

Public Document Pack



Cherwell

DISTRICT COUNCIL
NORTH OXFORDSHIRE

Committee: Overview and Scrutiny Committee
Date: Tuesday 15 October 2024
Time: 6.30 pm
Venue: Bodicote House, Bodicote, Banbury, Oxon OX15 4AA

Membership

**Councillor Dr Isabel Creed
(Chairman)**

Councillor Gordon Blakeway
Councillor Phil Chapman
Councillor Andrew Crichton
Councillor Harry Knight
Councillor Lynne Parsons

Councillor Nigel Simpson (Vice-Chairman)

Councillor John Broad
Councillor Grace Conway-Murray
Councillor Frank Ideh
Councillor Simon Lytton
Councillor Barry Wood

Substitutes Any member of the relevant political group, excluding Executive members

AGENDA

Overview and Scrutiny Members should not normally be subject to the party whip. Where a member is subject to a party whip they must declare this at the beginning of the meeting and it should be recorded in the minutes.

- 1. Apologies for Absence and Notification of Substitute Members**
- 2. Declarations of Interest**

Members are asked to declare any interest and the nature of that interest which they may have in any of the items under consideration at this meeting.

3. **Minutes** (Pages 5 - 10)

To confirm as a correct record the minutes of the meeting held on 10 September 2024.

4. **Chairman's Announcements**

To receive communications from the Chairman.

5. **Urgent Business**

The Chairman to advise whether they have agreed to any item of urgent business being admitted to the agenda.

6. **New Cherwell District Council Housing Strategy 2025-2030** (Pages 11 - 60)

Report of Assistant Director Housing and Wellbeing

Purpose of report

To present to the Committee a new draft Housing Strategy.

Recommendations

The Overview and Scrutiny Committee resolves:

- 1.1 To consider and comment on the contents of the new drafted Housing Strategy and make any recommendations to the Executive.

7. **Working Groups Update** (Pages 61 - 68)

An update on the Equality, Diversity and Inclusion, Food Insecurity and Climate Action Scrutiny Working Groups since the last Overview and Scrutiny Committee on 10 September 2024.

Recommendation

The Overview and Scrutiny Committee resolves:

- 1.1 To note the Scrutiny Working Groups update, including the updated membership of each working group.
- 1.2 To agree the terms of reference for the Food Insecurity Scrutiny Working Group, as set out in Appendix 1 of the briefing note.

8. **Work Programme 2024-25** (Pages 69 - 74)

An update on the Overview and Scrutiny Work Programme 2024/25.

The Overview and Scrutiny Committee resolves:

Recommendation

The Overview and Scrutiny

1.1 To consider and agree the Scrutiny Work Programme 2024/2025 update.

Overview and Scrutiny Support Guide

The Overview and Scrutiny Guide is attached for reference

Councillors are requested to collect any post from their pigeon hole in the Members Room at the end of the meeting.

Information about this Meeting

Apologies for Absence

Apologies for absence should be notified to democracy@cherwell-dc.gov.uk or 01295 221534 prior to the start of the meeting.

Declarations of Interest

Members are asked to declare interests at item 2 on the agenda or if arriving after the start of the meeting, at the start of the relevant agenda item.

Local Government and Finance Act 1992 – Budget Setting, Contracts & Supplementary Estimates

Members are reminded that any member who is two months in arrears with Council Tax must declare the fact and may speak but not vote on any decision which involves budget setting, extending or agreeing contracts or incurring expenditure not provided for in the agreed budget for a given year and could affect calculations on the level of Council Tax.

Evacuation Procedure

When the continuous alarm sounds you must evacuate the building by the nearest available fire exit. Members and visitors should proceed to the car park as directed by Democratic Services staff and await further instructions.

Access to Meetings

If you have any special requirements, such as a large print version of these papers or special access facilities to view a meeting online or attend a meeting in person, please contact the officer named below, giving as much notice as possible before the meeting.

Mobile Phones

Please ensure that any device is switched to silent operation or switched off.

Webcasting and Broadcasting Notice

The meeting will be recorded by the council for live and/or subsequent broadcast on the council's website. The whole of the meeting will be recorded, except when confidential or exempt items are being considered. The webcast will be retained on the website for 6 months.

If you make a representation to the meeting, you will be deemed by the council to have consented to being recorded. By entering the Council Chamber or joining virtually, you

are consenting to being recorded and to the possible use of those images and sound recordings for webcasting and/or training purposes.

The council is obliged, by law, to allow members of the public to take photographs, film, audio-record, and report on proceedings. The council will only seek to prevent this should it be undertaken in a disruptive or otherwise inappropriate manner.

Queries Regarding this Agenda

Please contact Michael Carr / Martyn Surfleet, Democratic and Elections
democracy@cherwell-dc.gov.uk, 01295 221534

Shiraz Sheikh
Monitoring Officer

Published on Monday 7 October 2024

Cherwell District Council

Overview and Scrutiny Committee

Minutes of a meeting of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee held at Bodicote House, Bodicote, Banbury, Oxon OX15 4AA, on 10 September 2024 at 6.30 pm

Present:

Councillor Dr Isabel Creed (Chairman)
Councillor Nigel Simpson (Vice-Chairman)
Councillor Gordon Blakeway
Councillor John Broad
Councillor Phil Chapman
Councillor Grace Conway-Murray
Councillor Andrew Crichton
Councillor Frank Ideh
Councillor Lynne Parsons
Councillor Barry Wood

Substitute Members:

Apologies for absence:

Councillor Harry Knight
Councillor Simon Lytton

Also Present:

Councillor David Hingley, Leader of The Council
Councillor Rob Pattenden, Portfolio Holder - Healthy Communities
Councillor Chris Brant, Portfolio Holder - Corporate Services

Also Present Virtually:

Councillor Jean Conway, Portfolio Holder - Planning and Development Management

Officers:

Gordon Stewart, Chief Executive
Ian Boll, Corporate Director Communities
Shiraz Sheikh, Assistant Director Law & Governance and Monitoring Officer
David Peckford, Assistant Director Planning & Development
Nicola Riley, Assistant Director Wellbeing & Housing
Shona Ware, Assistant Director Customer Focus
Martyn Surfleet, Democratic and Elections Officer
Natasha Clark, Governance and Elections Manager

Officers Attending Virtually:

Paul France, Strategic Housing Team Leader

10 **Declarations of Interest**

There were no declarations of interest.

11 **Minutes**

The minutes of the meeting of the Committee held on 18 July 2024 were agreed as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

12 **Chairman's Announcements**

There were no Chairman's announcements.

13 **Urgent Business**

There were no items of urgent business.

14 **Performance Monitoring Report Quarter 1 2024 - 2025**

The Committee considered a report from the Assistant Director – Customer Focus that detailed the council's performance position at the end of quarter 1 2024-2025.

In introducing the report, the Portfolio Holder for Corporate Services advised that 50 of the 57 Business Plan measures had been achieved, 6 were operating slightly behind target and 1 being behind target. The one measure that was operating behind target related to temporary accommodation where 68 households were reported in temporary accommodation against the maximum target of 45. It was reported that the number of new placements was now comparable to the number of moving out into other housing options, therefore the reported increase had shown a slight slowing down.

In response to a question regarding how the council defined the term "vulnerable" the Assistant Director – Housing and Wellbeing alongside the Strategic Housing Team Leader advised that it was considered in the broadest possible sense, but Housing legislation included specific set of criteria that helped determine if a person or household was "Vulnerable" which ensured a consistent approach.

In response to a question regarding the relationship between the green rating for delivered affordable housing and the red rating of homeless households in temporary accommodation, and what the council was doing to reconcile the difference, the Assistant Director – Housing and Wellbeing alongside the

Strategic Housing Team Leader advised that the ratings related to annually set measurable targets and indicated the council's position on achieving said targets. With regards affordable housing, the Assistant Director Planning and Development that the overall housing target and qualifying target for affordable housing would be reviewed as part of the Local Plan process and would have regard to the Council motion to target 50%. It was important to balance the target with what was viable to ensure housing delivery occurred.

In response to a question regarding BP1.2.10, % of Major Applications overturned at appeal and the cost to the council, the Assistant Director Planning and Development advised that the national target of 10% was the indicator whilst the actual for quarter 1 was 18.8%. The council was also measured nationally over a two-year period and this figure was 11.2% as reported to Planning Committee. The Assistant Director Planning and Development explained that the number of appeals this year had been higher than previous years resulting in more appeals being allowed. This was being reviewed and Planning Officers would work with the Portfolio Holder for Planning and Development Management and Planning Committee to ensure recommendations were sound, grounds for refusal were as defensible as possible, and that the council's decision making process was robust. The cost of appeals varied greatly and were subject to many factors The Chairman reminded the Committee that Planning Application Appeals would be a substantive agenda item at a future meeting.

In response to a request that the red and amber indicators on the EDI Action Plan action plan be considered at the first meeting of the EDI working group, Committee endorsed the request.

Resolved

- (1) That having given due consideration, the Council's Performance Monitoring Report Quarter 1 2024 - 2025 performance be noted, and no recommendations be submitted for Executive consideration.
- (2) That it be delegated to officers to arrange the EDI performance indicators be added to the agenda of the first meeting of the EDI Working Group.

15

New Cherwell District Council Allocations Scheme

The Committee considered a report from the Assistant Director – Housing and Wellbeing which sought consideration of draft Cherwell District Council Allocations Scheme prior to the Scheme being submitted to Executive in December.

In introducing the report, the Portfolio Holder for Healthy Communities explained that the Allocations Scheme was the Policy that ensured the fair allocation of social housing properties within district and was used for the administration of the waiting list for social housing, which was part of our statutory duties. It was good practice to regularly review the Scheme to

ensure it remained compliant and continued to meet the needs of applicants in the best way. At their July meeting, Executive had agreed the draft new Allocations Scheme for consultation. A public and stakeholder consultation on the new Scheme was currently under way.

The Portfolio Holder for Healthy Communities explained that the policy is heavily informed by legislation, Council's had flexibility to be able to manage and administer their own schemes and prioritise certain applicant circumstances. The main changes proposed in the new Scheme were:

- An increase in the banding for statutory homeless house holds
- The creation of a domestic abuse category within Band 2 to comply with the Domestic Abuse Act 2021
- Income threshold being capped at £80,000 for applications on larger properties
- Changes to how overcrowded households are managed through the waiting lists
- Additional preference for people leaving the armed forces and their families – consistent with the armed forces covenant within legislation

In response to a question relating to applicants with rent arrears the Assistant Director – Housing & Wellbeing advised that. Officers worked with applicants on a case by case basis. An applicant's rent record would be looked at the time of bidding and should have a cleared outstanding housing debt in full or evidence they have made a concerted effort to address their housing related debt.

In response to questions relating to the waiting list, available stock, how many providers the council worked with, the Assistant Director – Housing & Wellbeing advised that there were currently just over 2050 applicants on the waiting list and that stock availability varied from week to week> The council operated a choice based letting scheme with a weekly newsletter to those on the waiting list. With regards to current providers, the council worked with over 30 providers with Sanctuary being the largest. All registered providers signed up to the council's nominations agreement.

In the course of discussion, officers were requested to consider including in the report to Executive the relationship between the number of prospective applicants on the waiting list and those who don't meet the criteria but are supported by renting in the private sector with housing benefit support.

In response to questions regarding the changes and they would impact on supply and availability of properties, the Assistant Director – Housing & Wellbeing advised that the increase in supply was linked to the development. The Allocations Policy focused on the allocation of the limited stock available in line with the criteria and priority bands in the Policy rather than creating supply.

In response to a question regarding the Band 2 Categories: Domestic Abuse, and introduction for survivors of domestic abuse who wished to remain in their home, the Assistant Director Wellbeing and Housing Services explained that

this was intended to ensure each person's circumstance was best met. Individuals applying in this category who were high risk could make be eligible for Band 1 or may wish/need to make a homeless application for temporary accommodation away from their current home. There was a Duty Team during office hours and an Emergency Out of Hours services to assist individuals at risk of homelessness.

Resolved

- (1) That having given due consideration, the New Cherwell District Council Allocations Scheme be recommended for adoption by Executive,
- (2) That it be recommended to Executive that they receive a summary of the consultation for consideration alongside the Scheme being recommended for adoption.

16

Cost of Living 2023/2024 Review and 2024/2025 Activities

The Committee considered a report from the Assistant Director – Housing and Wellbeing, that provided an update on additional activity described in the 2023/24 Cost of Living action and proposed approaches and activity for 2024/2025.

In introducing the report, the Portfolio Holder for Healthy Communities, advised of the positive impact the councils' interventions has had on residents of the district, and that confirmation had been received of continued funding through HSF6 agreements with Oxfordshire County Council.

In response to clarification as to the report stating "Not Applicable" against "Climate and Environmental Impact" in the Implications section despite the report detailing activity relating to reduction in energy use and reduction of thermal loss, the Assistant Director – Housing and Wellbeing undertook to provide clarification to Members.

Resolved

- (1) That having given due consideration, the Cost of Living 2023/2024 review and proposed range of activities for 2024/2025 be noted and recommended to Executive to endorse.

17

Work Programme 2024 - 2025

The Chair provided an update on Committee's Work Programme 2024-25 advising that anticipated meeting dates for the majority of the suggested topics had been agreed and were as set out in the agenda. Planning Application Appeals and Infrastructure Funding and Delivery and S106 Contributions had subsequently been scheduled for the January meeting.

With regards the Local Plan, the Chair advised following discussion with officers, that due to the importance and complexity of the Local Plan, an extraordinary Overview and Scrutiny Committee be held to focus on the Local Plan. The extraordinary Overview and Scrutiny Committee meeting would take place on Tuesday 12 November ahead of Executive consideration of the Local Plan on 2 December. Given the importance of this item, all Members would be invited to attend and a briefing ahead of the meeting would be scheduled.

The Chair advised that the Chief Constable and Police and Crime Commissioner for the Thames Valley will join our March meeting to give their annual updates. As usual, all Members will be invited to attend this meeting. The Chair agreed to liaise with officers regarding a Committee suggestion that the Chair of the Buckinghamshire, Oxfordshire and Berkshire West (BOB), Integrated Care System (BOBICB) also be invited to attend the March meeting as the Committee could get value in a feedback loop.

The Governance and Elections Manager provided an update on the nominations received for the Food Insecurity, Climate Action and EDI working groups and encouraged members to come forward should they wish to participate. The first working group meetings would be scheduled in due course. It was also advised that the Personnel Committee will be asked to agree the continuation of the EDI working group at its next meeting and to nominate members. Arrangements would then be made for the first EDI working group meeting.

Resolved

- (1) That having given due consideration, that the indicative Work Programme 2024 – 2025 be noted and endorsed.
- (2) That the update on the scrutiny working groups (Climate Action; Food Insecurity; and Equalities, Diversity and Inclusion) be noted.

The meeting ended at 7.50 pm

Chairman:

Date:

This report is public	
New Cherwell District Council Housing Strategy 2025-2030	
Committee	Overview and Scrutiny
Date of Committee	15 October 2024
Portfolio Holder presenting the report	Portfolio holder for Housing - Councillor Nick Cotter
Date Portfolio Holder agreed report	3 October 2024
Report of	Nicola Riley - Assistant Director, Wellbeing and Housing

Purpose of report

To present to the Committee a new draft Housing Strategy.

1. Recommendations

The Overview and Scrutiny Committee resolves:

- 1.1 To consider and comment on the contents of the new drafted Housing Strategy and make any recommendations to the Executive.

2. Executive Summary

- 2.1 The Housing Strategy describes the approach that Cherwell plans to take to meet its housing objectives and challenges over the coming 5 years. It is part of the Council's statutory duties to set objectives, targets and policies for how the authority intends to manage and deliver its strategic housing role.
- 2.2 The new drafted strategy reflects local and national context in developing its priorities and objectives.
- 2.3 A public and stakeholder consultation is currently taking place on the draft policy ahead of the Executive meeting in January.

Implications & Impact Assessments

Implications	Commentary
Finance	There are no new financial implications outlined in the report as the existing arrangement is captured in the base revenue budget Kelly Wheeler, Finance Business Partner, 29 July 2024

Legal	<p>The Housing Strategy is a necessary forward plan, an ECIA is required and has been completed and public consultation will take place before the strategy is finalised therefore there are no direct legal implications arising from this report.</p> <p>Alison Coles, Legal Services Operations Manager, Solicitor, 31 July 2024</p>			
Risk Management	<p>As it is part of our statutory housing duties, we should review current policy to ensure it is compliant with legislation, is fair and inclusive and is meeting the needs of the district.</p> <p>Therefore, a regular review of this policy is prudent as part of mitigating actions of non-compliance. This and any further risks will be managed through the Service Operational Risk and will be escalated to the Leadership Risk Register as and when deemed necessary.</p> <p>Celia Prado-Teeling, Performance Team Leader, 29 July 2024</p>			
Impact Assessments	Positive	Neutral	Negative	Commentary
Equality Impact	x			<p>An Equalities and Climate Impact Assessment is included as an Appendices of the report. This review has been developed in line with the principles of our Equalities, Diversity and Inclusion framework.</p> <p>Celia Prado-Teeling, Performance Team Leader, 29 July 2024</p>
A Are there any aspects of the proposed decision, including how it is delivered or accessed, that could impact on inequality?	x			
B Will the proposed decision have an impact upon the lives of people with protected characteristics, including employees and service users?	x			
Climate & Environmental Impact		x		Not applicable

ICT & Digital Impact		x		Not applicable
Data Impact		x		Not applicable
Procurement & subsidy		x		Not applicable
Council Priorities	Housing that meets your needs			
Human Resources	Not applicable			
Property	Not applicable			
Consultation & Engagement	A decision to undertake a public consultation was resolved by the Executive on 9 September 2024.			

Supporting Information

3. Background

- 3.1 The Council develops and delivers a Housing Strategy in accordance with its statutory duties. The last strategy span was from 2019 to 2024. Therefore, a review and development of a new strategy is required to reflect changing national and local context over recent years and develop new priorities and objectives to deliver.
- 3.2 Following approval by the Executive on 9 September, the new scheme will undergo public and stakeholder consultation. Following conclusion of the consultation and consideration of comments, a final version will be presented for approval at the Executive.

4. Details

- 4.1 The Housing Strategy provides a strategic overview of local housing issues and set out what both the Council and our partners will need to do or consider to address them. It will help shape the housing services and policies, from our role in providing services to vulnerable people, to how we ensure appropriate management of housing within the district and taking into account our role as the local planning authority.
- 4.2 The draft strategy has 3 main priorities for delivery and on which actions are based. These 3 priorities are
- Prioritise the delivery of homes that people can afford and that are suitable for the needs of the community
 - Improving the existing condition of properties within Cherwell. Ensuring high property standards and properties that are fit for the future, working towards net zero

- Promoting health and wellbeing through housing, tackling homelessness, improving support. Helping to create sustainable communities

4.3 The priorities have been produced following a review of the housing pressures and challenges nationally and locally. These include, affordability of housing, supply of affordable and social housing, increasing homelessness rates and the discrepancy locally between earnings and housing costs.

4.4 The consultation will include all the major stakeholders involved in housing. This includes partners that work for Registered Providers of social housing and statutory agencies, such as health and social care. A summary of the consultation comments and actions taken as a result will accompany the final version of the Housing Strategy presented at the Executive.

5. Alternative Options and Reasons for Rejection

5.1 Not applicable.

6 Conclusion and Reasons for Recommendations

6.1 It is important that the Council has up to date policies and procedures for its statutory and key service areas and it is important that they are legislatively and operationally sound. A periodic review of policies is therefore appropriate. Where appropriate, it is important that consultation is undertaken on new policy to ensure that the views of stakeholders are understood and taken account of.

Decision Information

Key Decision	Not applicable
Subject to Call in	Not applicable
If not, why not subject to call in	Not applicable
Ward(s) Affected	All wards

Document Information

Appendices	
Appendix 1	New Housing Strategy 2025-30 – draft for consultation
Appendix 2	Equalities and Climate Impact Assessment
Background Papers	None

Reference Papers	None
Report Author	Richard Smith – Head of Housing
Report Author contact details	richard.smith@cherwell-dc.gov.uk 01295 221640

This page is intentionally left blank

Introduction

The Housing Strategy sets out Cherwell District Council's plans for the Housing Service for the period 2025-2030.

The previous Housing Strategy (2019-24) brought about the following key achievements

- 1344 new affordable homes delivered in partnership with Registered Providers
- Delivery of 32 properties of affordable housing directly by the Council through the BUILD! programme. Totalling 270 over the last decade.
- Partnered with Hook Norton Community Land Trust to develop 12 Passivhaus homes at Hook Norton on previously underutilised Council land.
- Provided 57 landlord grants and 45 homeowner grants to provide improvements and essential repairs to properties within the district.
- Accessing the Local Authority Housing Fund Rounds 1 and 2 to bring 56 units of accommodation back into use within Cherwell to assist in rehousing those in resettlement schemes. This is being delivered in partnership with South Oxfordshire Housing Association and Sanctuary. This includes the redevelopment of Town Centre House, Banbury, which the Council now owns.
- Delivering a refurbishment and reconfiguration programme for Town Centre House, Banbury. Bringing 1, 2 and 4 bedroom properties back into use for refugees.
- 2949 lets through the housing register
- Completed 1005 homelessness prevention between 2019 and 2024.
- Launched a Tenancy Relations drop in service, where landlords and tenants in the private sector can go for advice
- Launched a new Tenants' Charter, making a number of commitments to our tenants but also taking a lead role in what we expect from other landlords, social and private
- Reviewing and launching a new Housing Allocations Scheme.
- Launching a new Tenancy Strategy
- Responded to nearly 3000 enquiries from landlords and tenants regarding housing, landlord or tenant issues. Serving 859 notices, identifying 225

category 1 hazards, issuing 40 financial penalties and prosecuting 2 landlords for illegal evictions.

- Produced a new Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy for the Cherwell District. The new strategy outlines the approach to tackling homelessness within the district between 2024-29.
- Completed 923 disabled facilities adaptations and 1756 minor works and small repairs jobs.
- In partnership with the other Oxfordshire Councils, establishing the Alliance joint commissioning contract for rough sleeping support services, including prevention, supported accommodation and outreach. This County, District and City partnership is one of the only models in the Country where services are provided using a cross-Council tier and district line model.
- Establishing the Single Homelessness Team, providing specialised homelessness support and response to rough sleepers and those at risk of rough sleeping
- Establishing a new 28 unit supported accommodation scheme at Mawle Court in partnership with Sanctuary and Homeless Oxfordshire, providing accommodation for single homeless people in Cherwell.
- Accessing the governments RSAP funding following the COVID pandemic, providing supported accommodation services for rough sleepers at Oxford House, Bicester.
- Creating a Money Advice service contract in partnership with Citizens' Advice, assisting households in financial hardship. Typically returning £30 in direct financial gains to Cherwell residents for every £1 invested by Cherwell District Council.
- Increasing the portfolio of self-contained temporary accommodation, leading to more suitable units of temporary accommodation for homeless people.
- Establishing the Resettlement Team within Wellbeing and Housing. Providing advice, support and accommodation services to those in Cherwell who are fleeing conflict and seeking asylum in the UK.
- Partnering with the Ministry of Defence (MoD) to bring accommodation within their portfolio back into use for the purposes of assisting those within the asylum pathway. These are providing more housing into the affordable housing system that is ready for occupation.

- Continued to support the Graven Hill Development Company, who manage the Graven Hill site, which the Council purchased from the Ministry of Defence, which is the largest self-build development in the Country.

Cherwell District Council's new housing strategy brings together in a single document the various elements that comprise the Council's strategic housing function. The purpose of the housing strategy is to identify and horizon scan for the key housing issues and challenges that face or could be faced within the next five years. To overcome or mitigate these challenges, high level strategic priorities and objectives are set across the broad range of strategic housing functions that the Council delivers.

As a local authority, we want to be ambitious and deliver great outcomes for residents of the district. Whilst delivering these ambitions, we need to ensure that this strategy is financially sustainable and thus we will only achieve our outcomes by working in partnership with others.

Our vision for the new Housing Strategy is

For all Cherwell residents to live in a safe, secure, quality and affordable home that is suitable for their needs and fit for the future.

In order to achieve this vision, we have identified 3 strategic priorities. These are

1. Prioritise the delivery of homes that people can afford and that are suitable for the needs of the community
2. Improving the existing condition of properties within Cherwell. Ensuring high property standards and properties that are fit for the future, working towards net zero.
3. Promoting health and wellbeing through housing, tackling homelessness, improving support. Helping to create sustainable communities.

The Structure of the Strategy

The new Housing Strategy begins by outlining the main changes and challenges relating to housing within the national and local contexts, understanding that strategic housing intertwines with health, welfare, economic and planning policy.

As part of reviewing these contextual factors, it also analyses housing need locally, including population trends, house prices, rental prices, affordable housing supply and demand, income and affordability and the underlying socio-economic factors within the local area.

The 3 priority areas that underpin the strategy are then set out in more detail. With an analysis of the contextual information, data analysis, trends and findings as well as the activity of relevant partnerships. In each priority area, a high level assessment of the needs and challenges is provided, a summary of the work that has been

undertaken already where relevant and the principal actions to undertake over the next 5 years to deliver.

Development and Shaping of the Housing Strategy

In the development of the Housing Strategy, information and data from a range of sources and other documentation have been developed

- Detailed evidence, analysis and findings from a number of key strategic plans and policies, including
 - The Cherwell District Council's Business Plan 2024-2025
 - The Cherwell District Council Local Plan
 - The Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy 2024-2029
 - The Tenancy Strategy and Affordability Statement 2021
 - The Cherwell District Council Allocations Scheme 2025
- Analysis of recent demographic and housing data for the local area and national trends
- The most recent information from our housing waiting list and approaches to our housing options service

The Housing Strategy brings together all areas of strategic housing plans and related documents. It covers affordable housing delivery, housing for older people and those with support needs, tackling homelessness and rough sleeping and private sector housing, including adaptations for disabled people and the standards of properties available for rent within Cherwell. The strategy reflects the Council's role as an enabler in certain areas where it has less direct control and influence, such as within services provided by Registered Providers, who provide 99% of the social housing within Cherwell.

The strategy also links and reflects the priorities and actions identified within other key strategic documents, outlined in the above section. These include the current Cherwell District Council Business Plan. The Business Plan sets out a series of high level aspirations, this includes "housing that meets your needs".

Housing that meets your needs

- *Support the delivery of affordable and green housing*
- *Ensure minimum standards in rented housing*
- *Work with partners supporting new ways to prevent homelessness*
- *Support our most vulnerable residents*
- *Deliver a Local Plan*

Cherwell District Council Business Plan 2024-25

The Housing Strategy is the main delivery mechanism for the Council's housing objectives. It supports the Business Plan and other related documents by setting out

detailed plans for how the priorities will be achieved and delivered. This includes how we will develop new initiatives and deliver services that meet the local need, how we will make best use of our resources and how we will address current and future demands on the services that we deliver.

As the Council is only a small provider of housing locally, as it transferred its housing stock as part of a Large Scale Voluntary Transfer process in the late 1990's and early 2000's, and thus is not a large Registered Provider or a large direct enabler and landlord for new affordable housing, the scope of the strategy is far wider than just the services that the Housing Team at the Council delivers. Other statutory services are also delivered by other teams or partner organisations, such as planning and health and social care.

Much of the data, analysis and evidence required to inform the housing strategy is already published and available within other related strategic documents, such as Office of National Statistics Data, the Cherwell Local Plan and Housing and Economic Needs Analysis. However, up to date housing register analysis and analysis of homelessness data, such as our DELTA returns, have also been used.

National Context

It is important to acknowledge the national and local (including regional) context when developing this strategy. The strategy has been developed at a time when there has been some flux with regard to future housing legislation and legislation that relates and affects housing. For instance, the 2024 General Election timing has meant that some policies that would affect the housing sector at a local and national level, such as the Renters (Reform) Bill and amendments to leasehold arrangements have not progressed or been delivered as may have been anticipated.

There is an established narrative nationally that the Country faces significant housing pressures and challenges. This is caused by a lack of supply and, in turn, rising housing costs across tenures. National Government has been attempted to tackle these issues through legislation, new or planned, regarding reducing homelessness, boosting housing supply, making home ownership more accessible, reducing carbon emissions in both new and existing homes and improving the services received by tenants from their landlords.

The housing pressures and challenges that are faced nationally are as follows.

Lack of adequate supply of housing

Supplying enough housing to meet the demands of a growing and ageing population has been a challenge that successive governments have faced for many years. Supply targets have been made and not met and balancing the competing or contradictory needs of different stakeholders and those with a local interest are challenging.

There have been a number of proposed changes during the lifespan of the previous housing strategy, such as the Planning for the Future White Paper, which have culminated in the Levelling Up and Regeneration Act 2023. This aims to

“speed up the planning system, hold developers to account, cut bureaucracy, and encourage more Councils to put in place plans to enable the building of new homes”

Gov.uk press release, ‘Levelling up and Regeneration Bill becomes law’

Within these strategies, the government has committed to building 300,000 new homes per year. This commitment has not been met.

The Levelling Up and Regeneration Act 2023 committed to

“deliver more homes in for communities across the Country and unleash levelling up in left behind places”

Michael Gove, Former Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities (2023)

Measures included boosting services and infrastructure on new developments, more powers to Councils for tackling empty homes and compulsory purchasing, more powers for Councils to tackle empty retail units, speeding up housing delivery on developments once started and allowing local people greater powers to influence local development.

In 2024, following the General Election and a change in Government, there was a manifesto pledge to increase house building over the course of the Parliament and a reintroduction of housing targets. To enable this, the new government proposes to make changes to the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF), and a consultation was launched. Proposed changes to the NPPF include

- Standardising the method for assessing housing needs locally
- Implement a standard calculation to ensure local plans support the Government’s commitment to delivering 1.5 million homes between 2024-2029.
- Change the definition of brownfield land and the expectation of approvals on these developments.
- Identifying “grey belt” land within the Green Belt and for this to be brought forward within the planning system
- Deliver affordable and well-designed homes and ensure land released in the Green Belt deliver in the public interest
- Ensure that local planning authorities are able to prioritise types of affordable homes that their communities need

In announcing the proposed changes, the government advised that

“new flexibilities for councils will boost the number of social and affordable homes, and give working families a better route to a secure home”

Angela Rayner MP, Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government (2024)

Additional measures announced by the government related to supply of affordable housing include a proposal for a new taskforce to deliver new towns, creating new largescale communities of at least 10,000 new homes in each, governed by a “New Towns Code”.

Whilst general supply into the housing system is an issue, the supply of affordable housing is also an issue for those who are first time buyers or for those on low incomes seeking affordable housing options.

A recent affordable housing tenure that has launched is First Homes, which is a product that is aimed at first time buyers. This scheme offers a 30% discount for those that qualify.

The Local Authority Housing Fund has brought about the potential for more properties to be brought into the affordable housing estate across the Country, with a combination of Councils directly, or Councils in partnership with Registered Providers, developing new, refurbishing existing or purchasing additional units with government grants. This has been successful in boosting delivery quickly, but in small numbers compared to need, and is targeted at the cohorts that have been part of national resettlement schemes.

Tackling homelessness and rough sleeping

Homelessness is a rising national issue. The Homelessness Reduction Act 2017 provided the most significant change in service provision in a generation. It introduced new duties regarding the prevention of homelessness, to extend timescales that local authorities would be offering and providing support.

During COVID 19, the “Everyone In” initiative provided a drive to house rough sleepers, who were a group that were seen as particularly vulnerable. On the back of this initiative, new funding and accommodation programmes, such as NSAP, RSAP and SHAP have supplemented services provided through the Rough Sleeper Initiative (RSI) funding, to provide additional support to those rough sleeping.

This has been accompanied by additional commitments such as those within the ‘Ending Rough Sleeping for Good’ policy paper in 2022, which built on the manifesto commitment of the government to end rough sleeping by 2024.

The rough sleeping snapshot nationally shows a national increase of 27% between 2022 and 2023 in rough sleeping numbers, to 3898. As these are based on known rough sleepers, the actual number is likely to be higher. There has also been an increase in people who are homeless, a rise in 14% in the same period, meaning 309,000 or 1 in 182 people are homeless in England. (source, Shelter and Crisis)

Homelessness and rough sleeping, combined with the lack of supply, has a knock on effect on people in temporary accommodation and how long they spend within it. Government figures advise that 47% of families that are homeless and in temporary

accommodation have been there for 2 years or longer. The impact locally on Cherwell is outlined in the Local Context section.

Improving housing standards and the rights of tenants

Registered Providers of Social Housing have faced sharp focus over recent years with high profile failures associated with their services that contributed to tragic events, such as the Grenfell Tower Fire and the death of Awaab Ishak in Rochdale, linked to damp and mould within his property.

The Social Housing (Regulation) Act gives the Regulator stronger powers to act on underperforming social landlords. Unlimited fines can be levied against the worst performers and where improvements are not being made. There is a new inspection regime combined with new transparency measures for tenants to scrutinise their landlords. Particularly through the published performance and Tenant Satisfaction Measures, the way in which complaints are handled and the new tenant rights around access to their data and information. The Act also reaffirms the importance of compliance and safety within Social Housing stock and the appointment of Health and Safety lead officers.

An associated impact of the Grenfell Tower Fire has been the difficulties faced by leaseholders, particularly relating to the costs associated with remedying building safety issues associated with fire spread, particularly usage of combustible building materials. The Leasehold and Freehold Reform Act 2024 makes it easier for leaseholders to purchase freeholds or extend leaseholds, provides greater transparency over service charges and providing greater control and improving leaseholders' rights and access to redress. Further leasehold legislation is part of the 2024 Labour government's programme.

The Renters (Reform) Bill following the fairer private sector white paper had the headline of removing Section 21 "no fault" evictions, tackle blanket bans that tenants can face whom are in receipt of benefits and provide greater sector transparency through a new decent homes standard in the private sector and a new ombudsman. The Renters (Reform) Bill received widespread support during its publication but is yet to become law, the future of this legislation is currently uncertain following the General Election 2024, but new renters' rights and protections are part of the 2024 Labour governments programme.

Reducing housing's carbon footprint

The need to achieve "Net Zero" in the UK for all sectors of the economy is outlined within the 'Net Zero – Build Back Greener' policy paper. This outlines policy approach to achieve Net Zero by 2050. Homes, both new and existing, account for 20% of emissions (Future Homes Standard 2019 consultation)

The Future Homes Standard 2019 committed to a new standard for new build properties by 2025. Specifically, a planned change in Building Regulations to

increase energy efficiency and low carbon heating. The goal of the standard is that the average new home would have 75-80% less carbon emissions than one built to current energy efficiency requirements. This is achieved by installing heat pumps, triple glazing and wall, floor and roof construction that significantly limits heat loss.

In addition to new homes, the government has pledged £3.8 billion over a 10 year period to improve energy performance of social rented homes through the Social Housing Decarbonisation Fund from 2021. The Heat and Buildings Strategy 2021 sets out the government's plans to cut carbon emissions from the UK's 30 million homes and workplaces, including the phasing out fossil fuel heating systems and the investment of roll out of heat pumps.

Local Context

In 2021, there were 161,800 residents living in Cherwell. This increase from 150,500 in 2019, an increase of around 7%. Bicester and Banbury are the areas that are experiencing the highest population growths as the main areas of employment, commerce and house building.

Affordability of housing

Affordability of housing is a significant issue, particularly for first time buyers and those on lower incomes. House prices and market conditions have experienced some turbulence over the lifespan of the previous housing strategy, due to COVID 19 and cost of living pressures affecting interest rates, for instance.

However, despite some turbulence, the overall trajectory of house prices is that they are increasing. Cost of living pressures, namely high inflation rates (driven in part by household energy costs) and interest rates, have limited the amount of money being able to be borrowed from lenders or the amount of disposable income that individuals have, as wages have largely not increased at the same rate.

The median property price in Cherwell District is around £396,000 (2023), this is significantly higher than the UK average of £282,000 (2024). The Cherwell level is however lower than the Oxfordshire wide and South East wider level. Sold houses data from 2023-24 suggests that the average price for properties sold in Bicester and Kidlington were around 21% higher than those sold in Banbury. (source: Zoopla)

The estimated median income from a job within Cherwell is £30,749, which is lower than the Oxfordshire median of £34,005 but is higher than the national level of £29,669. The workplace earnings to house price ratio within Cherwell is wider therefore than at a national level. In 2021, the house price to workplace earnings ratio was over 10 times, and this gap has widened. This means that purchasing a home is out of the reach of many working households.

Overall, Cherwell is a prosperous area, it ranks at 220 on the Local Authority rank out of 317 (there are 219 more deprived Local Authority areas) within the Index of Multiple Deprivation (2019). However, it does have some areas of acute deprivation

when compared locally and nationally. Cherwell has areas that are within the bottom 20% of most deprived areas nationally. These ward areas are all within Banbury.

Affordability is not just an issue for homeowners and those seeking homeownership. It is a cross tenure issue, and the issues facing the private rented sector are similarly challenging.

The median rental cost per month for a property in Cherwell is £975. This is below the Oxfordshire level of £1100 but higher than the overall national and South East levels (2022). Median rents in Cherwell rose over 11% over the 3 prior years, which is a faster acceleration than the County as a whole.

The private rented sector locally is a challenging market. There is a high demand for accommodation and a buoyant market. Therefore, those that are on the lowest incomes face the most significant challenges in accessing private rented sector tenancies. As Cherwell is adjacent to Oxford City, prices have been pushed up by the Oxford City market and its thriving rental market, driven by its location, commerce and the student market, particularly in Houses of Multiple Occupation. Median rents in Oxford City are around £300 per month more than they are in Cherwell.

As Cherwell has some population centres close to Oxford, such as Kidlington and Bicester, competition is high for properties, and this influences prices. Cherwell District has two Local Housing Allowance (LHA) rates, the Oxford Rate and Cherwell Valley Rate. Local Housing Allowance is the rate up to which housing benefit can be paid within a certain area, this is calculated nationally and is linked to the local market.

Banbury and Bicester are within the Cherwell Valley Rate, whilst areas such as Kidlington are within the Oxford Rate. The Oxford Rate is higher than the Cherwell Valley Rate, which is to be anticipated. However, Bicester due to its expansion, improving transport links and associated employment opportunities has seen a greater acceleration in housing market and prices than in Banbury, for example. Bicester therefore has acute affordability challenges within the private rental market because of the greater difference between the market and LHA rates than in other areas in Cherwell.

Social housing demand

There are at present just over 2000 households on the housing register, and this has increased by almost 100% in the last 5 years, which is the lifespan of the previous housing strategy.

There were 546 lettings through the housing register during 2023-24. There is an increasing need for 1 bedroom accommodation within the district, with 50% of new applicants within a 12 month period requiring a 1 bedroom property and 84% of new applicants require smaller (1 and 2 bedroom accommodation). However, supply of smaller accommodation is stronger, both through new delivery and through relets, so the waits for this type of accommodation are shorter than for larger 4 bedroom or

larger accommodation, regardless of what priority band you are in. The average wait for a larger property (4-bedroom+) through the housing register is 1065 days.

The majority of new applications to the housing register cite their reason for applying and thus their housing needs to be that their current accommodation is too small. This reason is nearly twice as prevalent as any other single reason. Therefore, this coupled with supply issues of larger accommodation outlined above, there are significant numbers of households that are living in properties that are unsuitable and overcrowded.

Homelessness

Cherwell has a level of homelessness that is similar to the other Districts within Oxfordshire. In 2022-23, of the households assessed as being owed a homelessness duty, Cherwell assessed 419. This is lower as a total number than Oxford (439) and South Oxfordshire (476) as an apportionment of overall numbers, but more in West Oxfordshire (342) and the Vale of the White Horse (415).

In terms of the crisis presentations and those requiring temporary accommodation, Cherwell ranks routinely higher than South Oxfordshire and Vale of the White Horse, both of whom have less than 50 households accommodated in temporary accommodation and reports similar to the levels in West Oxfordshire. Oxford City has considerably more pressure in this area, with nearly 250 households, which is more than the rest of the County combined.

However, Cherwell has a higher number of rough sleepers in the County (outside Oxford City). There are routinely more than 10 people sleeping rough within Cherwell on a single night and this number has risen over the last two years by a third. Cherwell has also seen an increasing trend of those in employment rough sleeping. Support services for those rough sleeping is provided through a County and City "Alliance". This is where funding and services are pooled. It is one of the only models in the Country where these services are provided in this way as funding is calculated on a local authority area by area basis.

Private rented housing standards

As previously indicated, Cherwell has a buoyant housing market. There are approximately 9300 properties that are private rented within the district, which makes up around 18% of all households within the district.

The Council additionally licences 222 Houses in Multiple Occupation (HMO) across the district. The Council however does not have an additional or selective licencing scheme in accordance with Part 2 and 3 of the Housing Act 2004. This is opposed to Oxford City Council, for instance, who require all dwellings that are being used for private rented accommodation to be licenced.

The Council does not hold comprehensive stock condition data for all homes within the district. It is estimated that that 20% of the private rented stock has the presence of Category 1 hazards, 11% suffer excess cold and 13% of the occupants are in fuel poverty.

Local economy

Cherwell has a thriving local economy and has seen growth opportunities in recent decades. Compared to the national and regional average, Cherwell has less unemployment, with 2.6% of people unemployed compared to 2.9 across the South East and 3.7% nationally. Cherwell has a higher rate than the national average of people in skilled professional occupations, but also has an above average proportion of people completing unskilled manual labour occupations.

Cherwell therefore has fewer people claiming Universal Credit across all population metrics compared to the national average, 2.3% compared to 3.9%. (ONS 2021)

Environment and climate change

Like many Councils, a climate emergency has been declared in Cherwell. As part of this declaration, Cherwell has committed to

- Ensuring our own operations and activities are carbon net zero by 2030
- Do our part to support the district to become carbon net zero

Since 2008-09, our greenhouse gas emissions have reduced by 40% and in 2022-23, we reduced our emissions by a further 3%. The Cherwell District Council Climate Change Action Plan 2023-2024 outlines 17 goals within an Action Plan which support the Council and the wider district's ambitions to become carbon net zero. The action plan includes actions for Council buildings, fleet, staff behaviour and procurement as well as supporting transport, housing and businesses to reduce emissions.

Cherwell Local Plan

The Local Plan sets out the strategic priorities of the district, addressing the homes needed, and provision for other development, supporting infrastructure and social and environmental considerations. It is underpinned by detailed economic, environmental and social evidence. The Local Plan and the Housing Strategy and their associated evidence basis and objectives have synergy.

Cherwell is in the process of developing a new Local Plan. The new Local Plan therefore sets out the overall level of housing development, allocates sites and has a range of specific housing policies.

The draft Plan has three overarching themes

1. Meeting the challenge of climate change and ensuring sustainable development
2. Maintaining and developing a sustainable local economy
3. Building health and sustainable communities

Housing services in Cherwell

Since the 2019-24, the Council itself and the housing department have undergone a number of significant changes in their structure and operation. The last strategy was

written during the reorganisation and termination of the arrangements between Cherwell and South Northamptonshire District Council and the new partnership between Cherwell and Oxfordshire County Council being formed.

As part of these arrangements, the Housing department and service was coupled with Adult Social Care Commissioning and was overseen by an officer that oversaw these two teams. During the lifetime of the previous strategy, these shared arrangements between Oxfordshire County Council and Cherwell District Council also ceased.

Cherwell District Council and its housing functions are therefore now acting as an independent entity, no longer in coupled arrangements with other Council's. The new Housing Strategy is therefore for Cherwell District Council alone and addresses Cherwell specifically.

Conclusion

National policies and legislation provide a changing and sometimes challenging environment for delivering housing service and producing a housing strategy. These changes and challenges can produce new duties and new workstreams. Equally as important as understanding national policy and legislation is the understanding of local socio-economic factors and demographics that are impacting on housing or could have an impact on housing in the future.

Cherwell is a place of relative affluence, economic activity and productivity and low unemployment. Despite this, there are some pockets of significant deprivation and challenge that are reflective in national deprivation figures and are even more pronounced when compared to the surrounding County.

Despite the area being economically active and affluent, there are increasing pressure on housing services and the housing market. Cherwell has relatively high homelessness and rough sleeping figures. The affordability of housing, both rental and sale, are challenging. There is also quite a unique rental market in Cherwell with the split in LHA rates and the differences and acuteness of market pressures within the Cherwell area.

A summary of the national and local contextual factors that have informed the three priority areas within the Housing Strategy are outlined below.

- House price increases and the rental market are making housing increasingly unaffordable within Cherwell
- There is a widening gap between property prices and earnings
- Affordability challenges are likely to have a knock-on effect in the future on those in lower income jobs due to the lack of affordable housing and the wider affordability of housing

- Rising homelessness, rough sleeping and temporary accommodation usage means that there are more households in Cherwell living in poor housing conditions and seeking permanent and suitable housing. Further demonstrating affordability and supply pressures.
- The housing register is growing, showing there is greater demand for social and affordable housing in Cherwell. The largest group of people applying to the register state that they are living in overcrowded conditions. This could be due both to natural growth and children being at home for longer due to the accessibility of the market. The supply of larger properties is an issue, meaning longer waits.
- The growing profile of issues relating to housing standards in the rental sector and proposed legislative changes will put pressure on housing services within the Council
- The growing need to achieve net zero and achieve better environmental outcomes from the built environment will become increasingly important priorities over the lifetime of this strategy.

Delivering the priorities

Priority 1

Prioritise the delivery of homes that people can afford and that are suitable for needs of the community

A shortage of suitable homes to meet a range of needs and incomes can result in higher levels of homelessness, higher levels living in unsustainable housing conditions and increased poverty. It is also in turn linked to a reduction in life chances and opportunities, such as children being unable to move out of home.

Increase the delivery of new homes

The Council has a range of responsibilities in support the delivery of new housing projects. These responsibilities include the preparation of a Local Plan, including the assessment of future needs for homes, the type, size and tenure of housing needed on future residential developments and ensuring sufficient land is allocated for housing.

The Cherwell Local Plan informs that a further 25860 homes are required to be delivered by 2040 to meet projected housing need. This figure does take into account the accommodation of some of Oxford's Unmet Need. Cherwell has delivered on average 1275 new homes per year since 2015. As outlined in the introduction, the housing register has grown by 100% since 2019, suggesting that the housing being delivered in the district is not meeting the needs of everyone.

Cherwell understands that much of the existing and future proposed housing is out of reach of many people within our district. We therefore understand that it is important to increase opportunities for affordable home ownership, particularly for first time buyers, that is close to amenities and transport. At the same time, Cherwell must address the growing demand and pressure of those on lower incomes and who are more vulnerable who rely on social housing and enable the delivery of more affordable housing for rent, particularly social rent, to work to address the supply and demand gap.

The Council has made some positive strides in enabling affordable housing delivery, delivering 618 properties over a 3 year period. However, the Council is aware that there is a lot more work to do to ensure that more housing across tenure is available, particularly at social rent. Over the last 3 years, only 23 of the 618 new properties have been brought forward at social rent, which is our demand tenure through the housing register.

Whilst affordable housing delivered is positive, as alluded to above, the true affordability of affordable housing in Cherwell is of concern. There is a significant disparity between social and affordable rent levels, as affordable rents are available at up to 80% of market rent. As the Oxfordshire rental market and housing market generally is buoyant, the market rent level is out of reach of lower income households. Larger affordable housing rented units should be considered for priority towards social rent given the considerable gap between market, social and affordable rents on larger properties.

The majority of new affordable homes will come on new private developments and we will continue to work proactively with developers to secure the provision of affordable housing through our Local Plan and associated housing delivery engagement and help developers find solutions to viability concerns. We will also work closely with registered providers and developers to align affordable housing proposals to local needs, agree the distribution of tenures and formulate local lettings plans for sites. This will also include a review of our own assets, particularly our stock of supported accommodation, to ensure that we are aligning with the housing needs and priorities of the district.

Whilst we will prioritise social housing for rent to meet the needs of those on low incomes who have more limited housing opportunities. But will enable those who aspire to own their own home by enabling new low cost home ownership opportunities. Whilst providing incentives and support for first time buyers or home buyers generally is a matter for national policy, the Council will continue to enable and support the delivery of shared ownership schemes and First Homes, with a focus on smaller family units.

Addressing the need for adapted dwellings

The Housing Needs and Economic Assessment advises that Cherwell has the higher than average rate of households containing a person with a health problem than the rest of Oxfordshire, with 27.6% of people within this category. Whilst the housing

needs of these groups will be very different, depending on the nature and the severity of their disability, they are also more likely to be homeowners.

The role of this strategy and a priority within therefore is to ensure that future development provides a continued supply of accessible and adapted properties for all tenures that responds to the identified need. Increasing the numbers of properties built to Part M4 (3) of Building Regulations will be encouraged.

New types of housing developments

Cherwell has been at the forefront of delivering growth areas. Over the last two decades, Bicester has been transformed from being a quiet market town into a flourishing new Garden Town. A key area for growth, it has provided a range of desirable and innovative housing developments within well planned communities. None more innovative than the site at Graven Hill, which is the largest self-build site in the Country and one of the largest in Europe.

The Council is working in partnership with a Community Land Trust to provide homes Rural Exception Sites at Hook Norton. These homes provide an affordable housing and private market housing mix to develop 12 Passivhaus homes.

Additionally, through the Council's Build! Team, 270 affordable housing properties were developed between 2013 and 2022. These properties saw underutilised Council assets or other assets from the public estate transformed into housing. Many of these properties were developed using new or innovative methods, including self-build/finish at The Orchard, Banbury and Newton Close, Bicester. Both of these sites were offered at Low Cost Home Ownership. In addition, Hope Close Banbury was developed to Passive House Standards, delivering homes built for energy efficiency, comfort and affordability.

Cherwell is committed to continuing to enable innovative ways of developing high quality housing. An emerging method off quickly and cheaply increasing housing development is through off-site modular construction methods. Whilst this method may not be suitable in all situations, the method does offer opportunities to innovatively promote delivery and support carbon reduction and other sustainability objectives. It could also help the Council to alleviate some of its housing pressures, particularly those faced by certain groups.

Best use of existing homes and buildings

Whilst there is understandably a focus on new housing delivery when it comes to supply, the usage of existing stock and buildings is also important to meet the varied housing demands of the district.

Having homes that sit empty when there is such a high demand for housing is a wasted resource. Long term empty homes can also have a detrimental impact on the wider community and feel of a neighbourhood. It is therefore important that the Council works to identify these properties and when identified, dis-incentivises them from being left empty for long periods.

The Council is committed to ensuring the effective use of available social housing stock within the district. It maintains a housing register that enables people to apply for social housing in the local area providing that they meet the eligibility criteria. The Council relies on nominations to Registered Providers to enable applicants on the housing register to access Social Housing, as it does not retain a large stock holding itself.

The Council is required to publish a Housing Allocations Scheme. This sets out how social housing in the district will be allocated, informed by the Housing Act 1996. The Council reviews this Allocations Scheme periodically, most recently in 2024. Within these reviews, the Council considers whether the groups in the greatest need are being prioritised for the available social housing properties within the district in the most appropriate way.

Over recent years, the Council has become aware of a trend of social housing properties also sitting as empty, or void, for long periods. There are a variety of reasons to which could occur, but we are aware that a main cause for this is the cost increases attached to capital investment due to inflation and the amount of capital investment required to bring the home up to modern standards, as many social housing units are now up to and approaching 100 years old. The Council is working with Registered Providers to bring some of these properties back into use through opportunities provided by the Local Authority Housing Fund, and it will continue to endeavour to ensure that all social housing stock within the district is occupied.

We recognise that those offered a secure housing tenancy by a social housing provider should have their security respected. It is also for the individual housing provider, in consultation with the Cherwell District Council Tenancy Policy, to manage their own tenancies within their own frameworks. However, the Council understands that larger social housing properties are often underoccupied, because family dynamics within them change over time. The Council is therefore committed to working with Registered Providers to create mobility within the social housing stock within the district to enable larger properties to be more fully utilised.

Similarly, the Council will act with similar flexibility and in partnership with Registered Providers on its provision of temporary accommodation. The Council will work to secure new partnerships with Registered Providers to increase supply of self-contained temporary accommodation in efforts to meet rising demand and also to reduce long term hotel use.

What the Council will do in the future to tackle these issues

- Work with planning colleagues, developers, Registered Providers and other partners to ensure affordable housing delivery and ensure that the delivery of affordable housing within the district reflects the demands, property types, tenures and sizes that are required.
- Ensuring appropriate challenge to planning viability and challenging developers where they propose to deliver schemes that are not delivering affordable housing in accordance with policy. Increasing the number of properties provided within district at Social Rent, as a proportion of the affordable housing contribution.
- Widen our engagement with Registered Providers, to align our strategic needs and explore new opportunities in partnership. This includes new housing, temporary accommodation and ensuring the most appropriate usage of existing housing.
- Development of a collaborative approach to “right sizing” properties, managing potential under occupancy and providing assistance to move with stock of Registered Providers.
- Review Council assets with a view to delivery of more housing that meets the needs of the district.
- Work with our partner Council's in Oxfordshire to explore wider partnership initiatives, funding and new business opportunities to ensure the development of housing schemes that can meet our collective needs
- Work collectively and use our collective powers to bring more empty properties back into use, considering a new policy approach
- Strive for the new homes provided in district to be as adaptable and accessible as possible, designing in basic accessibility requirements.
- Ensure that the most vulnerable disabled households with the most acute needs are given the best option through the Housing Register and the needs of the customer are collectively understood and addressed
- To continue to promote a wide tenure mix of properties within the district, including continued opportunities for self-build, self-finish and custom build housing.
- Review our allocations scheme annually to ensure that the housing needs of the district with regard to affordable housing are understood and responded to.

Priority 2

Improving the existing condition of properties within Cherwell. Ensuring high property standards and properties that are fit for the future, working towards net zero.

Everyone has the right to live in a decent home and whilst we want to ensure that we are delivering more new homes in future years, we also want to acknowledge that the majority of residents live in existing homes within the district. In addition, older properties are more likely to be in poorer condition, be less well insulated and be more expensive to heat and maintain.

Ensuring social homes are of high standard and well managed and maintained

The Council has a small stock holding of its own that it retains following a Large Scale Voluntary Transfer of Council owned housing that was concluded in 2004, to what is now Sanctuary Housing. Around 99% of social housing within the district is provided by Registered Providers independently from the Council. There are currently 10,505 social housing properties provided within the district and the majority are owned and managed by Sanctuary Housing as the stock transfer landlord.

The government over recent years has consulted on and implemented a new regulatory framework called the Social Housing (Regulation) Act. This gives the new regulator greater powers and frameworks to scrutinise and enforce housing standards on underperforming landlords. This is aimed at securing better outcomes for residents following well publicised failures by social housing providers, particularly in addressing poor housing conditions.

It is therefore the role of the Regulator to monitor performance of Registered Providers across the Country, and within Cherwell. However, the Council considers the raising of standards of accommodation within the district as important and wants to ensure that properties meet the Decent Homes Standard, and tenants have a good relationship with their landlord. The Council brought forward a Tenants' Charter to underline its commitments to this. We want to ensure through our engagement with Registered Providers that tenants concerns are being responded to and that standards of accommodation are being raised, using our enforcement powers and influence as the Local Authority to bring about these outcomes.

Private Sector Housing

Local Authorities must review housing conditions in their area and identify where action is necessary in accordance with legislation. These action areas include;

- Taking a cross rented tenure enforcement role to housing standards in the rented sector
- Regulating Houses of Multiple Occupation (HMO) with regard to their standards and management
- Investigating empty homes
- Licensing caravan and park home sites
- Regulating the standards of private rented housing, addressing hazards identified through the Housing, Health and Safety Rating System. (HHSRS)

The regulatory requirements for private landlords are also less stringent and codified than social housing providers. There have been plans to bring forward reforms in legislation for the private sector and regulatory standards, but these are not as

advanced at the time of writing as they are for social providers. The reforms proposed included a ban on Section 21 'no fault' evictions, to reduce the number of non-decent private rented sector dwellings and apply the Decent Homes Standard to the private rented sector for the first time and to establish a new ombudsman to oversee the sector. The new ombudsman would seek to resolve disputes between tenants and landlords and also introduce a new registration system for private landlords, giving greater accountability and transparency.

It is therefore unclear what the potential introduction of the Decent Homes Standard for the private rented sector will include and what the affect will be on the oversight and resources required by local authorities in addition to the current responsibilities we have for identifying Category hazards.

The Council has a strong track record of taking a pro-active approach to housing standards and is committed to raising the standards of rented properties within the District.

The Council operates grant schemes to assist both landlords to improve the standard of their properties, benefitting tenants in turn but also help owner occupiers that are on low incomes undertake essential home repairs. Over the last 5 years, 57 properties in the private rented sector have benefitted from our landlord grants and 45 households benefitted from our owner occupier grants.

As well as working to improve properties through grants, we take our statutory role regarding housing standards seriously and use our regulatory tools and powers when necessary. Over the last 5 years, we have issues 40 financial penalties for housing offences totalling £133,657 and have convicted two landlords of illegally evicting their tenants. We have investigated 3380 service requests at private rented homes, serving 859 notices, taking action on 225 Category 1 hazards and 591 Category 2 hazards.

We work closely and communicate with landlords through Landlords Forums and through other mediums to advise landlords of their responsibilities and how legislative changes may affect them. We also work closely with other partners, such as the Fire Service, to ensure that residents properties and converted properties are safe. The Council takes appropriate action against landlords where standards fall below what is expected.

Cherwell also leads the Oxfordshire Housing Standards Forum, which ensures good practice and close working relationships between the other Districts and the City Council are maintained.

As part of our partnership work, we are part of Better Housing Better Health (BHBH). BHBH is a service that supports residents keep warm and improve the energy efficiency of their homes. It provides impartial advice to help improve the energy efficiency of homes with an associated goal of saving residents money.

Following the death of Awaab Ishak in Rochdale, the Council has received a growing number of cross rented tenure concerns about damp and mould within rented property. The Council is committed to continuing to provide help and advice to

tenants and escalating these matters with landlords to ensure they are remedied, and actions are coordinated where possible.

Tackling climate change and reducing carbon footprint

The Council is committed and takes its role in tackling climate change seriously. Like many Councils, a climate emergency has been declared and as part of this, have committed to ensuring our operations and activities are carbon net zero by 2030 and ensuring that we do our part in supporting the district to become carbon net zero.

As part of the Oxfordshire Plan 2050 jointly with the other District, City and County Council's, Cherwell is committed to supporting the delivery of new homes, economic development, and associated infrastructure across Oxfordshire, with a vision to confront the climate crisis, build a fair and prosperous economy, foster thriving neighbourhoods and support a green recovery that protects the future of wildlife and the environment.

To promote sustainable construction, Cherwell through the Local Plan has promoted renewable energy, decentralised energy systems, sustainable construction and a general focus on mitigation and adapting to climate change within all new developments. Cherwell has seen successes in developments in and around Bicester, such as Graven Hill and North West Bicester. Requirements have included zero carbon developments, reducing water usage and some properties being commissioned to Passivhaus standards.

The Oxfordshire Energy Statement advises that the pathway to a low carbon future within greenhouse gas emissions projections assumes that by 2030, 4000 existing homes must be renovated every year to reduce energy requirements to 60kWh/m² per year. A retrofitting programme will therefore be required to bring all homes in the County up to a minimum of EPC band C by 2035.

Projects to help in the delivery of this are already underway. BHBH supports residents living in fuel poverty, which is around 1 in 10 residents across the County, to address the immediate issues that they are facing within their homes. Cherwell was also part of a successful joint bid with the other Districts within Oxfordshire and partnered with Oxfordshire County Council to deliver the second phase of the Home Upgrade Grant (HUG2). The HUG2 grant is available to all owner occupiers and private renters living in the worst performing, off gas grid homes.

Enforcement of the Minimum Energy Efficiency Standards (MEES) requires all eligible private rented residential and non-domestic properties to meet a minimum standard of an EPC band E. Over the last 5 years, the Council has proactively investigated 234 potential MEES breaches, issuing 99 notices and 16 financial penalties to landlords with substandard properties.

Rapidly rising costs of energy over recent years has led to an increasing amount of residents in the District facing fuel poverty. Using our existing partnerships, we want to ensure that we help to deliver a coordinated approach to identify households that are living in fuel poverty. We also want to improve our intelligence of the energy

efficiency status of households within the district and to understand where the more energy inefficient homes may be.

Additionally, to homes in the private sector, we want to ensure that homes that are socially rented are decarbonising. We will expand our existing Registered Provider engagement to include progress on stock condition and retrofitting programmes to ensure progress on the decarbonisation of the social housing estate managed by Registered Providers.

Additionally, as a Registered Provider itself with a de minimis stock holding, the Council wants to ensure that it is contributing towards decarbonisation of its estate. The Council will undertake a strategic review of its assets to ensure that stock that is retained and used by the Council for housing is achieving its highest potential of energy efficiency. The Council has led the way locally in using innovative construction techniques and delivering greater energy efficiency from properties developed. Some of the properties we own and manage already have air source heat pumps installed, for instance.

DRAFT

What the Council will do in the future to tackle these issues

- Engage developers in reducing the carbon emissions of new homes and ensuring new homes have a high level of thermal efficiency
- To develop a coordinated approach across the County to better identify households living in fuel poverty and in poor housing conditions
- To more greatly understand the energy performance and efficiency of stock in the private rented sector and the general stock condition of housing in district, including a review of Council owned residential assets
- To more greatly understand and coordinate the response to decarbonisation of social housing, ensuring that decarbonisation initiatives and measures are part of our cross rented tenure landlord engagement
- Provide advice and assistance to the most vulnerable and improve fuel poverty advice, support and signposting to improve the energy efficiency of homes and to provide support for those hardest hit by fuel costs.
- Continually identify, where available, and bid or support wider bids for funds to promote energy efficiency and tackle fuel poverty for private owners and landlords
- To continue to support and promote services such as Better Housing Better Health and HUG2 to ensure continued support for those requiring support keeping warm and well at home
- Continue to ensure that landlords are compliant with the Minimum Energy Efficiency Standards (MEES)
- Using our agreed Tenants' Charter, ensure that the services that are provided to tenants across rented tenure improve, the tenant voice is heard, and poor landlord practices are held to account
- To support the implementation of the Social Housing (Regulation) Act and the new potential renters legislation, understanding and utilising the Council's role as a strategic influence and enforcement body
- To continue to evolve our private landlord engagement to ensure that the Council is playing a strategic enabling role and an enforcement role.
- To review the grants offered by the Council to ensure that they are meeting the evolving needs and demands of the private rented sector and to maximise their effectiveness in raising the overall standards of properties within the district as well as promoting greater energy

Priority 3

Promoting health and wellbeing through housing, tackling homelessness, improving support. Helping to create sustainable communities.

Housing is a key part of a person's wellbeing and health. Poor and/or unsuitable housing, homelessness and/or rough sleeping and lack of appropriate support or community infrastructure can have a significant impact on people.

Homelessness and rough sleeping

Preventing and tackling homelessness and rough sleeping requires a partnership response. Cherwell District Council has its own Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy, which was published in 2024, in which a full review of homelessness was undertaken in 2023 which informed the strategy and action plan.

The review of homelessness in Cherwell took place as part of delivering this strategy which drew the following conclusions.

1. That the overall trend of homelessness in Cherwell is downward from where it was in 2018-19 in terms of the full picture. However, the amount of homelessness preventions has fallen at a rate that is faster than the other duties.
2. The most prevalent group in of homelessness person is single males, which follows a national trend. Females or couples with children are more common in the Prevention Duty.
3. The service of Section 21 "no fault eviction" notices have become increasingly more prevalent. There has been a significant increase, which could be linked to economic factors and upcoming changes in legislation.
4. Domestic Abuse prevalence is increasing.
5. Friends and family and the breakdown of these relationships and living arrangements is a major contributing factor to homelessness within the district.
6. An offer of social housing is the main way in which our homelessness duties are discharged. The ability of the Council to be able to discharge to the Private Sector has fallen over the last two years.
7. The number of lettings of Social Housing that have been made through the Choice Based Lettings system have fallen and have not recovered to pre COVID levels. This creates additional waiting list pressures making it more difficult to discharge duties to social housing.
8. The supply of one-bedroom units is slowing in favour of a greater number of 2- and 3-bedroom units. This is therefore meeting certain areas of Cherwell

demand regarding homelessness, particularly families with children, the number of single people who are homeless have more limited options through the general housing pathway.

9. There has been a reduction in the lets and availability of the largest properties. Larger properties are also the most difficult to source through the private sector because of affordability issues within Cherwell. If families approach requiring these larger properties, such as 4-bedroom houses, it can be particularly difficult to discharge duties.
10. There is an increasing use of supported accommodation as a way of discharging homeless duties, this suggests the client group is more vulnerable and therefore may be more susceptible to repeat homelessness and rough sleeping.
11. Rough sleeping figures within Cherwell have increased, showing a growing national trend. These are predominantly single men. Since COVID lockdowns ended, there has been a particularly significant increase.
12. Affordability of accommodation is an issue within Cherwell.

The Action Plan is based around the following key priorities

1. Identify the causes of homelessness, facilitating early interventions to ensure a pathway to housing and reducing rough sleeping
2. Ensure that our service is accessible to all; engaging and assisting households who have difficulty receiving our services
3. Deliver long term housing solutions and help sustain tenancies for the most vulnerable, creating resilience
4. Improve access to quality and affordable accommodation across all sectors, for homeless households

Additionally, Cherwell is part of a Countywide partnership to deliver supported accommodation and support services for those at risk of homelessness and rough sleeping and is also part of the Oxfordshire Countywide Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy. This Countywide partnership was brought about principally by the additional funding provided by government and the Rough Sleeping Initiative (RSI) to help meet the government's aim of ending rough sleeping by 2027.

The prevention of homelessness is a key objective of both of these strategies and Cherwell's Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy action plan sets out how we will do this. Homelessness and rough sleeping are a rising national housing issue, and the actions focus on working with partners to ensure a strong focus on

intervening early, targeting prevention and key support services and improving access to suitable accommodation.

Temporary accommodation

Linked to homelessness is the rise in usage of temporary accommodation for those facing homelessness. This has increased significantly in Cherwell within 2024 with an increase from around 35-40 households typically accommodated to a rise to around 60-70.

This increase is typical when we compare with other surrounding areas and similar local authorities, and we are seeing a rise of single homeless people that are in priority need and therefore requiring temporary accommodation. There is also rising pressure from new cohorts of applicants, such as those fleeing conflict through the various resettlement schemes.

The increase in numbers has meant both increasing times spent in temporary accommodation by applicants but also an increasing number of applicants spending more time in hotel accommodation. The Council is taking steps to address this through by carrying out a review of temporary accommodation with a view to increasing its supply of self-contained temporary accommodation.

Appropriate move on and support options

Once in an accommodation offer as a vulnerable person or household, it is important that support continues to ensure that the tenancy and home is sustained.

Accommodation with support is provided through the Countywide Adult Homeless Pathway. The Council also refers into supported accommodation in the wider region where clients feel able to go, to ensure that they receive the support they need, and they are supported to move on from rough sleeping.

When a client is moving into a home for the first time or they have a significant vulnerability that makes them susceptible to tenancy failure or repeat homelessness, tenancy sustainment is offered or engaged from a variety of providers, including the Council's in house team.

Housing First is a relatively new approach to housing vulnerable people with multiple and complex needs, who are at risk of homelessness. It involves providing a secure home, together with personalise support, to enable people into housing, deliver positive outcomes and prevent street homelessness. Cherwell is committed through the Countywide Alliance partnership to increasing the number of properties for Housing First within the district.

Timely and appropriate move on from supported accommodation into a general needs tenancy remains a challenge that is linked to housing supply. Additionally, the provision of step down or transitioning support from supported to general needs can prove to be a gap in provision.

Domestic Abuse

Domestic Abuse is an issue with increasing prevalence within our communities. Cherwell records the highest rates of domestic abuse cases across the Oxfordshire area. The Domestic Abuse Act 2021 aimed to increase the support and protection for survivors and included new duties for local authorities. Cherwell District Council is part of the Oxfordshire Domestic Abuse Strategy and Countywide commissioning approach to services. The Council has also set up a Domestic Abuse specialist role within the Housing service, to review and improve our service offer and create new partnership opportunities.

Health, wellbeing and housing

As the majority of a person's time is spent within the home, preventing health problems caused by poor housing conditions is important for staying well. The ability to live independently for as long as possible and have access to a home within a quality wider environment and thriving community is important. It is also important to acknowledge that providing the right type of housing is important to easing pressure on the wider health and social care system.

Cherwell's population by age shows that 17.5% of people living in the district are over 65 (2021), which is slightly less but comparable with the Oxfordshire average. It is anticipated that the proportion will increase by 52% by 2040. This will mean many more people will not only be over 65 but may well be over 75 in turn. This shows a growing need to provide homes that are suitable for an older population.

Cherwell remains committed to working with partners to improve the integration of housing, health and social care services, including within the planning and delivery of new housing schemes. Cherwell will continue to maximise and improve the services provided by the grants team through Disabled Facilities Grants and the Home Improvement Agency.

Cherwell works closely with Adult Social Care at Oxfordshire County Council to ensure that the needs of those within the housing pathways and the social care pathways are linked and mutually beneficial partnership outcomes are achieved. Cherwell will support the wider needs of those requiring specialist and supported housing through its housing enabling role where there is an identified need and opportunity.

There is a growing recognition that Extra Care provision should be more greatly enabled rather than a reliance on residential care. This would allow greater independence for individuals and also reduces care costs. Linking to the Specialist Housing provisions within the Local Plan, Cherwell will work closely with Oxfordshire County Council to enable more Extra Care placements within the district but also to enable greater access pathways into this provision, in light of the growing need now and in the future.

The inclusion and integration of different groups within Cherwell is important to a thriving community. Through the wellbeing and resettlement teams, Cherwell actively explores new opportunities for interagency inclusion work and provides grants to

voluntary and community groups whilst help to bring people together and improve their overall quality of life.

Despite the Council not being a significant housing stock holder within the district, the Council does understand the importance of the role of Registered Providers and the positive impact that good quality housing services has on the health and wellbeing of social housing tenants. The Council therefore works closely with Registered Providers to improve and maximise these partnership opportunities. In 2023, the Council also brought in a Tenants' Charter for its own tenants, with a view to influencing other landlords to follow its positive themes of quality homes, help and support and engagement and being responsive.

Further measures relating to housing standards within Cherwell are within Theme 2.

Poverty, inequality and the cost of living

At the time of this strategy being written, the Country faces a cost of living crisis due to a rise in energy, food and other costs which in turn drove inflation throughout 2022 and 2023. As outlined in the context sections, there are factors that make affordability challenging in Cherwell. As a result, a growing number of households in Cherwell have financial and welfare support needs and the likelihood of more people requiring an affordable housing tenure, for instance, is growing. This is a contributory factor in homelessness and rough sleeping rates and a rising waiting list number.

Cherwell also recognises that it has some acute pockets of deprivation within its main population centres, particularly within areas of Banbury.

Cherwell will continue to assist vulnerable households through its role in service provision but also by strengthening local partnerships within its enabling role. This could be by the services offered directly, such as Discretionary Housing Payments (DHP), funded partnerships with local agencies such as Citizens Advice and Faithworks or by tackling specific area based issues, such as through the Brighter Futures partnership project, which focuses on the three most deprived wards within Banbury.

What the Council will do in the future to tackle these issues

- Implement the Action Plan of the Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy, bringing about better prevention of homelessness, and improved accommodation opportunities for those facing homelessness and/or rough sleeping
- Greater understand the needs of the district regarding support needs of applicants and available accommodation, addressing gaps in provision
- Improving pathways into accommodation with support, to ensure that the most vulnerable can sustain their accommodation
- Reviewing pathways out of supported accommodation, to improve timely move on balanced with some continuing support to ensure sustainment of new accommodation
- Ensure commissioned services evolve and develop to respond to the needs and pressures on housing options services
- Strengthen partnerships to ensure that there is appropriate support and provision available to meet increasing demand from those suffering from multiple complex needs and health issues
- Deliver transformed temporary accommodation options, reducing the prevalence of those living in nightly charged hotel accommodation
- Raise awareness of domestic abuse issues, enabling those to access support available
- Ensure our Home Improvement Agency delivers enhanced services and an adaptations service that can best respond to the needs of households to enable them to remain in their homes, where possible and appropriate
- Reviewing our service offers and opportunities to deliver services using new models to engage more positively with vulnerable and hard to reach groups
- Continue to support and explore new partnerships linked to health, financial hardship and housing that could deliver improved outcomes to residents and help them secure and maintain housing.

Delivering and monitoring

The Housing Strategy highlights the priorities for the Council and a high level plan to address and deliver them.

An operations delivery action plan will be developed which will be regularly monitored and reviewed.

An annual report on progress will be presented to the Overview and Scrutiny Committee.

The Council as part of its County wide partnership working within homelessness will also feed in progress made on the operational delivery of the Alliance services into the Health and Wellbeing board.

DRAFT

**Cherwell District Council
Equality and Climate Impact Assessment**

Cherwell District Council Housing Strategy 2025-30

Appendix 2

Contents

Section 1: Summary details..... 3

Section 2: Detail of proposal..... 4

Section 3: Impact Assessment - Protected Characteristics..... 5

Section 3: Impact Assessment - Additional Community Impacts 8

Section 3: Impact Assessment - Additional Wider Impacts 9

Section 3: Impact Assessment - Climate Change Impacts 11

Section 4: Review 13

Section 1: Summary details

Directorate and Service Area	Wellbeing and Housing – Housing Services
What is being assessed (e.g. name of policy, procedure, project, service or proposed service change).	Cherwell District Council Housing Strategy 2025-30
Is this a new or existing function or policy?	Revised policy to cover existing service function
Summary of assessment Briefly summarise the policy or proposed service change. Summarise possible impacts. Does the proposal bias, discriminate or unfairly disadvantage individuals or groups within the community? (following completion of the assessment).	<p>The Housing Strategy is the overarching policy document that informs housing services within the district and provided by the Council.</p> <p>It covers local and national context issues and how the housing needs required by the district may be met over the coming years. It also outlines some new initiatives and policy direction</p> <p>The Housing Strategy should not affect any group directly in terms of bias or disadvantage. The Strategy looks at factors that affect the provision of housing and outlines approaches to tackle them. However, factors that affect housing could be as a result of potential underlying bias or disadvantage within wider society. Any of these wider factors that may be present are not tackled through this document.</p>
Completed By	Richard Smith
Authorised By	Nicola Riley
Date of Assessment	July 2024

Section 2: Detail of proposal

<p>Context / Background</p> <p>Briefly summarise the background to the policy or proposed service change, including reasons for any changes from previous versions.</p>	<p>The previous Housing Strategy covered the period from 2019-2024 and a new housing strategy should be produced every five years. This is to address changes in demand or supply pressures and other contextual factors within that period.</p> <p>The previous strategy therefore addressed and set targets for the context as was in 2018-19 and that could be foreseen in the coming years. There have been significant changes in the period from 2018-19 to today, including COVID 19 and cost of living pressures from high inflation, high interest rates and energy prices. Additionally, the resettlement schemes have widened the groups and cohorts of people that require housing assistance. There have also been changes in legislation or proposed changes that affect the housing services that are provided by the Council.</p> <p>The new strategy therefore acknowledges achievements made in the previous 5 years by the Council but also outlines the new priorities for the coming 5 years.</p>
<p>Proposals</p> <p>Explain the detail of the proposals, including why this has been decided as the best course of action.</p>	<p>The new strategy proposes 3 overarching themes that seek to address the most pressing housing issues identified by the contextual review. These are, broadly;</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The supply and affordability of housing • Issues relating to Private Sector Housing, including quality of accommodation and net zero • Rising homelessness and the vulnerability of those requiring housing support
<p>Evidence / Intelligence</p> <p>List and explain any data, consultation outcomes, research findings, feedback from service users and stakeholders etc, that supports your proposals and can</p>	<p>A public consultation to gather feedback on the themes outlined within the Housing Strategy and overall aims will be carried out prior to implementation. Stakeholders will have the opportunity to contribute to this consultation.</p> <p>Consultation responses will be considered and further revisions to the Housing Strategy may be made in accordance with the response received.</p>

<p>help to inform the judgements you make about potential impact on different individuals, communities or groups and our ability to deliver our climate commitments.</p>	<p>The data gathered and relied upon for the production of the housing strategy has all come from published documents that are publicly available, such as the Housing and Economic Needs Analysis or are compiled from government data sources, such as the Office for National Statistics. Some market data to illustrate the housing market locally, such as Zoopla, has also been used to allow comparisons.</p>
<p>Alternatives considered / rejected</p> <p>Summarise any other approaches that have been considered in developing the policy or proposed service change, and the reasons why these were not adopted. This could include reasons why doing nothing is not an option.</p>	<p>The following alternative options have been identified and rejected for the reasons as set out below.</p> <p>Option 1: Not bring forward a new Housing Strategy. This is rejected as it is one of the key statutory documents for the Council to produce and review.</p>

Section 3: Impact Assessment - Protected Characteristics

Protected Characteristic	No Impact	Positive	Negative	Description of Impact	Any actions or mitigation to reduce negative impacts	Action owner* (*Job Title, Organisation)	Timescale and monitoring arrangements
Age	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Analysis of population trends shows that the population is ageing. Older people have different accommodation needs and the housing strategy acknowledges these accordingly	Planning processes ensure appropriate delivery of new housing types and sizes and location	Head of Housing	Annual monitoring
Disability	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	The housing strategy acknowledged the importance of providing properties that are suitable for people with disabilities and ensuring that certain proportions of properties developed meet disability standards	Planning processes ensure appropriate delivery of new housing types and sizes and location and facilities	Head of Housing	Annual monitoring
Gender Reassignment	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
Marriage & Civil Partnership	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A

Appendix 2

Pregnancy & Maternity	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
Race	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
Sex	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
Sexual Orientation	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
Religion or Belief	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A

Section 3: Impact Assessment - Additional Community Impacts

Additional community impacts	No Impact	Positive	Negative	Description of impact	Any actions or mitigation to reduce negative impacts	Action owner (*Job Title, Organisation)	Timescale and monitoring arrangements
Rural communities	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	The Housing Strategy looks at the contextual challenges within Cherwell and provides actions to tackle or develop different service areas. The needs and challenges faced by some communities or cohorts are therefore acknowledged where relevant	None	Head of Housing	N/A
Armed Forces	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	None	N/A	N/A	N/A
Carers	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	None	N/A	N/A	N/A
Areas of deprivation	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	The Housing Strategy acknowledged the deprivation that is present within certain pockets of the district and acknowledges that the supply and affordability of housing are issues to address through the strategy and associated documents and processes	None	Head of Housing	N/A

Section 3: Impact Assessment - Additional Wider Impacts

Additional Wider Impacts	No Impact	Positive	Negative	Description of Impact	Any actions or mitigation to reduce negative impacts	Action owner* (*Job Title, Organisation)	Timescale and monitoring arrangements
Other Council Services	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
Providers	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	The housing strategy will inform planning processes and strategic housing comments within about the numbers, types, tenures and characteristics of housing developed within new developments. This will impact social housing providers as they will be the managing agent of some of these properties. Whilst it will have an impact, whether the impact is positive or negative will depend on the provider and their business models.	Annual monitoring	Head of Housing	Annual monitoring

Additional Wider Impacts	No Impact	Positive	Negative	Description of Impact	Any actions or mitigation to reduce negative impacts	Action owner* (*Job Title, Organisation)	Timescale and monitoring arrangements
Social Value ¹	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	The Housing Strategy takes account of the social, economic and environmental needs of the district in relation to housing and outlines the development of new and existing initiatives to help tackle issues and improve the overall outcomes and opportunities for those within district	Annual monitoring	Head of Housing	Annual Monitoring

¹ If the Public Services (Social Value) Act 2012 applies to this proposal, please summarise here how you have considered how the contract might improve the economic, social, and environmental well-being of the relevant area

Section 3: Impact Assessment - Climate Change Impacts

OCC and CDC aim to be carbon neutral by 2030. How will your proposal affect our ability to reduce carbon emissions related to

Climate change impacts	No Impact	Positive	Negative	Description of impact	Any actions or mitigation to reduce negative impacts	Action owner (*Job Title, Organisation)	Timescale and monitoring arrangements
Energy use in our buildings or highways	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
Our fleet	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
Staff travel	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
Purchased services and products (including construction)	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
Maintained schools	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A

We are also committed to enable Cherwell to become carbon neutral by 2030 and Oxfordshire by 2050. How will your proposal affect our ability to:

Climate change impacts	No Impact	Positive	Negative	Description of impact	Any actions or mitigation to reduce negative impacts	Action owner (*Job Title, Organisation)	Timescale and monitoring arrangements
Enable carbon emissions reduction at district/county level?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<p>The Housing Strategy has steps for the Council to take towards achieving net zero and improving overall housing quality as one of its key themes and outcomes with the draft strategy.</p> <p>There are therefore strategies within that assist with the Council in achieving net zero.</p>	Annual monitoring	Head of Housing	Annual monitoring

Section 4: Review

Where bias, negative impact or disadvantage is identified, the proposal and/or implementation can be adapted or changed; meaning there is a need for regular review. This review may also be needed to reflect additional data and evidence for a fuller assessment (proportionate to the decision in question). Please state the agreed review timescale for the identified impacts of the policy implementation or service change.

Review Date	Annual
Person Responsible for Review	Head of Housing
Authorised By	Assistant Director – Wellbeing and Housing

This page is intentionally left blank



Overview and Scrutiny Committee Briefing Paper

Subject: Scrutiny Working Groups update

Climate Action Scrutiny Working Group

Membership:

Councillor Barry Wood
Councillor Rebecca Biegel
Councillor Isabel Creed
Councillor Les Sibley
Councillor John Broad
Councillor Grace Conway-Murray

Executive Member:

Councillor Tom Becket – as Portfolio Holder for Greener Communities

Service Lead Officers:

Jo Miskin - Climate Action Manager, Environmental Services
Hitesh Mahawar - Climate Change Programme Manager

Scrutiny Support Officers:

Michael Carr - Interim Principal Officer - Scrutiny and Democratic Lead
Martyn Surfleet - Democratic and Elections Officer.

Update

The Climate Action Scrutiny Working Group met throughout the 2022-2024 municipal years and reviewed key aspects of the implementation of the Council's Climate Action strategies, including the Climate Action Framework and the Climate Change Action Plan 2023-2024.

The Overview and Scrutiny Committee agreed that this Scrutiny Working Group continue its work through the 2024-2025 municipal year. The first meeting of the working group has been scheduled for 25 October.



Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Scrutiny Working Group

This Scrutiny Working Group is made up of members of the Personnel Committee and members of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee.

Membership:

Councillor Barry Wood (OSC & Pers)
Councillor Lynne Parsons (OSC & Pers)
Councillor Frank Ideh (OSC)
Councillor Gemma Coton (Pers)
Councillor Rebecca Biegel (Pers)
Councillor Dr Chuckwudi Okeke

Executive Member:

Councillor Chris Brant – Portfolio Holder for Corporate Services

Service Lead Officers:

Claire Cox – Assistant Director Human Resources
Nicola Riley - Assistant Director Housing and Wellbeing

Scrutiny Support Officers:

Michael Carr - Interim Principal Officer - Scrutiny and Democratic Lead
Martyn Surfleet - Democratic and Elections Officer.

Update

The Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Scrutiny Working Group met throughout the 2023-2024 municipal year and reviewed key aspects of the implementation of the Council's Including Everyone Framework which outlines the Council's approach to equalities, diversity and inclusion strategies, including the Including Everyone Framework which outlines the approach to equalities, diversity and inclusion and the associated Framework Action Plans.

The Overview and Scrutiny Committee agreed that this Scrutiny Working Group continue its work through the 2024-2025 municipal year. Work is in progress to arrange the first meeting of the working group.



Food Insecurity Scrutiny Working Group

Membership:

Councillor Rebecca Biegel - Chair
Councillor Phil Chapman – Vice Chair
Councillor Dr Isabel Creed
Councillor Gordon Blakeway
Councillor Andrew Crichton
Councillor Dr Chukwudi Okeke.

Executive Member:

Councillor Rob Pattenden –Portfolio Holder for Healthy Communities
Councillor Ian Middleton – Member Champion for Food

Service Lead Officers:

Nicola Riley - Assistant Director of Wellbeing and Housing Services
Edward Frape - Senior Healthy Place Shaping Officer
Libby Knox - Food and Wellbeing Officer

Scrutiny Support Officers:

Michael Carr - Interim Principal Officer - Scrutiny and Democratic Lead
Martyn Surfleet - Democratic and Elections Officer.

Update

The Food Insecurity Scrutiny Working Group met throughout the 2022-2024 municipal years and reviewed key aspects of food insecurity in Cherwell, including the development of the Council's Food Action Plan, and implementation of the Oxfordshire Food Strategy, as well as other interrelated issues.

The Overview and Scrutiny Committee agreed that this Scrutiny Working Group continue its work through the 2024-2025 municipal year.

The Working Group held its first meeting on 2 October. At the meeting Working Group members appointed their Chair and Vice-Chair and agreed their Terms of Reference. These are included in the Food Insecurity Scrutiny Working Group Scoping Document attached at Appendix 1.

Wellbeing and Housing Services officers provided an update on Cherwell District Council's Annual Food Action Plan and a summary of progress to date. It was reported that there was ongoing distribution of Food vouchers until the pot of funding is used up. The organisations that can distribute the food vouchers has been expanded beyond just the foodbank referral venues (additions include: Sunrise MCP, Sunshine and planning to start Homestart Bicester/Banbury). Vouchers were previously £50 then went to £75, but following feedback



from partners they are now bespoke to size of family/need e.g. from £20 (individual) to £100 (family of 5).

An update was provided on the *Community Food Grant*. It was reported that 24 groups benefited from the community food grant. A total of £58,000 was awarded to a range of groups from across Cherwell, including environmental groups, local larders, community centres, and schools.

An update was provided on the *Household Support Fund – Food* and the Household Support Fund grant expenditure, along with some details of the projects being supported for energy efficient equipment to support the cost of living and equipment grant linked to food/ food providers.

The next Working Group meeting is scheduled for 14 November.

**Completed by: Michael Carr, Interim Principal Officer – Scrutiny & Democratic Lead
Date: 4 October 2024**

Presented to Overview and Scrutiny Committee: 15 October 2024



Cherwell

DISTRICT COUNCIL
NORTH OXFORDSHIRE

TOPIC Review Group Scoping Document

This scoping template is designed to assist councillors and officers in establishing the focus of a scrutiny review group. It emphasises the need for scrutiny review groups to have a clear purpose, rationale and focus for their work, and to make the best use of the resources available within a given time frame.

This document will act as a reference guide throughout the review process to ensure the does not deviate from its intended purpose.

Review Group Overview & Scrutiny Committee Member Lead	Councillor Phil Chapman
Membership	Councillor Rebecca Biegel - Chair Councillor Phil Chapman – Vice Chair Councillor Dr Isabel Creed Councillor Gordon Blakeway Councillor Andrew Crichton Councillor Dr Chukwudi Okeke
Terms of Reference	<i>To review implementation of the Cherwell Food Action Plan and any associated issues and make recommendations and suggestions for consideration by the Executive Member for Healthy Communities and the Wellbeing and Housing Services department.</i>
Executive Member	Councillor Rob Pattenden - Portfolio Holder for Healthy Communities
Member Champion for Food	Councillor Ian Middleton (Executive Portfolio Holder for Neighbourhood Services)
Officer Support	Nicola Riley, Assistant Director of Wellbeing and Housing Services Edward Frape, Senior Healthy Place Shaping Officer Libby Knox, Food and Wellbeing Officer
Background	<p>The Oxfordshire Food Strategy sets out a vision where everyone in Oxfordshire can enjoy the healthy and sustainable food they need every day.</p> <p>A critical part of implementing The Oxfordshire Food Strategy has been the development of local Food Action Plans for each district, to ensure that the Food Strategy reflects local priorities and reflects the unique nature of the City and each of the Districts. These have been led by representatives from across the food system, through the Food Action Working Groups¹. the Food Action Plan for Cherwell district is a multi stakeholder plan, with a range of organisations taking responsibility for action.</p>

¹ FAWGs -are the multistakeholder groups who helped devise the plan.

	The plan identifies initial actions spanning 2024 – 2027. Throughout this period, the Scrutiny Working Group will, as part of this process, review progress against targets and metrics and refine the actions.		
Rationale	The Food Insecurity Scrutiny Working Group will provide oversight and assurance and elected member contributions through the review progress of the implementation of the Food Insecurity Action Plan and make recommendations and suggestions for consideration by the Executive Member for Wellbeing and Housing Services department.		
Indicators of Success	The main indicator of success will be successfully providing oversight and assurance and also through contributions from the Scrutiny Working Group through the review progress of the implementation of the Cherwell Food Action Plan.		
Out of Scope	This review will focus on implementation of the Cherwell Food Action Plan.		
Method / Approach	This scrutiny review will continue throughout the 2024-2025 municipal year, with an informal Scrutiny Working Group considering key aspects of the development and implementation of the Cherwell Food Action Plan and related corporate priorities and objectives and feeding in any suggestions informally.		
Guest speakers / Witnesses / Experts	<i>Witnesses will be identified from local community partner organisations.</i>		
Evidence required and documents	Cherwell Food Action Plan Cost of living support		
Site Visits	<i>Site visits will be arranged to see local foodbanks, as well as other key activities taking place locally.</i>		
Risks	Identified risks to the success of this project are: a) As this is a very wide and complex area there is a risk that it could easily stray off topic – so will need to focus on the terms of reference. b) Availability of councillors and officers to progress the work		
Projected Start Date	2022	Draft Report Deadline	March 2025 TBC
Meeting Frequency	Every 6 weeks – 2 months	Projected Completion Date	April 2025

Approved by Overview & Scrutiny Committee

Date: 15th October 2024

Draft Outline of meetings

(Review Group members are reminded that they will be required to undertake evidence gathering and work outside of the meetings detailed below to ensure that the Review completion date is met)

Meeting 1 –
Meeting 2 –
Meeting 3 –
Meeting 4 –
Meeting 5 –

This page is intentionally left blank

Overview and Scrutiny Work Programme 2024-25

(Updated: 2 October 2024)

Tuesday 12 November 2024 – Extraordinary Overview and Scrutiny Committee		
Local Plan Regulation 19 Consultation	<p>Policy Development (pre-decision scrutiny).</p> <p>To consider the Local Plan Regulation 19 document and agree comments to be forwarded to Executive for their consideration. All Members are invited to attend the meeting.</p>	<p>David Peckford, Assistant Director Planning & Development</p> <p>Portfolio Holder for Planning and Development Management, Councillor Jean Conway</p>
Tuesday 26 November 2024		
Report on Safeguarding and the annual return.	<p>Performance Monitoring</p> <p>Whilst there is no requirement to submit an annual return to the Safeguarding Boards, it is important to have an overview of the work we're doing at this time in training staff, members and the reflect on the number and nature of referrals</p>	<p>Nicola Riley, Assistant Director Wellbeing and Housing & Susan Asbury, Deputy Designated Safeguarding lead</p> <p>Portfolio Holder for Healthy Communities, Councillor Rob Pattenden</p>
Performance Monitoring – Quarter Two (July to September 2024)	<p>Performance Monitoring</p> <p>To consider the Quarter 2 performance report, with a focus on amber / red indicators, and provide comments to the Executive.</p>	<p>Shona Ware, Assistant Director Customer Focus & Celia Prado-Teeling, Performance Team Leader</p> <p>Portfolio Holder for Corporate Services, Councillor Chris Brant</p>
New Developments in Castle Quay (Exempt item)	<p>Holding the Executive to account</p> <p>To consider an exempt update (Item suggested by Chair and Vice-Chair and endorsed by Committee at 18 July meeting.)</p>	<p>Corporate Director Resources and Transformation & Mona Walsh, Assistant Director Property</p> <p>Portfolio Holder for Finance, Property & Regeneration, Councillor Lesley McLean</p>



Sale of Bodicote House (Exempt item)	Holding the Executive to account To consider an exempt update (Item suggested by Chair and Vice-Chair and endorsed by Committee at 18 July meeting.)	Stephen Hinds, Corporate Director Resources and Transformation & Mona Walsh, Assistant Director Property Portfolio Holder for Finance, Property & Regeneration, Councillor Lesley McLean
Working Groups update	Standing item. Progress update relating to established working groups.	Working Group Members, Democratic and Elections Team
Work Programme 2024-25 Update	Standing item. Review of work programme, update on topics suggested for consideration, update on items previously considered	Overview & Scrutiny Committee Chair, Democratic and Elections Team
28 January 2025		
Performance Monitoring – Quarter Three (July to September 2024)	Performance Monitoring To consider the Quarter 3 performance report, with a focus on amber / red indicators, and provide comments to the Executive.	Shona Ware, Assistant Director Customer Focus & Celia Prado-Teeling, Performance Team Leader Portfolio Holder for Corporate Services, Councillor Chris Brant,
Planning Application Appeals	Performance monitoring Scrutiny to play a critical friend role in relation to planning appeals (report in the performance monitoring report and to Planning Committee) having particular regard to planning application refusals overturned at appeal (Planning Committee and delegated decisions), the reasons for cost implications and lessons learned. (Item suggested by Chair and Vice-Chair and endorsed by Committee at 18 July meeting.)	David Peckford Assistant Director Planning and Development & Paul Seckington, Head of Development Management Portfolio Holder for Planning and Development Management, Councillor Jean Conway

<p>Infrastructure Funding and Delivery and S106 Contributions</p>	<p>Performance monitoring To review the policies and processes relating to the use of developer contributions and how income is collected, spent and reported. (Item suggested by Chair and Vice-Chair and endorsed by Committee at 18 July meeting.)</p>	<p>David Peckford Assistant Director Planning and Development & Paul Seckington, Head of Development Management Portfolio Holder for Planning and Development Management, Councillor Jean Conway</p>
<p>Transformation Programme</p>	<p>Holding the Executive to account. To consider an update on the transformation programme (Item suggested by Chair and Vice-Chair and endorsed by Committee at 18 July meeting.)</p>	<p>Stephen Hinds, Corporate Director Resources and Transformation & Shona Ware, Assistant Director Customer Focus Leader & Portfolio Holder for Strategic Leadership, Councillor David Hingley</p>
<p>Wellbeing Strategy Impact Assessment</p>	<p>Policy Development and Monitoring To consider the work undertaken so far on shaping how the impact of the new wellbeing strategy will be measured</p>	<p>Nicola Riley, Assistant Director Wellbeing and Housing & Tom Gubbins, Wellbeing Manager Portfolio Holder for healthy Communities, Councillor Rob Pattenden</p>
<p>Working Groups update</p>	<p>Standing item. Progress update relating to established working groups.</p>	<p>Working Group Members, Democratic and Elections Team</p>
<p>Work Programme 2024-25 Update</p>	<p>Standing item. Review of work programme, update on topics suggested for consideration, update on items previously considered</p>	<p>Overview & Scrutiny Committee Chair, Democratic and Elections Team</p>



11 March 2025		
Attendance by the Chief Constable and the Police and Crime Commissioner for the Thames Valley	External Scrutiny To fulfil the Council's requirement regarding crime and disorder scrutiny to review or scrutinise decisions made, or other action taken, in connection with the discharge by the responsible authorities of their crime and disorder functions no less than once in every twelve-month period. All Members are invited to attend the meeting.	Ian Boll, Corporate Director Communities Portfolio Holder for Safer Communities, Councillor Rob Parkinson
Resettlement and Migration Annual Report	Performance Monitoring To reflect on the resettlement work during the year highlighting successes and challenges	Nicola Riley, Assistant Director Wellbeing and Housing Portfolio Holder for Housing, Councillor Nick Cotter
Draft Performance Monitoring – Outcomes Framework 2025/26	Performance Monitoring. To consider and make comments / recommendations to Executive on the draft Performance Outcomes Framework for 2025-2026 prior to Executive adoption of the framework	Shona Ware, Assistant Director Customer Focus & Celia Prado-Teeling, Performance Team Leader Portfolio Holder for Corporate Services, Councillor Chris Brant,
Working Groups update	Standing item. Progress update relating to established working groups.	Working Group Members, Democratic and Elections Team
Work Programme 2024-25 Update	Standing item. Review of work programme, update on topics suggested for consideration, update on items previously considered	Overview & Scrutiny Committee Chair, Democratic and Elections Team



Items to be allocated		
Council Owned Companies (Graven Hill and Crown House)	Holding the Executive to account / External Scrutiny The Shareholder Representative to update the Committee and answer questions relating to companies owned by the Council and the performance of those companies (Item suggested by Chair and Vice-Chair and endorsed by Committee at 18 July meeting.)	Stephen Hinds, Shareholder Representative Leader & Portfolio Holder for Strategic Leadership, Councillor David Hingley

Meeting Dates 2024/25 (All Tuesday, 6.30pm unless indicated)

13 June 2024, 18 July 2024, 15 October 2024, 12 November 2024 (*Extraordinary*), 26 November 2024, 28 January 2025, 11 March 2025

Work Programme Items:

Members are reminded of the five roles of scrutiny when considering items for the work programme:

- Performance Monitoring; Policy Development; Policy Review; Holding the Executive to Account; External Scrutiny

The [Executive Forward Plan](#) is published on the Cherwell District Council website

This page is intentionally left blank

Cherwell District Council Overview and Scrutiny Support Guide.

This document is designed to be used as a support guide alongside the detailed section of the Constitution Part 4a.

What is Overview and Scrutiny? (OSC)

The purpose of scrutiny is to ensure that decision-making in local government is efficient, transparent and accountable and that all decisions are taken in the interests of the residents of Cherwell. Scrutiny has the power to look at any issue which “affects the area or the area’s inhabitants” and this gives it a unique legitimacy to examine those cross-cutting issues in a way that no other individual or organisation could.

Cherwell District Council operates an Executive/Cabinet and scrutiny system, based on the central government model. Scrutiny is independent and it holds the Executive to account by acting as a critical friend.

What are the aims of scrutiny?

The aims of scrutiny are:

- **Challenge** the Council’s performance so that we can improve and raise standards.
- **Undertake scrutiny** on matters of concern.
- **Make recommendations** for action and change.

Scrutiny meets these aims by carrying out independent and in-depth reviews of topics and services. These are carried out either as a full Committee or by a small group of Members in a time-limited group.

What are the benefits of scrutiny?

The benefits include:

- Gives non-Executive Members the opportunity to hold the Executive to account.
- Provides non-Executive Members with an opportunity to examine the Council’s current services, review issues of member or public concern and drive improvements to the services the public receives from the Council
- Enables members to assess the performance of other providers
- Gives officers an external and independent view of their service, its strengths and weaknesses. It is a ‘critical friend’.

How does scrutiny work at Cherwell?

Structure

Every local authority is required to put in place arrangements for overview and scrutiny; however the detail is for individual authorities to decide. In Cherwell, scrutiny undertakes the majority of its investigations via a combination of working groups and one-off reports to the formal OSC prior to Executive consideration (pre-decision scrutiny).

Scrutiny in Cherwell

- The Committee is politically proportionate and meets roughly six times a year. The remit for the Committee is: Decisions made by and on behalf of the Council or its Executive.
- Any operational or policy aspect of the Council's business

Scrutiny is outcome focused and concentrates on the impact for residents. This includes services provided by, or on behalf of the Council; or by external agencies

Regulatory decisions, i.e. those relating to planning or licensing applications, are not within the remit of OSC.

Section 5 of the OSC Constitution gives more detail on the specific functions of Committee.

How do I 'call in' a decision?

The Local Government Act 2000 allows non-Executive members of the Council to ask that a key decision which has been taken by the Executive or a key decision made by officers, but not yet implemented, be reviewed.

Unless it meets exemption criteria (detailed in paragraph 13.1 of Part 4a the Constitution), any Executive or key officer decision can be called by noon within 4 working days of publication of a key decision made by the Executive or by an officer (Executive decisions will be published as soon as practicable after the Executive meeting). A key decision can be called in for scrutiny by five Non-Executive members specifying the reason or reasons for the proposed call in.

A meeting of OSC will be held within 10 working days. Implementation of the decisions will be delayed while OSC meets and considers the decision.

One of the councillors who submitted the call-in notice would be expected to address the committee and, for key decisions made by Executive, the relevant Executive Member will respond on behalf of the Executive.

Having considered the decision, OSC can

- (a) Determine that it has no objection to the called-in decision being implemented
- (b) Determine that the called-in decision should be referred back to the Executive or officer (as the case may be) for re-consideration
- (c) Determine that the called-in decision is one which is contrary to the policy framework or to the budget; in this instance the called-in decision will be referred to Full Council for consideration. Decisions referred for further consideration remain suspended until redetermined.

Call-in should not be used on a subject that has previously been considered by OSC.

Sections 13 to 17 of the OSC Constitution give more detailed information and guidance on the call-in process at Cherwell.

1. Process of appointing Chairman and Vice-Chairman

A separate meeting of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee will be scheduled as soon as possible after annual council, when Committee appointments have been approved, to allow Committee members to make their case for being appointed Chairman and vice-Chairman.

Prior to the meeting, those wishing to stand for Chairman/vice-Chairman will have an opportunity address fellow committee members, explaining their reasoning for being considered for the role(s). The expectation is that an informal session will take place shortly before the formal Committee meeting to facilitate discussions between members who wish to be considered for the role of Chair and vice chair.

The Chairman of OSC has a responsibility for establishing the profile of the committee, its influence across the council and its ways of working, as well as ensuring that the scrutiny process is managed in a fair and balanced environment, is free from political point scoring and allows for effective scrutiny of all issues presented for consideration. Members putting themselves forward for the role may wish to use these points as guidance for the basis of their discussions with the committee.

Committee members will have the opportunity to ask questions of the prospective chairs and vice-chairs before the formal meeting.

The appointment of Chairman will take place at the formal meeting in the usual way.

The Monitoring Officer or his representative will call for nominations to the position of Chairman of the Committee, with seconders as appropriate. Voting will take place for each nominated candidate, via a show of hands, in line with section 4, paragraph 4.24 of the Constitution, with steps repeated as necessary until one candidate is successful.

The newly appointed Chairman will then take the chair, and preside over the appointment of the vice-Chairman, which will follow the same process.

Once the vice-Chairman has been appointed, the meeting will be brought to a close.

Note – those wishing to stand as Chairman/vice-Chairman will be expected to attend in person. If a prospective Chairman or vice-Chairman is unable to attend the meeting, the Monitoring Officer may use their discretion to determine whether or not a nomination can be made in the members' absence on their behalf.

2. Allocation of resources/committee time

The Chairman and Vice-Chairman of the Committee will be responsible for allocating the Committee's time to each work programme item, to ensure the best approach to each subject.

There are six formal committee meetings scheduled throughout the year. In addition, OSC can appoint working groups to carry out detailed research and enquiries on behalf of the formal Committee (as detailed in Constitution section 4a).

Initial subjects for consideration will be taken from the Committee via a work programme planning session, with committee members given the opportunity to request subjects for inclusion on the annual work programme.

An important document the Committee may wish to refer to during the planning session is the Executive Forward Plan (also known as the Executive work programme), the statutory document that is published on a monthly basis covering a rolling four-month period. More detailed information on the requirements of the Forward Plan can be found in section 6 of the Constitution, paragraph 6.1.

OSC may find it useful to refer to the latest version of the Forward Plan during the work programme planning session, to consider upcoming items for the Executive and whether they would benefit from detailed discussion by OSC.

After the planning session, the Chairman and vice-Chairman will meet with officers from the Democratic and Elections Team to propose which subjects will be taken forward for the formal work programme and what style of scrutiny (from the options below) would best suit each subject. The proposed work programme will be presented to OSC at the next meeting, for discussion and approval.

As well as being responsible for scrutinising services provided or commissioned by the Council, and external agencies it reviews the overall work programme ensuring that work is timely, adds value and does not duplicate activity already underway or undertaken by external regulators. The working group scoping document ensures that the key questions that members want to address are listed.

How do Committees choose what to scrutinise?

Scrutiny is a member led process and topics are usually identified by members acting in their capacity as democratic representatives of the community. Additionally,

suggestions can be made by officers, partner organisations or the public. Effective scrutiny requires a balanced work programme, which examines the most important challenges facing the district and responds to the concerns of residents.

It is important to remember that scrutiny is a member-led process and it is the responsibility of the chairman and their committee to determine what is scrutinised and when.

Appendix A explains some of the key factors in determining whether an issue should be scrutinised.

Here are a few key points to remember when choosing subjects to scrutinise:

- It is not possible to scrutinise everything that might be suggested by other councillors, officers or the community. Therefore, a rigorous approach is taken to choosing which topics are scrutinised.
- Increasingly, OSC is thinking about the work of commissioned organisations and the monitoring other public bodies, and how its activities will engage partner organisations
- The Committees have to be realistic about what can effectively be scrutinised and needs to be prepared to say 'No' to some suggestions and be able to explain why they will not be scrutinised.
- It is also important to consider what the best method to deal with any given scrutiny topic is. The choice may depend on the nature of the activity and the capacity of members and Officers to conduct further topic groups within the suggested timeframe.

Further items can be added to the work programme during the year, with additional meetings between the Chairman, vice-Chairman and officers being scheduled as necessary.

What methods are there to conducting scrutiny?

Effective scrutiny is creative. It uses a range of approaches depending on the issue being scrutinised. An important part of the work planning process is deciding on how a topic will be examined. Using the full range of methods open to it, scrutiny will be able to mix in-depth and searching inquiries with concise and effective reviews.

Here are some examples of different methods open to committee, some of which are discussed in more detail below:

- Whole committee
scrutiny working groups
- Single issue meetings
- Calling witnesses or experts to provide specific information to members at committee Site visits / observations
- Seminar
- Bulletins

Options regarding scrutiny reviews

Working Groups

Working groups involve a small number of councillors looking at an issue in great detail, in some cases over a day. This process is more time-consuming for councillors and officers than other scrutiny activities. Consequently, issues for topic groups are carefully prioritised. In order to make sure that the review is as effective as possible, it is vital that the scope of the review is well-defined.

For this reason each review starts with the completion of a scoping template (see appendix B) which outlines the key questions, outcomes and constraints, time-scale, key sources of information and principal witnesses.

At its meeting, the working group will hear from a range of witnesses and the lead officer. Depending on the topic this may include expert witnesses and stakeholders, service users, managers and the relevant executive member/s. Councillor questioning skills are a significant element of the scrutiny and the quality of the questions is instrumental to achieving clear outcomes and strong recommendations. A short report containing the recommendations and the evidence to substantiate those recommendations is made publicly available. The relevant Executive member is required to respond to the report and its recommendations within two months. Six months following the scrutiny, the OSC will monitor implementation of the recommendations.

Single item on a committee agenda

This may offer limited opportunity for effective scrutiny, but may be appropriate for some issues or where the committee wants to maintain a formal watching brief over a given issue.

At a single meeting - 'scrutiny day' or 'challenge panel'

Either a formal committee meeting or an informal working group or briefing session. This could provide an opportunity to have a single public meeting about a given subject, or to have a meeting at which evidence is taken from a number of appropriate officers or subject matter experts.

At a task and finish review of two or three meetings - 'light touch' review

A shorter scrutiny review may be most effective even for complex subjects. Properly planned and focused, they allow members to swiftly reach conclusions and make recommendations, over a short time period such as a couple of months.

Via a longer-term task and finish review - 'full length' review

The 'traditional' task and finish model, with multiple meetings spread over a number of months, is appropriate when scrutiny needs to dig into a complex topic in

significant detail. This may be suited to the most complex subjects, due to the length of time and wider resource implications for a long review.

By establishing a ‘standing panel’

If Committee feel they need to keep a watching brief over a particular issue, meeting regularly to carry out detailed oversight, this may be the best approach.

What is the best way to make sure our recommendations are implemented?

A scrutiny will conclude by making recommendations to decision-making bodies, such as the Council’s Executive.

The following tips can help ensure that scrutiny recommendations are implemented:

- Recommendations that are short, achievable and few in number
- Recommendations exert most influence if they are based on logical argument drawing on evidence gathered over the course of a review.
- Ensure those responsible for implementing recommendations are aware of what the topic group is proposing and can suggest modifications to wording if that is going to make it more likely that the recommendation will be implemented.
- Recommendations will be written and presented clearly by the working group as part of its final report. Executive, via the appropriate Executive member, will provide a response to all recommendations explaining the reasons for accepting or not accepting any of the recommendations.
- Implementation of recommendations will then be monitored.

How are recommendations monitored?

Six months after a review has made recommendations, progress on the implementation of those recommendations will be reported to OSC. The format of the monitoring may differ from subject to subject, but may include:

- A table listing each recommendation with a ‘progress’ column
- A written report from relevant Executive member/officer
- A presentation

OSC may wish to evaluate and assess the impact of their previous recommendations, referring back to the initial scoping document and compiling a brief evaluation summary for publication.

3. Co-opting of external people to assist with specific reviews

The constitution allows co-option of external people to assist with specific scrutiny reviews (section 4a, paragraph 6.9). Such co-options can be made to the formal OSC, however it is more likely that committee will want to appoint short term co-optees to informal task and finish groups that are established for specific reviews.

Once a task and finish group has decided to co-opt members, the following steps should be followed.

Advertisement of the co-option opportunity, summarising:

- the subject under review
- an indicative timeframe for the whole review
- an estimate as to the number of meetings that the co-optees will be expected to attend
- The format and anticipated location of the meetings, i.e. online via MS Teams, in person at Council offices, or a hybrid approach
- How interested parties should make their application, i.e. via a CV and covering letter, email or application form
- The deadline for applications/expressions of interest

Members of the task and finish group will consider expressions of interest received, creating a short list for interview. Shortlisted candidates will be invited to attend a meeting, and the task and finish group will decide who to appoint.

The task and finish group will reserve the right to not appoint any co-optees following interview.

Any appointments made will be for a specified time period, likely to coincide with the estimated timeframe for the full review.

Once the recruitment process has completed, meetings of the task and finish group will take place in line with the process detailed at paragraph 6.6 of the Constitution.

4. Role Profiles

The role profiles shown below highlight the key elements of each role within OSC, to inform members ahead of their involvement with the Committee. They are not exhaustive or prescriptive, and are for guidance only.

OSC Chairman

The OSC Chairman (or vice-Chairman in their absence) may be required to:

- Chair the formal Committee meetings.
- Provide leadership and direction to the Committee.
- Lead the committee in prioritising its work so as to ensure effective scrutiny
- Encourage all members of the Committee to engage with the scrutiny process.
- Develop a constructive relationship with Executive.
- Develop a constructive relationship with the Corporate Leadership Team
- Meet with officers as required to receive agenda briefings, plan scrutiny reviews (as detailed in section 2 above) and to discuss possible future additions to the work programme, i.e. from the Executive Forward Plan.
- Where the Committee has been asked to provide comments or feedback to a decision maker, i.e. Executive or Full Council, the Chairman will be expected

to attend the relevant meeting to provide feedback on behalf of the Committee.

- Be prepared to brief their wider political party or group on the business to be considered by the Committee.

OSC Vice-Chairman

The OSC Vice-Chairman will be expected to deputise for the Chairman should they be absent or unavailable. The vice-Chairman is to mirror the chair and act as advisor and second set of eyes over the Chairman role.

The Vice-Chairman can chair in full or parts of a committee meeting as determined by the Chairman.

Where officer meetings/agenda briefings are arranged, the Vice-Chairman will be invited as a matter of course.

The Vice-Chairman should ensure they are familiar with the Chairman role profile above.

OSC Committee member

OSC Committee members are encouraged to:

- Assist with the development of an effective work programme during work programme planning sessions.
- Engage with all stages of the scrutiny process.
- Participate in scrutiny in an impartial manner.
- Analyse and if necessary challenge information presented to the Committee.
- Read agendas in advance of formal Committee and submit questions to officers in advance, to assist them with their pre-meeting preparation.
- Make recommendations based on the Committee's deliberations.
- Conduct independent research/reading outside formal committee meetings if required.
- Brief their wider political party or group on the business to be considered by the Committee.
- Act as a point of contact for members of the public, external organisations and other members.

Working Group members

If OSC decide to establish a working group to review a particular subject, any member from across the council can be appointed to sit on that group.

Executive Members are not allowed to sit on OSC or take part in formulating recommendations, however they can contribute to reviews in their capacity as Portfolio Holders and provide useful background information.

If appointed to a working group, members may be required to:

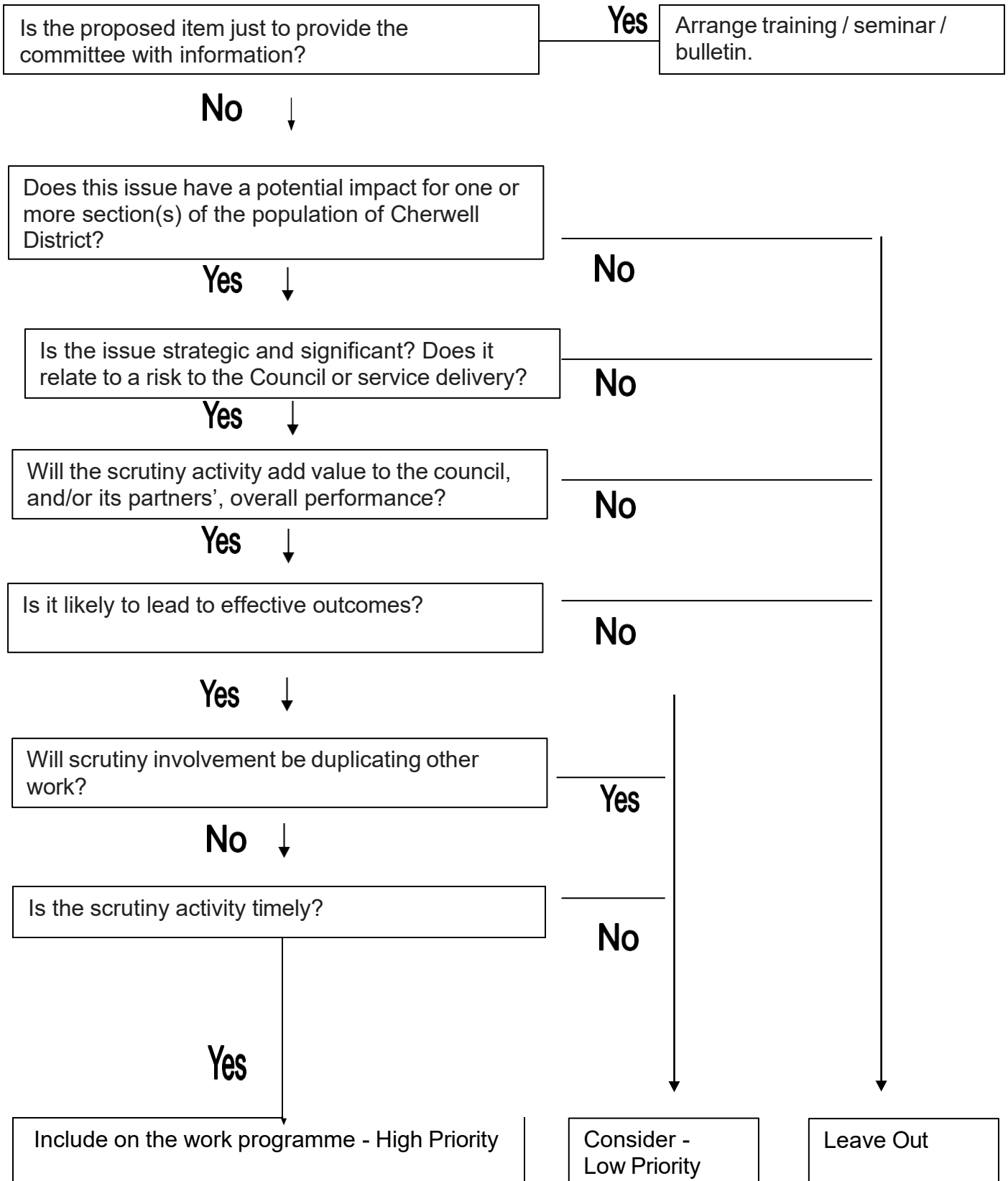
- Contribute to the scoping stage of a review, to help determine the best approach to the subject under review.
- Attend additional meetings to progress work in relation to the review (timetable to be determined by each working group).
- Take responsibility for one or more areas of the agreed scope of the review, conducting independent research/reading/visits/discussions as necessary.
- Contribute to the end of review report and recommendations, and support the presentation to the full Committee at the conclusion of the review.

5. Further resources and reviewing and updating of this guide

The Monitoring Officer and Democratic and Elections Team will periodically review this guide with the Chair and Vice Chair, gathering feedback from OSC as required, to ensure it remains up-to-date and appropriate.

In addition to this guide and the formal CDC Constitution, OSC members may wish to consult further resources, such as the LGA's Councillor Workbook on Scrutiny - <https://www.local.gov.uk/publications/councillors-workbook-scrutiny> (updated September 2023) which gives more detailed information about possible approaches to Scrutiny.

Criteria for selecting scrutiny topics





This scoping template is designed to assist councillors and officers in establishing the focus of a scrutiny review group. It emphasises the need for scrutiny review groups to have a clear purpose, rationale and focus for their work, and to make the best use of the resources available within a given time frame.

This document will act as a reference guide throughout the review process to ensure the does not deviate from its intended purpose.

Review Group Overview & Scrutiny Committee Member Lead	<i>The name of the Member(s) suggesting the subject.</i>
Membership	<i>This would be the working group working on the review – not necessary at initial suggestion stage.</i>
Officer Support	<i>Anticipated officer involvement, e.g. departments with knowledge of the subject</i>
Background	<i>What has led to the subject being suggested for review</i>
Rationale	<i>What is the justification for the subject being suggested for review</i>
Indicators of Success	<i>Potential outcome of the review, e.g. a new policy being drafted, a new process being adopted etc.</i>
Out of Scope	<i>What will not be considered during the review</i>
Method / Approach	<i>A brief outline of how the review would be completed</i>
Guest speakers / Witnesses / Experts	<i>Brief outline of any specialists or experts who may be invited to take part in the review</i>
Evidence required and documents	<i>Brief outline of information</i>
Site Visits	<i>Subject to covid restrictions, if any visits are anticipated.</i>
Risks	<i>Availability of councillors and officers to progress the work</i>

Projected Start Date		Draft Report Deadline	
Meeting Frequency		Projected Completion Date	

Approved by Overview & Scrutiny Committee	Date:
--	--------------

Draft Outline of meetings

(Review Group members are reminded that they will be required to undertake evidence gathering and work outside of the meetings detailed below to ensure that the Review completion date is met)

Meeting 1 –
Meeting 2 –
Meeting 3 –
Meeting 4 –
Meeting 5 –

This page is intentionally left blank