

Cherwell District Council

Executive

Minutes of a meeting of the Executive held at 39 Castle Quay, Banbury, OX16 5FD, on 7 April 2025 at 6.30 pm

Present:

Councillor David Hingley (Leader of the Council & Portfolio Holder for Strategic Leadership) (Chairman)

Councillor Tom Beckett, Portfolio Holder for Greener Communities
Councillor Chris Brant, Portfolio Holder for Corporate Services
Councillor Nick Cotter, Portfolio Holder for Housing
Councillor Ian Middleton, Portfolio Holder for Neighbourhood Services
Councillor Robert Parkinson, Portfolio Holder for Safer Communities

Apologies for absence:

Councillor Lesley McLean, Deputy Leader of the Council and Portfolio Holder for Finance, Property & Regeneration
Councillor Jean Conway, Portfolio Holder for Planning and Development Management
Councillor Rob Pattenden, Portfolio Holder for Healthy Communities

Also Present:

Councillor Amanda Watkins, Leader of the Opposition, Labour Group

Officers:

Gordon Stewart, Chief Executive
Ian Boll, Corporate Director Communities
Stephen Hinds, Corporate Director Resources and Transformation
Michael Furness, Assistant Director Finance & S151 Officer
Shiraz Sheikh, Assistant Director Law & Governance and Monitoring Officer
David Peckford, Assistant Director Planning & Development
Nicola Riley, Assistant Director Housing and Wellbeing
Shona Ware, Assistant Director Customer Focus
Jacey Scott, Head of Revenues and Benefits
David Spilsbury, Head of Digital and Innovation
Natasha Clark, Governance and Elections Manager

Officers Attending Virtually:

Mona Walsh, Assistant Director - Property
Claire Cox, Assistant Director Human Resources

119 **Declarations of Interest**

There were no declarations of interest.

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

There were no petitions or requests to address the meeting.

The Chairman welcomed Councillor Watkins, Leader of the Opposition, the Labour Group, to the meeting and invited her to indicate if she wished to speak on any item.

121 **Minutes**

The minutes of the meeting held on 19 March 2025 were agreed as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

122 **Chairman's Announcements**

The Chairman welcomed Members and officers to the first Executive meeting at the council's new office at Castle Quay. Executive members and the Leader of the Opposition thanked officers for their work resulting in the move of the council's headquarters.

The Chairman advised that further to the decision at the 19 March Executive meeting in respect of Local Government Reorganisation options, a letter had been sent to the Minister of State for Local Government and English Devolution from the Oxfordshire councils (county, city and districts). A separate letter had also been sent from Cherwell District Council and West Oxfordshire District Council. It was anticipated there would be feedback would be received in May.

123 **Annual Delivery Plan and Performance Measure 2025/2026**

The Assistant Director Customer Focus submitted a report to agree the council's Annual Delivery Plan (ADP) and Performance measures for 2025/26.

In considering the report, Executive members thanked officers for their hard work on the ADP and Performance Measures and their support to individual Portfolio Holders.

Resolved

- (1) That the council's Annual Delivery Plan and Performance Framework for 2025/26 be approved.

- (2) That the responsibility for finalising the milestones and the Key Performance Indicators be delegated to the Assistant Director for Customer Focus in consultation with the Portfolio Holder for Corporate Services.

Reasons

This report sets out a suggested annual delivery plan and framework for measuring and monitoring the council's performance and progress towards achieving better outcomes for its communities.

Alternative options

Option 1: Not to have an annual delivery plan and performance framework, however without one, the council cannot monitor its progress towards achieving its desired outcomes and therefore agree any corrective action that might be necessary to keep them on track. This option has therefore been rejected as the council would risk being able to deliver better outcomes for its communities.

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Local Authority Housing Fund Round 3

The Assistant Director Wellbeing and Housing submitted a report to seek approval for the expenditure of the capital grant received from the Local Authority Housing Fund (LAHF) Round 3.

In response to a question from the Leader of the Opposition, Councillor Watkins, the Portfolio Holder for Housing explained that the grant would be used to deliver 8 units of accommodation with 4 units to be used as temporary accommodation for households owed a homelessness duty by the Council, and 4 units to be initially let (at first let only) to those on Afghan resettlement schemes. The units would be delivered at the end of March 2026 in accordance with grant conditions.

Resolved

- (1) That a capital grant to South Oxfordshire Housing Association (SOHA) for the delivery of new social housing within Cherwell from the grant received from Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local government (MHCLG): Local Authority Housing Fund Round 3 be approved.
- (2) That the increase to the Council's capital programme of £1.4m that arises from the report be approved.

Reasons

Delivering more social housing in district is a key objective and providing suitable, self-contained, housing for those in temporary accommodation is important. Accepting this grant is a way in which the council can enable more

housing delivery, easing pressures, without significant financial expenditure or risk.

Alternative options

Option 1: Not to transfer the grant to SOHA. The Council is under time pressure to deliver units as conditions of the grant. The government have provided the grant based on the Council's assurance to deliver quickly. To use an alternative delivery method, which is not currently known, risks non-delivery and repayment of the grant. This is therefore rejected.

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Discretionary Housing Payments Policy

The Assistant Director Finance (Section 151 Officer) submitted a report to inform Executive of the reviewed policy for Discretionary Housing Payment (DHP) and proposed updates.

In response to Executive member questions, the Head of Revenues and Benefits confirmed that eligible applicants would be signposted to the scheme. The Head of Revenues and Benefits confirmed that spending of the funding was maximized.

Resolved

- (1) That the contents of the reviewed policy for Discretionary Housing Payments be noted.
- (2) That the reviewed policy for Discretionary Housing Payments be approved.

Reasons

Discretionary Housing Payments are vital for residents in the current economic climate and help to support our most vulnerable residents with housing costs. It is recommended that the policy is endorsed by Executive to continue delivering support to these customers.

Alternative options

Option 1: To return the funds to the Department for Works and Pensions. This has been rejected as this would not be in line with Cherwell's objectives of continuing to respond to the cost-of-living crisis and working to prevent homelessness.

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Urgent Business

There were no items of urgent business.

The meeting ended at 7.00 pm

Chairman:

Date: