm

Chair:

Date: