

## **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 24 March 2026 at 6.30 pm

Present:

Councillor David Rogers (Chair)

Councillor Gordon Blakeway

Councillor John Broad

Councillor Frank Ideh

Councillor Simon Lytton

Councillor Dom Vaitkus

Councillor Barry Wood

Councillor Dr Kerrie Thornhill (for Labour Vacancy)

Apologies for absence:

Councillor Dr Isabel Creed (Vice-Chair)

Councillor Phil Chapman

Councillor Gemma Coton

Vacancy (Labour Group)

Also Present:

Councillor Chris Brant, Portfolio Holder Corporate Services

Also Present Virtually:

Councillor Jean Conway, Portfolio Holder for Planning & Development Management

Councillor Nick Cotter, Portfolio Holder for Housing

Officers:

Nicola Riley, Assistant Director Wellbeing and Housing

David Peckford, Assistant Director Planning

Richard Smith, Head of Housing

Charlotte Baylis, Housing Management Team Leader

Celia Prado-Teeling, Performance Team Leader

Emma Faulkner, Principal Officer - Scrutiny and Democratic Lead

Martyn Surfleet, Democratic and Elections Officer

Officers Attending Virtually:

Ian Boll, Executive Director Place & Regeneration

Kristian Aspinall, Executive Director Neighbourhood Services

Kaimi Ithia, Head of Chief Executive's Office

Paul Seckington, Head of Development Management  
Sean Tilbury, Planning Enforcement Team Leader

54      **Declarations of Interest**

There were no declarations of interest.

55      **Minutes**

The Minutes of the meeting of the Committee held on 27 January 2026 were agreed as a correct record and signed by the Chair.

56      **Chair's Announcements**

There were no Chair's announcements.

57      **Urgent Business**

There were no items of urgent business.

58      **Corporate Performance and Insight Strategy 2026/27**

The Committee considered a report of the Head of Chief Executive Office that provided an overview of the Corporate Performance and Insight Strategy 2026/27, including proposed key performance indicators and annual delivery plan milestones to be reported across the new financial year.

In introducing the report, the Portfolio Holder for Corporate Services explained that the report set out a clear framework to link the Corporate Delivery Plan, Annual Delivery Plan and Service plans to move emphasis from reporting metrics in isolation with the aim to provide meaningful evaluation to support decision making and service outcomes.

Members were also advised that the report responded directly to the findings of the 2025 internal audit and performance management framework. A total of 16 Corporate and 28 Directorate performance indicators were proposed with a benchmarking exercise comparing Cherwell's key performance indicators (KPIs) with those used by potential Local Government Reorganisation (LGR) partners, as well as reflecting recommendations from the Local Government Association to ensure better alignment of decision making for preparations for LGR.

In response to a question regarding the ability of quarterly reporting cycles to efficiently handle emergency situations, the Performance Team Leader explained that work was being carried out to introduce an ongoing performance monitoring structure to work alongside the current reporting

cycle, to ensure that measures were in place to help monitor and mitigate any potential issues as they occurred.

In response to a question regarding the inclusion of indicators for tracking climate change, the Performance Team Leader explained that a separate Climate Action Plan was in production that would include dedicated KPIs and actions related to climate change within the district.

In response to a question regarding LGR and its potential impact on the Climate Action Plan, and whether a strategy for solar energy would be at the forefront, the Corporate Director of Communities explained that both the Climate Action Plan and the emerging Solar Strategy were still in draft and yet to be reviewed by the Executive.

In response to a question regarding the time frames allocated to targets and KPI's, the Performance Team Leader explained that all targets and time frames were discussed with the service line and benchmarked against national targets.

In response to a question regarding a contradiction in the wording regarding the reduction of greenhouse gas emissions in the district, the Portfolio Holder for Corporate Services explained that they would liaise with officers to better clarify the wording for future reports.

In response to a question regarding the omission of measured targets for certain KPIs the Performance Team Leader explained that where appropriate figures were displayed as percentages, but the baseline figures were available for officers, and that other targets without measures were in the process of baseline monitoring with the intention for true targets to be included going forward.

In response to a question relating to a recommendation forwarded from the Accounts, Audit and Risk committee regarding the inclusion additional performance indicators relating to the environmental and social value of Castle Quay, members were asked to endorse the recommendation

It was proposed by Councillor Vaitkus and seconded by Councillor Lytton that the recommendations as set out in the report, as well as the additional recommendation relating to the inclusion of further performance indicators in relation to Castle Quay, be included.

## **Resolved**

- (1) That having given due consideration, the Corporate Performance and Insight Strategy 2026/27 be noted with the following comments to be submitted to the Executive for consideration:
  - That consideration be given to additional performance measures for evaluating the Castle Quay investment, ensuring that social impact, environmental outcomes and growth potential are

monitored alongside the existing financial and treasury management indicators.

- (2) That having given due consideration, the Annual Delivery Plan (ADP) Milestones 2026/27 be noted.

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### **Temporary Accommodation Policy Presentation**

The Committee considered a presentation from the Assistant Director of Wellbeing and Housing Services that detailed the councils Temporary Accommodation Policy.

Members were advised that the policy outlined the provision of temporary accommodation (TA) as part of the councils' statutory duties, and that TA was used when households presented as homeless and were categorised as Priority Need., 'Priority Need' status was a legislative test.

Members were advised that TA was provided either within units of residential accommodation or within hotels, and that when the council either found someone permanent accommodation or had no duties to continue housing them, the TA duty ended.

Members were also advised that demand for TA was rising rapidly, driven by affordability issues, complex needs, and crisis presentations and that the Council was shifting away from expensive, unsuitable hotel use toward owned/self-contained accommodation. there was also a strong emphasis on prevention and early intervention, increasing housing supply

In response to a question regarding the rise in more complex needs of households, as well the rise in needs due to reports of domestic violence, the Executive Director Neighbourhood Services explained that the perceived rise in complexity could be contributed to national initiatives to increase awareness of domestic violence scenarios, as well as officer training to help identify needs.

In response to a question regarding the building of suitable housing for council stock, whether officers had given thought to the creation of a housing revenue account and whether the onset of LGR had an impact on any present and future plans, the Head of Housing explained that the government had revised its thresholds for housing revenue accounts, but temporary accommodation did not contribute towards it. The council had a capital scheme in place to aid in the purchasing of properties suitable for temporary accommodation. Members were also advised that the impact of LGR on the council's position on TA was unknown, but government incentives were in place to ensure that development of housing was at the forefront of local authorities' agendas.

In response to a question regarding the inspection and quality control of housing that was being acquired for the use of TA, the Head of Housing explained that all properties were vetted and assessed before use, and that most properties were newly built for purpose.

In response to a question regarding the comparison in cost effectiveness of the Tenancy Sustainment Programme compared to TA and whether budgets set were adequate to sustain such programmes, the Head of Housing explained that focus was given to prevention initiatives but due to legislative restrictions, once a household presented as homeless they would have to be dealt with as such and therefore tenancy sustainment would not be possible.

In response to a follow up question regarding whether the council was doing everything it could to help prevent and mitigate homelessness within the district, the Head of Housing explained that there was always more work to be done, and that officers were tackling high caseloads, but priority was given to cases where the most work could be done to help.

In response to a question regarding the role Councillors had in helping officers with their work on housing and homelessness, the Assistant Director Housing and Wellbeing explained that signposting to services and relevant officers was the best way to support the service.

In response to a question regarding the involvement of enforcement tactics in relation to Council Tax arrears for residents that were already facing housing crises, the Assistant Director Housing and Wellbeing explained that there were discretionary funds available that were subject to stringent criteria and reviewed on a case by case basis. , There was also a dedicated policy regarding revenue and benefits that detailed options available to officers and residents.

In response to a question regarding the reduction in the use of hotels for temporary and emergency accommodation, the Head of Housing explained that the reduction was linked to many factors such as acquisition of suitable alternative accommodation and local and national demand, as well as national trends in cost of living and affordability crises that have an impact on the demand and supply of accommodation in the district.

## **Resolved**

- (1) That the Temporary Accommodation Policy Presentation be noted.

## **Response to the Planning Advisory Service: Review of Planning Committee Decision Making**

The Committee considered a report of the Assistant Director Planning that aimed to advise the Committee on how the Council was responding to the Planning Advisory Service review of Planning Committee decision making.

In introducing the report, the Portfolio Holder for Planning & Development Management explained that a review of the Council's decision-making on planning applications for major developments was undertaken in 2025 by the Planning Advisory Service (PAS) which formed part of the Local Government Association (LGA). Members were advised that the review was undertaken for

the period April 2022 to March 2024, due to the percentage of the Council's decisions overturned at appeal having slightly exceeded the nationally prescribed threshold of 10%.

Members were advised that the review concluded that the Council had an effective planning committee with professional, knowledgeable officers and members who understood planning issues and the importance of following officer advice. However, a number of recommendations were made in the interest of improvement;

- Improve early member engagement at pre-application stage
- Standardise and strengthen site visit procedures
- Introduce 24 Hour cut-off period prior to committee for late submissions
- Increase member involvement in planning appeals
- Improve understanding of planning enforcement
- Enhance clarity of officer reports as well as required considerations
- Strengthen member training programme
- Reintroduce developers' forum
- Review legal representation at committee

In response to a question regarding decisions that go against officer recommendation and the resulting appeal determination, the Portfolio Holder for Planning & Development Management explained that PAS concluded that members were overly influenced by local objection and not evidence-based planning considerations in their decision making process.

In response to a question regarding the removal of a questions section before debate within Planning Committee meetings to allow for a more natural flow of questions and debate, the Portfolio Holder for Planning & Development Management explained that this had been considered but consensus amongst members and officers was mixed, and that the potential introduction of pre-meetings could help alleviate the volume of questions asked within the meetings.

In response to a question regarding member participation in Planning Committee as well as pre-committee site visits for members who were in full time employment, and whether consideration could be made for such members, the Portfolio Holder for Planning & Development Management explained that due to the technical intricacies of planning applications and their impact on the length of committees resulted in meetings needed to be held earlier in the day to allow time for full consideration of applications brought before members.

In response to a question regarding the involvement of Parish Councils at the pre-application stage, the Portfolio Holder for Planning & Development Management explained that due to the confidentiality of applications at the pre-application stage, involvement was restricted. Members were advised that officers were working on the possibility of ward members involvement at pre-application stage, to better articulate localised issues and requirements.

In response to a question as to whether planning forums and training could be made available to all members of the council and not limited to Planning Committee members, the Assistant Director Planning explained that internal and developer planning forums were already open to all members, and that officers would ensure any training provided would also be open to all members, should they wish to attend.

In response to a question regarding the criteria for approving applications for development on land prone to flooding, the Head of Development Management explained that for applications on such sites, officers would consult with the Environment Agency, the local flood authority and the local draining provider, and a flood risk assessment would be carried out to assess whether the site would be acceptable for development.

It was proposed by Councillor Wood and Seconded by Councillor Thornhill that the Committee support the suggestion from PAS that consideration be given to dispensing with the questions stage before a debate (para 6.1 of the PAS report), and it be forwarded to the Executive for consideration.

### **Resolved**

- (1) That the Response to the Planning Advisory Service: Review of Planning Committee Decision Making report be noted.
- (2) That Executive be advised that Overview and Scrutiny support the suggestion from PAS that consideration be given to dispensing with the questions stage before a debate (para 6.1 of the PAS report)

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### **Performance of S106 Delivery**

The Committee considered a report of the Assistant Director Planning that provided an overview of the Section 106 agreement and infrastructure delivery process, and a review of infrastructure delivery in Cherwell from a health perspective.

In introducing the report, the Team Leader Planning Enforcement advised that Section 106 (S106) agreements secured infrastructure contributions to mitigate the impacts of development.

The Council was required to publish an annual Infrastructure Funding Statement (IFS) setting out contributions secured, received, held and spent. The report provided an overview of the S 106 process and highlighted the factors that influenced both the securing and delivery of obligations, with a focus on health contributions in Cherwell.

In response to a question regarding the implementation of infrastructure as a result of development, with particular focus on health provision, and whether in lieu of input from parties such as the Integrated Care Board (ICB) the Council be eligible to fulfil the role of developer, the Executive Director Place and Regeneration explained that should the situation arise, the council would

have powers to act in such a capacity, but market interest and input from suitable developers with better market intelligence would be sought first.

In response to a question regarding the expansion of primary care provision as a result of developer contributions as part of S106 agreements, and whether the Council had any involvement in the ICB's decision making process for requesting sufficient funds to support growth in housing provision within the District, the Executive Director Place and Regeneration explained that the Council had the powers to request involvement in that process, but were not in that position currently.

In a follow up question regarding the Committee's ability to make recommendations to the Executive on expansion of primary care provision, the Executive Director Place and Regeneration advised that such involvement would result in the Council's intervention in the aforementioned processes officers would have to take that away for further discussion.

In response to a question regarding whether the lack of requests for funding from the ICB was linked to staffing provision issues, the Team Leader Planning Enforcement explained that the Council was not privy to that information and therefore could not comment on the reasoning behind the ICB's decisions.

In response to a question regarding S106 contributions for healthcare from 48% of developments since 2021 and whether the remaining 52% was made up of developments that did not require health contributions, the Team Leader Planning Enforcement explained that the contributions were received from the development of residential sites and that not all of those sites included within the percentage demonstrated a need for contributions for health provisions.

In response to a question regarding what S106 contributions would typically be used for the Team Leader Planning Enforcement explained that contributions would consist of capital contributions with the intention of building improvements, and any contributions would be subject to demonstrable need.

### **Resolved**

- (1) That the Performance of S106 Delivery presentation be noted.
- (2) That the key findings for health contributions currently held by the Council and trends in health contributions secured between 2019/20 and 2024/25 be noted.

The Committee considered a report of Assistant Director – Law & Governance/Monitoring Officer as part of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee's (OSC) constitutional obligation to report annually to Council on

function of their workings and make recommendations for future work programmes and amended working methods if appropriate.

The Committee were asked to consider and approve the draft annual report for 2025-26, for submission to full Council. The report provided a summary of the subjects covered by OSC during the previous Municipal Year, highlighting key observations and outcomes of discussions.

Members were advised that due to the timing of the draft report, information would need adding to reflect the discussions had at this meeting. Delegated authority was therefore requested for the Assistant Director Law and Governance, in consultation with the Chair, to finalise the report as required for its submission to full Council in May.

### **Resolved**

- (1) That having given due consideration, the Overview and Scrutiny Committee Annual Report – 2025-26 be noted.
- (2) That authority be delegated to the Assistant Director Law and Governance, in consultation with the Overview and Scrutiny Chair, to finalise the report for submission to full Council

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### **Work Programme Update**

The Principal Officer - Scrutiny and Democratic Lead provided an update on the Committee's Work Programme 2026 – 2027.

Members were advised that there would be a detailed work programme planning discussion at the first meeting of the committee at the start of the new municipal year 2026 – 2027, at which point the indicative items can be discussed in detail and proposed dates for consideration could be agreed by members. Should the committee be minded the set-up of any dedicated working groups could also be considered.

In response to a question regarding requests from the public for items to be considered by the Overview and Scrutiny Committee and whether mention of this mechanism could be included on the work programme for the benefit of the public, the Principal Officer - Scrutiny and Democratic Lead explained that topics listed on the work programme were often a result of suggestions from elected Members, who may have had subjects raised with them by residents the topics with their elected representative., Consideration would be given to the possibility of highlighting the opportunities for the public to suggest items for the work programme.

### **Resolved**

- (1) That having given due consideration, the Work Programme 2026 – 2027 be noted.

The meeting ended at 9.22 pm

Chair:

Date: