

Cherwell District Council

Council

Minutes of a meeting of the Council held at Bodicote House, Bodicote, Banbury, Oxon OX15 4AA, on 18 July 2022 at 6.30 pm

Present:

Councillor Les Sibley (Chairman)

Councillor Hannah Banfield
Councillor Andrew Beere
Councillor Rebecca Biegel
Councillor Nathan Bignell
Councillor Maurice Billington
Councillor John Broad
Councillor Hugo Brown
Councillor Phil Chapman
Councillor Mark Cherry
Councillor Colin Clarke
Councillor Patrick Clarke
Councillor Gemma Coton
Councillor Nick Cotter
Councillor Andrew Crichton
Councillor Sandy Dallimore
Councillor John Donaldson
Councillor Donna Ford
Councillor Ian Harwood
Councillor David Hingley
Councillor Matt Hodgson
Councillor Kieron Mallon
Councillor Nicholas Mawer
Councillor Fiona Mawson
Councillor Ian Middleton
Councillor Perran Moon
Councillor Richard Mould
Councillor Adam Nell
Councillor Dr Chukwudi Okeke
Councillor Angus Patrick
Councillor Chris Pruden
Councillor Eddie Reeves
Councillor George Reynolds
Councillor Dan Sames
Councillor Amanda Watkins
Councillor Douglas Webb
Councillor Fraser Webster
Councillor Bryn Williams
Councillor Barry Wood
Councillor Sean Woodcock

Councillors Present virtually (no voting rights):

Councillor Jean Conway
Councillor Katherine Tyson

Apologies for absence:

Councillor Jason Slaymaker
Councillor Mike Bishop
Councillor Ian Corkin
Councillor Simon Holland
Councillor Lynn Pratt
Councillor Dorothy Walker

Officers:

Yvonne Rees, Chief Executive (virtual)
Ian Boll, Corporate Director Communities
Stephen Hinds, Corporate Director Resources
Michael Furness, Assistant Director Finance & S151 Officer
Shahin Ismail, Assistant Director Law, Governance, Democratic Services & Procurement & Monitoring Officer Interim
Nicola Riley, Assistant Director Wellbeing and Housing Services
Simon Hope, Interim Head of Communications and Marketing
Natasha Clark, Governance and Elections Manager

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Welcome

The Chairman welcomed Members, officers and guests to the meeting.

On behalf of Council, the Chairman welcomed Ian Boll, Corporate Director Communities and Steve Hinds, Corporate Director Resources to their first Full Council meeting. The Chairman also welcomed Matt Marsh, Deputy Monitoring Officer, to the meeting.

The Chairman advised that Councillors Tyson and Conway were joining the meeting virtually and could speak on items but had no voting rights or rights to propose or second items.

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Declarations of Interest

There were no declarations of interest.

Communications

The Chairman made the following announcements:

Chairman's Engagements

A copy of the events attended by the Chairman or the Vice-Chairman was published with the agenda.

Chairman's Charity

The Chairman reminded Members that when he was appointed Chairman at the Annual Meeting, he had not yet chosen his charity for the year. The Chairman advised he was pleased to report that he would be raising money for Alexandra House of Joy who plan to open a centre for adults with learning disabilities in Bicester. The charity had today launched the Buy a Brick campaign and information about how to support the initiative had been provided to Members.

Former Chair's Charity

The Chairman invited the former Chair, Councillor Banfield, to address Council to report on the

Councillor Banfield addressed Council and advised that she and former Councillor Hughes, Chairman May 2019 to May 2021, had agreed to pool their charity funding. Former Councillor Hughes' charities, Rosie's Respite Caring for Young People, ARCH (Assisted Reading for Children), Katharine House Hospice, and Councillor Banfield's charities, Green Dome Trust Community Fridge, The Sunshine Multicultural Ladies Drop In Project and the Banburyshire Benefits Advice Centre had each received £620.

On behalf of Council, the Chairman commended Councillor Banfield and former Councillor Hughes for the donations they had made to their charities, particularly in light of the difficulties of fundraising during their terms of office due to covid restrictions.

Meeting Length

Due to the length of the agenda, out of courtesy to other Members, the Chairman asked Members to remain in your seat during items and advised, if needed, he would adjourn the meeting to allow for a comfort break at a suitable point.

Members' Pigeon Holes

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

Parish Liaison Meeting

The Chairman invited the Leader, Councillor Wood, to address the meeting.

The Leader referred to the Parish Liaison Meeting which had taken place on Wednesday 8 June and had been extremely well attended and received. The Leader would ensure all Members were sent the notes of the meeting when available and encouraged all Members to attend in the future.

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

There were no petitions or requests to address the meeting.

24 **Urgent Business**

There were no items of urgent business.

25 **Minutes of Council**

The minutes of the meeting held on 18 May 2022 were agreed as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

26 **Minutes**

a) **Minutes of the Executive, Lead Member Decisions and Executive Decisions made under Special Urgency**

Resolved

That the minutes of the meeting of the Executive and Lead Member decisions as set out in the Minute Book be received and that it be noted that since the last meeting of Council at which it was reported, 28 February 2022, one key decision had been taken by Executive, in relation to a Proposal to Consult on a Hackney Carriage Tariff Increase.

b) **Minutes of Committees**

Resolved

That the minutes of Committees as set out in the Minute Book be received.

27 **Questions**

a) **Written Questions**

There were no written questions.

b) **Questions to the Leader of the Council**

Questions were asked and answers received on the following issues:

Councillor Broad: Cherwell Local Plan
Councillor Webb: Leadership structure
Councillor Woodcock: Housing waiting list

Councillor Watkins: Old garages, Banbury Ruscote
Councillor Middleton: Development in Kidlington

c) Questions to Committee Chairmen on the Minutes

There were no questions to Committee Chairman on the minutes of meetings.

28 Disbanding of Joint Shared Services and Personnel Committee and Joint Appeals Panel

The Assistant Director Law, Governance and Democratic Services and Monitoring Officer (interim) submitted a report which sought agreement to disband the Joint Shared Services and Personnel (JSSP) Committee as from 31 August 2022 following the end of the formal partnership arrangements between Cherwell District Council (CDC) and Oxfordshire County Council (OCC) and the conclusion of business for the Committee.

Resolved

- (1) That the Joint Shared Services and Personnel Committee be disbanded with effect from 31 August 2022 and the conclusion of its business noted.
- (2) That the Joint Appeals Panel be disbanded with effect from 31 August 2022.
- (3) That the interim Monitoring Officer be requested to update the Constitution to reflect the disbanding of the Joint Shared Services and Personnel Committee and Joint Appeals Panel accordingly effective 1 September 2022 and to add into the Chief Executive's delegations the power to terminate, extend or vary the new arrangements.
- (4) That the interim Monitoring Officer be requested to submit revised proportionality calculations with the Joint Shared Services and Personnel Committee and Joint Appeals Panel removed from the calculations and any committee allocation and appointment adjustments made accordingly to the 17 October Full Council meeting.
- (5) That it be noted at its meeting of 4 July 2022, the Joint Shared Services and Personnel Committee noted that operational oversight of the new arrangements for service areas would be undertaken by each respective Chief Executive and agreed delegated powers to terminated, extend or vary the new arrangements.

29 Overview and Scrutiny Committee Annual Report 2021/22

The Assistant Director – Law, Governance and Democratic Services (Interim) submitted a report which presented the Overview and Scrutiny Annual Report for 2021/22.

Resolved

- (1) That the Overview and Scrutiny Committee Annual Report 2021/22 be noted.

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Amendments to Committee Membership

The Conservative Group Leader, Councillor Wood, advised Council of changes to membership of committees by Conservative Group members.

Resolved

- (1) That the following Conservative Group changes to committee membership be noted:

Overview and Scrutiny Committee
Remove: Councillor John Donaldson
Add: Councillor Bryn Williams

Planning Committee
Remove: Councillor Barry Wood as committee member to become named substitute
Add: Councillor Colin Clarke (previously named substitute)

Remove: Councillor Donna Ford as named substitute
Add: Councillor Bryn Williams as named substitute

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Motions

The Chair advised that four motions had been submitted. Amendments to two of the motions had been submitted. In line with the Constitution, no further amendments were now permitted.

Motion to declare a Food Poverty Emergency

It was proposed by Councillor Moon and seconded by Councillor Biegel that the following motion be adopted:

“The long-term effects of the COVID pandemic, spiralling inflation and stagnant wages are leaving many adults and children across our communities hungry. Over 2m people in the UK are now reliant on food banks.

Many residents throughout Cherwell are facing the terrible choice of heating or eating. The situation this coming winter is set to get worse. Fuel bills and the cost of food are both likely to increase again in the autumn. The knock-on effects on declining mental health will increase the burden on the NHS.

This Council acknowledges the suffering of residents struggling to feed themselves and their families and declares a Food Poverty Emergency.

We commit to:

- Designating a Food Champion: a lead member for food poverty at Cherwell District Council
- Establishing and reporting to Overview and Scrutiny Committee on the scale of the food poverty crisis in Cherwell
- Drawing up a Cherwell Food Action Plan that supports local communities in helping to relieve the food poverty emergency, in line with the new countywide food strategy
- Developing a promotional campaign that raises awareness of underclaimed Healthy Start food vouchers
- Supporting local communities to reduce food waste and improve the food choices of residents and continuing to be an active member of the Cherwell Community Food Network."

No amendments to the motion having been proposed, the motion was debated as submitted. On being put to the vote the motion was unanimously agreed.

Cost of Living Crisis

It was proposed by Councillor Hingley and seconded by Councillor Middleton that the following motion be adopted:

"There is a pressing need to address the cost-of-living crisis.

Inflation is squeezing already stretched household budgets – propelled largely by energy price increases. On 1 April 2022, Ofgem increased the household energy price cap by 54 per cent - this excludes homes using solid fuel oil or bottled gas. However, the cap does not protect businesses. Energy cost rises affect all aspects of life: from logistics and food production to home heating and cooking. Many Cherwell families face the hard choice between heating and eating.

This crisis demonstrates the need to change our energy supply, not only to prevent a climate catastrophe, but also to maintain a functioning economy for all. The UK Government has announced tax reliefs for companies investing in "UK extraction". This move is encouraging more investment in North Sea oil and gas extraction, whilst hampering energy decarbonisation plans.

This Council therefore declares a 'Cost of Living Crisis' and calls on the Leader to write to the Government to:

1. Put in place schemes for subsidising bus and train travel, to ensure people can travel affordably and sustainably
2. Urgently review the energy cap to cover all types of domestic fuels and provide protection to SMEs.
3. Expand the coverage of the Rural Fuel Duty Rate Relief.
4. Provide immediate financial support for councils to aid the most vulnerable.
5. Demonstrate a real and immediate increase of investment in UK renewables to decarbonise the energy sector and prevent a future energy fuelled cost of living crisis."

Councillor Sames proposed the following amendment (amendments struck through and in italics), which was duly seconded by Councillor Corkin.

~~"There is a pressing need to address the cost-of-living crisis.~~

~~-~~

~~Inflation is squeezing already stretched household budgets—propelled largely by energy price increases. On 1 April 2022, Ofgem increased the household energy price cap by 54 per cent—this excludes homes using solid fuel oil or bottled gas. However, the cap does not protect businesses. Energy cost rises affect all aspects of life: from logistics and food production to home heating and cooking. Many Cherwell families face the hard choice between heating and eating.—~~

~~-~~

~~This crisis demonstrates the need to change our energy supply, not only to prevent a climate catastrophe, but also to maintain a functioning economy for all. The UK Government has announced tax reliefs for companies investing in "UK extraction". This move is encouraging more investment in North Sea oil and gas extraction, whilst hampering energy decarbonisation plans.~~

~~-~~

~~This Council therefore declares a 'Cost of Living Crisis' and calls on the Leader to write to the Government to:~~

*We recognise the need to continue to support our communities at a time when the cost of living is increasing. We would like to thank our staff for ensuring that **£6.7m of the £7.7m** of Government funded resources, through **the Council Tax Rebate Scheme**, has already been provided to support our residents.*

We will continue to work closely with the Government and the Leader of the Council will write to the Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities, requesting a meeting to discuss:

1. ~~Put in place schemes for subsidising~~ *Subsidy for* bus and train travel, to ensure people can travel affordably and sustainably

2. ~~Urgently review~~ *A review of the energy cap to cover all types of domestic fuels and provide protection to SMEs.*
3. ~~Expand~~ *Expansion of the coverage of the Rural Fuel Duty Rate Relief.*
4. ~~Provide immediate~~ *Additional financial support for councils to aid the most vulnerable.*
5. ~~Demonstrate a real and immediate increase of~~ *Increasing investment in UK renewables to decarbonise the energy sector and prevent a future energy fuelled cost of living crisis."*

The amendment was debated and on being put to the vote was carried and therefore became the substantive motion for debate.

Council debated the substantive motion (the motion as amended), which on being put to the vote was carried and therefore approved.

Campsfield House, Kidlington, Motion

It was proposed by Councillor Middleton and seconded by Councillor Coton that the following motion be adopted:

"The Home Office intends to reopen Campsfield House Immigration Removal Centre in Kidlington, as part of the newly signed migrant deportation agreement signed with the Rwandan Government.

Before its closure in 2018, Campsfield detained hundreds of migrants - some for years. There were weekly demonstrations, prison protests, hunger strikes, two suicides, escapes and scores of legal challenges. Management switched between three of the UK's main private prison providers before the closure, following a damning enquiry into conditions.

The UK's 'Economic and Development Partnership' with Rwanda has been condemned as inhumane and illegal by international bodies, the UNHCR, politicians from all parties, legal experts and a large part of the British population. Not one migrant has yet been deported, due to legal challenges.

Reopening Campsfield is cruel, ineffective, and costly. Instead of criminalising and deporting migrants out of Cherwell, the government should re-invest in many of the aid projects working to mitigate the key drivers of migration. If the government does reopen Campsfield House, then this council should commit to ensuring that Cherwell District provides no direct support for it.

This Council therefore condemns the re-opening of Campsfield House and calls on the leader to write to the Government to:

1. Cancel the Campsfield House reopening as a detention centre.
2. Create safe havens and legal routes to apply for asylum in the United Kingdom.

3. Restore the UK's commitment to spend 0.7% of its Gross National Income on overseas aid to support countries to tackle the key drivers of migration.

No amendments to the motion having been proposed, the motion was debated as submitted. In the course of the debate it was proposed by Cotter and seconded by Councillor Woodcock that a recorded vote be taken. Having been proposed and seconded, a recorded vote was duly taken and Members voted as follows:

Councillor Hannah Banfield	For
Councillor Andrew Beere	For
Councillor Rebecca Biegel	For
Councillor Nathan Bignell	Against
Councillor John Broad	Abstain
Councillor Hugo Brown	Against
Councillor Phil Chapman	Against
Councillor Mark Cherry	For
Councillor Colin Clarke	Against
Councillor Patrick Clarke	Against
Councillor Gemma Coton	For
Councillor Nick Cotter	For
Councillor Andrew Crichton	For
Councillor Sandy Dallimore	Against
Councillor John Donaldson	Against
Councillor Donna Ford	Against
Councillor Ian Harwood	Against
Councillor David Hingley	For
Councillor Matt Hodgson	For
Councillor Kieron Mallon	Against
Councillor Nick Mawer	Against
Councillor Fiona Mawson	For
Councillor Ian Middleton	For
Councillor Perran Moon	For
Councillor Richard Mould	Against
Councillor Adam Nell	Against
Councillor Dr Chukwudi Okeke	For
Councillor Angus Patrick	For

Councillor Chris Pruden	For
Councillor Eddie Reeves	Against
Councillor George Reynolds	Against
Councillor Dan Sames	Against
Councillor Les Sibley	Against
Councillor Amanda Watkins	For
Councillor Douglas Webb	Against
Councillor Fraser Webster	For
Councillor Bryn Williams	Against
Councillor Barry Wood	Against
Councillor Sean Woodcock	For

The vote was lost and the motion therefore fell.

Refugee Crisis Motion

It was proposed by Councillor Middleton and seconded by Councillor Patrick that the following motion be adopted:

“The UK government response to the Ukrainian refugee crisis has been criticised for its slow start and unnecessary bureaucracy at a time of extreme stress for people fleeing a war zone.

Many of the problems associated with the Homes for Ukraine Scheme have been piled on to local authorities already dealing with the fallout from the pandemic and the emerging cost of living crisis.

Nevertheless, the generosity of our residents and the dedication and hard work of our housing team has ensured that hundreds of guests have been placed with hosts in Cherwell. But there is now some uncertainty about the longer-term prospects for these people as the conflict in their home country continues.

Ukrainian support groups such as the Opora network have reported that finding longer term accommodation may be hampered by requirements from landlords and lettings agencies for extensive reference checks, including proof of earnings in the UK going back some years along with other documentation. According to reports, many refugees have been told point blank that they have no chance of renting in the UK. This is a problem that may impact all refugees.

This Council therefore re-affirms its commitment to providing as much support as we are able to all refugees in Cherwell and calls on the leader to write urgently to the Home Secretary seeking reassurances on long-term support packages, including national agreements with landlords and lettings

organisations to prevent another major crisis that our housing and homeless agencies will have to deal with.”

Councillor Wood proposed the following amendment (amendments struck through and in italics), which was duly seconded by Councillor Mawer.

“The UK government response to the Ukrainian refugee crisis has been criticised for its slow start and unnecessary bureaucracy at a time of extreme stress for people fleeing a war zone. *Local authorities, already dealing with the fallout from the pandemic and the emerging cost of living crisis, are on the frontline of sorting out the issues from the Homes for Ukraine scheme.*

~~Many of the problems associated with the Homes for Ukraine Scheme have been piled on to local authorities already dealing with the fallout from the pandemic and the emerging cost of living crisis.~~

Nevertheless, the generosity of our residents and the dedication and hard work of our ~~housing team~~ *staff* has ensured that hundreds of guests have been placed safely with hosts in Cherwell. But there is now some uncertainty about the longer-term prospects for these people as the conflict in their home country continues.

~~Ukrainian support groups such as the Opora network have reported that finding longer term accommodation may be hampered by requirements from landlords and lettings agencies for extensive reference checks, including proof of earnings in the UK going back some years along with other documentation. According to reports, many refugees have been told point blank that they have no chance of renting in the UK. Reports from groups like Opora show that the likelihood of refugees becoming renters in the private sector is unlikely based on the documentation requirements from landlords and letting agents. This places a huge additional pressure on social housing availability. This is a problem that may impact all refugees.~~

This Council therefore re-affirms its commitment to ~~providing as much support as we are able to~~ *welcoming refugees and working in partnership with other agencies and organisations to provide longer term stability for all refugees in Cherwell and calls on the Leader to write urgently to the Home Secretary seeking reassurances on long-term support packages, including national agreements with landlords and lettings organisations to prevent another major crisis that our housing and homeless agencies will have to deal with. Lord Harrington, Minister for Refugees, offering an invitation to Cherwell to show how beneficial partnership working can be in resolving issues. We also request reassurance on long-term funding packages, delivering parity for refugees from different countries alongside national guidance to private landlords regarding letting properties to refugees and so prevent a major housing crisis.”*

The amendment was debated and on being put to the vote was carried and therefore became the substantive motion for debate.

Council debated the substantive motion (the motion as amended), which on being put to the vote was carried and therefore approved.

Resolved

(1) That the following motion be adopted:

"The long-term effects of the COVID pandemic, spiralling inflation and stagnant wages are leaving many adults and children across our communities hungry. Over 2m people in the UK are now reliant on food banks.

Many residents throughout Cherwell are facing the terrible choice of heating or eating. The situation this coming winter is set to get worse. Fuel bills and the cost of food are both likely to increase again in the autumn. The knock-on effects on declining mental health will increase the burden on the NHS.

This Council acknowledges the suffering of residents struggling to feed themselves and their families and declares a Food Poverty Emergency.

We commit to:

- Designating a Food Champion: a lead member for food poverty at Cherwell District Council
- Establishing and reporting to Overview and Scrutiny Committee on the scale of the food poverty crisis in Cherwell
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- Developing a promotional campaign that raises awareness of underclaimed Healthy Start food vouchers
- Supporting local communities to reduce food waste and improve the food choices of residents and continuing to be an active member of the Cherwell Community Food Network."

(2) That the following motion, as amended, be adopted:

"We recognise the need to continue to support our communities at a time when the cost of living is increasing. We would like to thank our staff for ensuring that £6.7m of the £7.7m of Government funded resources, through the Council Tax Rebate Scheme, has already been provided to support our residents.

We will continue to work closely with the Government and the Leader of the Council will write to the Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities, requesting a meeting to discuss:

1. Subsidy for bus and train travel, to ensure people can travel affordably and sustainably
 2. A review of the energy cap to cover all types of domestic fuels and provide protection to SMEs.
 3. Expansion of the coverage of the Rural Fuel Duty Rate Relief.
 4. Additional financial support for councils to aid the most vulnerable.
 5. Increasing investment in UK renewables to decarbonise the energy sector and prevent a future energy fuelled cost of living crisis.”
- (3) That the following motion, as amended, be adopted:

"The UK government response to the Ukrainian refugee crisis has been criticised for its slow start and unnecessary bureaucracy at a time of extreme stress for people fleeing war. Local authorities, already dealing with the fallout from the pandemic and the emerging cost of living crisis, are on the frontline of sorting out the issues from the Homes for Ukraine scheme.

Nevertheless, the generosity of our residents and the dedication and hard work of our staff has ensured that hundreds of guests have been placed safely with hosts in Cherwell. There is uncertainty about the longer-term prospects for refugees while the conflict in Ukraine continues.

Reports from groups like Opora show that the likelihood of refugees becoming renters in the private sector is unlikely based on the documentation requirements from landlords and letting agents. This places a huge additional pressure on social housing availability. This is a problem that may impact all refugees.

This Council therefore re-affirms its commitment to welcoming refugees and working in partnership with other agencies and organisations to provide longer term stability for all refugees in Cherwell and calls on the Leader to write urgently to Lord Harrington, Minister for Refugees, offering an invitation to Cherwell to show how beneficial partnership working can be in resolving issues. We also request reassurance on long-term funding packages, delivering parity for refugees from different countries alongside national guidance to private landlords regarding letting properties to refugees and so prevent a major housing crisis.”

The meeting ended at 9.05 pm

Chairman:

Date: