Cherwell District Council

Executive

Minutes of a meeting of the Executive held at 39 Castle Quay, Banbury, OX16 5FD, on 13 July 2026 at 4.30 pm

Present:

Councillor Lesley McLean (Leader of the Council and Portfolio Holder for Strategic Leadership) (Chair)
Councillor Chris Aramini-Brant (Deputy Leader of the Council and Portfolio Holder for Planning and Development) (Vice-Chair)
Councillor Nicola Borkmann, Portfolio Holder for Customer and Community Services
Councillor David Hingley, Portfolio Holder for Finance
Councillor Ian Middleton, Portfolio Holder for Housing and Greener Communities
Councillor Rob Pattenden, Portfolio Holder for Property and Assets
Councillor Dr Lisa Smith, Portfolio Holder for Leisure

Apologies for absence:

Councillor Frank Ideh, Portfolio Holder for Law and Governance
Councillor Alisa Russell, Portfolio Holder for Neighbourhood Services

Also Present Virtually:

Councillor Paul Jeffreys, Leader of Reform UK Group
Councillor David Rogers, Chair, Overview and Scrutiny Committee

Officers:

Ian Boll, Executive Director Place & Regeneration
Kristian Aspinall, Executive Director Neighbourhood Services
Ann Slavin, Cherwell Futures Director
Michael Furness, Assistant Director Finance & S151 Officer
Shiraz Sheikh, Assistant Director Law & Governance and Monitoring Officer
David Peckford, Assistant Director Planning
Nicola Riley, Assistant Director Wellbeing and Housing
Kaimi Ithia, Head of Chief Executive's Office
Peter Sharp, Head of Regeneration and Economy
Richard Smith, Head of Housing
Geoff Taylor, Head of Property and Assets
Natasha Clark, Governance and Elections Manager

Officers Attending Virtually:

Mona Walsh, Assistant Director - Property

Andy Bowe, Strategic Transport and Infrastructure Lead Officer
Mehmoona Ameen, Programme Manager

19 **Declarations of Interest**

17. Banbury Museum Utility Charges.
Councillor Rob Pattenden, Other Registerable Interest, as a trustee of Banbury Museum and would not vote on the item.

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

There were no petitions or requests to address the meeting.

21 **Minutes**

The minutes of the meeting held on 16 June 2026 were agreed as a correct record and signed by the Chair.

22 **Chair's Announcements**

The Chair referred to the recent announcement that, unfortunately, Banbury had been unsuccessful in its Town of Culture bid.

The Chair advised that the decision in relation to Local Government Reorganisation was due this week. Updates would be provided when information was available.

The Chair explained that she would address the 20 July Council meeting in relation to the council being officially designated by the Secretary of State on 15 June 2026 for decision making on major developments.

The Chair reported that a new Planning Inspector had been appointed for the independent examination of the Cherwell Local Plan 2042. Whilst no timeframe had been set, assurance had been given that the examination would move forward as soon as possible.

Referring to the death of former MP Ann Widdecombe at the weekend, the Chair implored all Members to ensure they are aware of their personal safety and to interact with Operation Ford.

23 **Urgent Business**

There were no items of urgent business.

24 Purchase of Housing Accommodation

The Assistant Director Wellbeing and Housing submitted a report to put the necessary approvals in place for the Council to be able to purchase suitable property with funds within the capital programme.

Resolved

(1) That the Head of Housing be authorised to determine the requirements of the additional housing (including location and specification), tenancy and rent setting and manage the acquired housing in accordance with obligations of the Council as a Registered Provider of Social Housing.

(2) That the Executive Director Neighbourhood Services, in consultation with Assistant Director Finance and the Portfolio Holder for Housing, be authorised to make initial offers and begin the appropriate due diligence, once appropriate freehold or leasehold properties have been identified and it be noted that a separate report to seek final approval for the exchange of contracts to purchase property will be submitted to the Executive, this will then enable the purchase of property above financial thresholds.

Reasons

The report is necessary to assist in the delivery of the project aims and funding agreed within the budget

Alternative options

Option 1: Do not grant the authorisations
This is the status quo option. This would lead to delays and would likely mean that the Council would be delayed in closing deals and entering negotiations, which could prove counterproductive to the purpose of the agreed funding.

25 Local Authority Housing Fund Round 4

The Assistant Director Wellbeing and Housing submitted a report to seek approval for the expenditure of capital grant received from the Local Authority Housing Fund (LAHF) Round 4.

Resolved

(1) That a capital grant to South Oxfordshire Housing Association (SOHA) of £342,100 for the delivery of new social housing within Cherwell from the grant received from MHCLG; Local Authority Housing Fund Round 4 be approved.

(2) That it be approved that the remaining £319,900 grant be used to provide temporary accommodation units enabled by the Council, in accordance with grant criteria.

(3) That the increase to the Council's capital programme of £342,100 that arises from the report be approved.

Reasons

The report will enable more affordable housing within the district, which is required to address demand pressures. It will not directly enable the planned self-contained temporary accommodation purchase to take place, but will reduce the amount of its own capital that the Council has to use when doing so.

Alternative options

Option 1: Not to transfer the grant to SOHA and use another provider. All Registered Providers operating locally were given the opportunity to work with the Council and SOHA were the only ones to submit a compliant expression of interest. This is therefore rejected.

Option 2: The Council deliver all units. The Council is under time pressure to deliver units in accordance with the conditions of the grant and SOHA have an established reputation for delivery. The Council does have funds within the Capital Programme to purchase and develop temporary accommodation. Due to this, the report proposes to retain some of the grant to offset potential borrowing. However, the Council does not have capital within the capital programme for general property purchases (for resettlement households in this instance) and housing development that the grant could assist with. This is a requirement of the grant. This is therefore rejected.

Option 3: Not deliver any units. This would lead to the return of the grant to MHCLG. This would lead to the inability to offset any potential capital usage for temporary accommodation that is within the capital programme through grant usage. This is therefore rejected.

26 **Thames Valley Spatial Development Strategy (SDS) Development and Governance**

The Executive Director Place and Regeneration submitted a report to advise the Executive of the interim governance and working arrangements for the preparation of a Thames Valley Spatial Development Strategy (SDS).

Resolved

(1) That the interim governance arrangements for the Thames Valley Spatial Development Strategy be noted.

(2) That officers be instructed to request that the Council be formally co-opted as a 'partner authority' with Leader representation on the Spatial Development Strategy Partnership Board until such time that a 'Strategic Planning Board' is formally established.

(3) That it be noted that the Executor Director Place and Regeneration will advise the Executive if the Council is not confirmed as a co-opted ‘Partner Authority’.

(4) That authority be delegated to the Executive Director Place and Regeneration to agree detailed working arrangements for the pre-inception development of the Spatial Development Strategy in consultation with the Assistant Director Law and Governance.

Reasons

Completing an SDS for the Thames Valley by mid-2029 will be challenging. Progressing early preparatory and informative work ahead of secondary legislation is sensible and the governance and working arrangements proposed in the County Council’s report will support the process. However, there remains some uncertainty about the co-opting of district councils and whether the Leader will have a seat on the Partnership Board. It is therefore recommended that the Council seeks confirmation of its co-opted partnership status and representation.

Alternative options

The Executive could decide not to seek formal co-opting as a ‘partner authority’ ahead of the establishment of a statutory Strategic Planning Board. However, it is considered to be in the best interests of Cherwell’s communities to be as embedded as possible in the SDS process.

27 **Oxfordshire Infrastructure Strategy (OxIS) Final Report**

The Executive Director Place and Regeneration submitted a report which presented the Oxfordshire Infrastructure Strategy (OxIS) and sought the Executive’s endorsement following the Oxfordshire Leaders Joint Committee endorsing the OxIS on 24 April 2026.

Resolved

(1) That the final Oxfordshire Infrastructure Strategy be endorsed.

Reasons

The final Oxfordshire Infrastructure Strategy is a comprehensive countywide assessment of the strategic infrastructure needs to support sustainable development to 2050. It was endorsed by the Oxfordshire Leaders Joint Committee on 24 April 2026 following a proactive approach to the Strategy’s development with other Oxfordshire local authorities. It provides a potential tool for the prioritisation and funding of infrastructure projects and evidence for promoting the infrastructure needs to a wider range of audiences. Engagement included technical stakeholders has contributed to the final.

Further collaboration with stakeholders will be required Oxfordshire local authorities progress the delivery of infrastructure to support growth.

Alternative options

Option 1: Do not endorse the OxIS – by not endorsing the Strategy, the Council would not benefit from the use of the data, and outputs it provides, in informing future plans and strategies.

Option 2: Endorse the Strategy – this is the recommended option.

Option 3: Endorse the Strategy with amendments. Officers have actively engaged in the preparation of the OxIS as part of the project working group from procurement to the final outputs and deliverable. The final reports meet the requirements of the project brief, and no further amendments are required.

28 **Local Area Development Funds - Proposal for Allocation**

The Executive Director Place and Regeneration submitted a report which set out the first tranche of projects – discussed and recommended by Area Oversight Groups (AOGs) – for Local Area Development Funding. This funding was agreed as part of the annual budget setting process by Council on 23 February 2026.

Resolved

(1) That it be agreed to allocate £21.5k of Local Area Development Funds to progress the following projects for the 2026/27 financial year as discussed and recommended at the respective Area Oversight Group:

Figure 1: Project Summary

Project	**Est. Cost (£)**	**AOG**
Banbury Town Centre Revitalisation - Look & Feel	26/27: £21.5k **27/28: £38.5k*	Banbury
-	-	Bicester
-	-	Kidlington
Total Funding Requested	**£21,500**	
** Figures for 27/28 full year are shown but not proposed for allocation at this stage.*		

(2) That authority be delegated to the Executive Director Place and Regeneration, in consultation with the Portfolio Holder for Strategic Leadership and Regeneration, to agree final cost plans for the above projects subject to the maximum cost envelope outlined in Figure 1.

Reasons

This report seeks to agree an allocation of £21.5k of Local Area Development Funds for delivery of specific projects in Bicester, Banbury and Kidlington.

The proposed projects are supported by the respective AOG and support the council's priorities around delivering economic prosperity and community leadership.

Alternative Options

Option 1: Do not proceed with projects proposed - Funds have already been allocated as set out in Section 4 and priorities have been agreed by Area Oversight Groups. This report is intended to utilise some of this funding for enhancements identified by ward councillors as representatives of our communities. Doing nothing means that identified priorities will not be funded and commitments made to the district as part of the budget setting process will not be fulfilled.

29 Finance Monitoring Report May 2026

The Assistant Director of Finance (S151 Officer) submitted a report to report to Executive the council's forecast year-end financial position as at the end of the May 2026.

Resolved

(1) That the council's financial management report as at the end of May 2026 be noted.

(2) That the use of reserves and grant funding detailed in the annex to the Minutes (as set out in the Minute Book) be approved.

Reasons

The report updates the Executive on the projected year-end financial position of the council for 2026/27. 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 2027, therefore there are no alternative options to consider.

30 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.

31 **A New Arts Centre for Banbury**

The Assistant Director Wellbeing and Housing submitted an exempt report in respect of a new Arts Centre for Banbury.

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.

32 **Cherwell Futures Customer Front Door Programme – Final Business Case**

The Executive Director Resources submitted an exempt report for Executive to consider the Cherwell Futures Customer Front Door Programme Final Business Case.

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.

(6) As set out in the exempt minutes.

Reasons

As set out in the exempt minutes.

Alternative options

As set out in the exempt minutes.

33 **The Hill Youth and Community Centre - Lease to The Hill Banbury CIC**

The Assistant Director Property submitted an exempt report in respect of The Hill Youth and Community Centre - Lease to The Hill Banbury CIC.

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.

34 **Banbury Museum Utility Charges**

The Executive Director Neighbourhood Services submitted an exempt report in respect of Banbury Museum utility charges.

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.

(6) As set out in the exempt minutes.

Reasons

As set out in the exempt minutes.

Alternative options

As set out in the exempt minutes.

35 Renewal of Lease at Castle Quay

The Assistant Director Property submitted an exempt report in respect of a lease renewal at Castle Quay.

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.

The meeting ended at 6.26 pm

Chair:

Date: