



# Annual Council Meeting

Wednesday 20 May 2026

Members of Cherwell District Council,

The Annual Council meeting will be held at 39 Castle Quay, Banbury, OX16 5FD on Wednesday 20 May 2026 at 6.30 pm, and you are hereby summoned to attend.

Monitoring Officer  
Tuesday 12 May 2026

## AGENDA

1 **Apologies for Absence**

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 **Communications**

To receive communications from the Chair

4 **Election of Chair for the Municipal Year 2026/2027**

5 **Investiture of Chair**

6 **Vote of Thanks to Immediate Past Chair**

7 **Immediate Past Chair's Address**

**8 Election of Vice-Chair for the Municipal Year 2026/2027**

**9 Investiture of Vice-Chair**

**10 Minutes of Council (Pages 7 - 14)**

To confirm as a correct record the Minutes of Council held on 16 March 2026.

## **Council Business Reports**

**11 Annual Council Business Report 2026/2027 (Pages 15 - 28)**

Report of Monitoring Officer

### **Purpose of report**

To note the results of the district elections held on 7 May 2026, to appoint the Leader of the Council and to consider the appointments and allocation of seats on Committees for municipal year 2026/2027 in accordance with the duty under Section 15 Local Government Housing Act 1989, to ensure that this reflects the political make-up of the Council following the elections. The political representation of members on committees needs to be considered on an annual basis.

### **Recommendations**

Council resolves:

- 1.1 To note the results of the District elections held on 7 May 2026.
- 1.2 To note the constitution of Political Groups and notification of Group Leaders which has been notified in accordance with Regulation 8 of the Local Government (Committees and Political Groups) Regulations 1990.
- 1.3 To appoint the Leader of the Council.
- 1.4 To note the appointment of the Deputy Leader of the Council, the membership of the Executive and Executive portfolios for the municipal year 2026/2027.
- 1.5 To agree the allocation of seats on committees that are subject to the political balance requirements as set out in Appendix 2 (to follow).
- 1.6 To agree that the allocation of seats on the Licensing Acts Committee reflects the General Licensing Committee.
- 1.7 To appoint members (and where required, substitute members) to serve on each of the committees in accordance with the nominations made by political groups (Appendix 3 - to follow).

- 1.8 To appoint a non-Executive representative to the Oxfordshire Joint Health Overview and Scrutiny Committee.
- 1.9 To appoint a representative and named substitute to the Health and Wellbeing Board.
- 1.10 To appoint a representative and named substitute to the Police and Crime Commissioner Scrutiny Panel.
- 1.11 To appoint an Executive member representative and an Executive member substitute to the Oxfordshire Leaders Joint Committee.
- 1.12 That authority be delegated to the Monitoring Officer to make changes required to the Constitution as a result of the changes referred to in this report.

**12 Annual Report of the Accounts, Audit and Risk Committee 2025/26** (Pages 29 - 42)

Report of Assistant Director of Finance (Section 151 Officer)

**Purpose of report**

This report presents the annual report of the Accounts, Audit and Risk Committee for the municipal year 2025/26. It has been prepared to enable the committee to demonstrate to Council how it has fulfilled its terms of reference.

**Recommendations**

Council resolves:

- 1.1 To note the annual report of the Accounts, Audit and Risk Committee for the municipal year 2025/26.

**13 Overview and Scrutiny Committee Annual Report 2025/2026** (Pages 43 - 64)

Report of Assistant Director Law & Governance / Monitoring Officer

**Purpose of report**

For Council to consider and note the Overview and Scrutiny Committee Annual Report for 2025-26.

**Recommendations**

Council resolves:

- 1.1 To note the Overview and Scrutiny Committee Annual Report for 2025/2026.

## 14 Urgent Business

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

### **For information**

Please note:

Members are advised that written questions and motions for the next scheduled Council meeting on Monday 20 July must be submitted to the Assistant Director Law and Governance & Monitoring Officer, [democracy@cherwell-dc.gov.uk](mailto:democracy@cherwell-dc.gov.uk), by noon on Wednesday 8 July.

## **FIRST MEETINGS OF COMMITTEES**

### **Appointments of Chairs and Vice-Chair of Committees for the Municipal Year 2026/2027**

At the conclusion of the Council's proceedings all Members are asked to remain in their seats in the Council Chamber while Committees meet for the purpose of electing their Chairs and Vice-Chairs for the 2026/2027 municipal year.

The Monitoring Officer will ask the Members on each Committee to stand (if they can) / sit as appropriate in the following order:

- Audit and Governance Committee
- Appeals Panel
- Budget Planning Committee
- General Licensing Committee
- Licensing Acts Committee
- Personnel Committee
- Planning Committee

The Monitoring Officer will seek nominations for Chair. Once appointed, the newly elected Chair of each Committee will seek nominations for Vice-Chair.

The Overview and Scrutiny Committee will appoint its Chairman and Vice-Chairman at its meeting on Thursday 18 June 2026.

## **Councillors are requested to collect any post from their pigeon hole in the Members' Lounge at the end of the meeting.**

### **Information about this Agenda**

#### **Apologies for Absence**

Apologies for absence should be notified to [democracy@cherwell-dc.gov.uk](mailto: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**

If you hear the fire alarm, please leave the building via the nearest available exit. The fire assembly point is outside the Premier Inn, adjacent to the canal.

#### **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 Natasha Clark, Democratic and Elections [democracy@cherwell-dc.gov.uk](mailto:democracy@cherwell-dc.gov.uk), 01295 221534

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## **Cherwell District Council**

### **Council**

Minutes of a meeting of the Council held at 39 Castle Quay, Banbury, OX16 5FD, on 16 March 2026 at 6.30 pm

#### Present:

Councillor Dorothy Walker (Chair)  
Councillor Nigel Simpson (Vice-Chair)  
Councillor Fiaz Ahmed  
Councillor Tom Beckett  
Councillor Rebecca Biegel  
Councillor Gordon Blakeway  
Councillor Chris Brant  
Councillor John Broad  
Councillor Mark Cherry  
Councillor Becky Clarke MBE  
Councillor Jean Conway  
Councillor Gemma Coton  
Councillor Nick Cotter  
Councillor Dr Isabel Creed  
Councillor Andrew Crichton  
Councillor Donna Ford  
Councillor Ian Harwood  
Councillor David Hingley  
Councillor Frank Ideh  
Councillor Simon Lytton  
Councillor Kieron Mallon  
Councillor Nicholas Mawer  
Councillor Fiona Mawson  
Councillor Lesley McLean  
Councillor Zoe McLernon  
Councillor Ian Middleton  
Councillor Julian Nedelcu  
Councillor Dr Chukwudi Okeke  
Councillor Robert Parkinson  
Councillor Lynne Parsons  
Councillor Rob Pattenden  
Councillor Chris Pruden  
Councillor Edward Fraser Reeves  
Councillor David Rogers  
Councillor Les Sibley  
Councillor Dr Kerrie Thornhill  
Councillor Dom Vaitkus  
Councillor Amanda Watkins  
Councillor John Willett  
Councillor Douglas Webb  
Councillor Barry Wood

Apologies for absence:

Councillor Besmira Brasha  
Councillor Phil Chapman  
Councillor Grace Conway-Murray  
Councillor Dr Henry Elugwu  
Councillor Harry Knight  
Councillor Alisa Russell  
Councillor Linda Ward

Officers:

Ian Boll, Executive Director Place & Regeneration  
Stephen Hinds, Executive Director Resources  
Kristian Aspinall, Executive Director Neighbourhood Services  
Nicola Riley, Assistant Director Wellbeing and Housing  
Michael Furness, Assistant Director Finance & S151 Officer  
Shiraz Sheikh, Assistant Director Law & Governance and Monitoring Officer  
Kaimi Ithia, Head of Chief Executive's Office  
Martha Bagnall, Paralegal  
Natasha Clark, Governance and Elections Manager

68 **Declarations of Interest**

There were no declarations of interest.

69 **Communications**

**Chair's Engagements**

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

The Chair thanked all who attended and supported her recent charity lunch, which had raised funds for her three Chair's charities, Asylum Welcome, Homeless Oxfordshire, and the Oxfordshire Homeless Movement. If anyone wished to donate, they were requested to contact the Chair's PA.

**Meeting Length**

The Chair asked Councillors to be respectful of each other when addressing the meeting and to address the meeting through the Chair. If necessary, the Chair would adjourn the meeting to allow for a comfort break at a suitable point.

**Banbury Borough Council Minute Books Update**

The Chair updated Members on the question from Councillor Mallon to the Leader regarding about historic Banbury Borough Council minute books at previous Council meetings. Following investigation by the Governance and

Elections Manager and Councillor Mallon himself, it was discovered that the Minute Books were already with Banbury Town Council.

**Members' Pigeon Holes**

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

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

There were no petitions or requests to address the meeting.

71 **Urgent Business**

There were no items of urgent business.

72 **Minutes of Council**

The minutes of the meeting held on 23 February 2026 were agreed as a correct record and signed by the Chair.

73 **Minutes**

**a) Minutes of the Executive, Portfolio Holder Decisions and Executive Decisions made under Special Urgency**

**Resolved**

That the minutes of the meeting of the Executive and Portfolio Holder decisions as set out in the Minute Book be received and that it be noted that since the last meeting of Council at which this was reported, 15 December 2025, one key and exempt decision had been taken by the Executive which was not included in the 28-day notice, relating to the award of contract for an HR system.

**b) Minutes of Committees**

**Resolved**

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

74 **Questions**

**a) Written Questions**

There were no written questions.

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

Questions were asked and answers received on the following issues:

Councillor Sibley: Free parking trial in Bicester

Councillor Pruden: Pioneer Square, Bicester

Councillor Rogers: Submission to Joint HOSC working group

Councillor Clarke MBE: Letter to Oxfordshire County Council Leader regarding online booking system for waste recycling centres

Councillor Cherry: Oxfordshire County Council tree planting in Banbury

Councillor Mawer: Doorstep glass collection and bring bang glass collection bins

Councillor Reeves: Free parking trial in Banbury

Councillor Wood: Consideration of similar covenant currently in place in Kidlington for all CDC operated car parks when transferred to the new unitary

Councillor Creed: Fly tipping in Banbury at clothing banks where glass bring banks have been removed

### **c) Questions to Committee Chairs on the Minutes**

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

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## **Constitution Review**

The Monitoring Officer submitted a report to update Members with the latest changes agreed following meetings of the Constitution Review Working Group (CRG). The Constitution is the document by which, in accordance with the law, the Council exercises all its powers and duties. It is essential that it is reviewed to ensure it remains fit for purpose.

In introducing the report, the Portfolio Holder for Corporate Services, Councillor Chris Brant, thanked all Members and officers who had been involved in the process with the recommendations to Council reached through collaboration.

### **Resolved**

- (1) That the changes to Part 3, Officer Scheme of Delegation and the organisation chart be approved.
- (2) That the Access to Information Procedure Rules be approved.
- (3) That the composition of the Planning Committee be amended to 11 members (with 11 named substitutes) effective from the Municipal Year 2026/2027.
- (4) That it be agreed that the Key Decision threshold on revenue expenditure/savings be £250,000.
- (5) That the renaming of the Accounts, Audit and Risk Committee to the Audit and Governance Committee, with a Standards Hearing Sub-

Committee established under its remit; and that, consequently, the existing standalone Standards Committee be removed from the committee structure, effective from the Municipal Year 2026/2027, be approved.

- (6) That authority be delegated to the Monitoring Officer to make amendments to the committee terms of reference, including stating the purpose of the committees, and to make any minor amendments to the Constitution as appropriate.
- (7) That authority be delegated to the Monitoring Officer to change the frequency of Planning Committee, if required, in consultation with the Chair of the Committee.

76 **Member Development Framework and Programme 2026 - 27**

The Monitoring Officer submitted a report to consider and agree the Member Development Framework and Programme for the municipal year 2026 – 27.

**Resolved**

- (1) That the Member Development Framework for 2026–27 be noted.
- (2) That the Member Development Programme for 2026–27 be approved.

77 **Amendment(s) to Committee Membership**

The Chair advised that no amendments to Committee membership had been notified to the Monitoring Officer by Group Leaders.

78 **Exclusion of the Press and Public**

**Resolved**

That, in accordance with Section 100A(4) of Local Government Act 1972, the press and public be excluded from the meeting for the following item of business, on the grounds that they could involve the likely disclosure of exempt information as defined in paragraph 3 of Schedule 12A of that Act and that in all the circumstances of the case, the public interest in maintaining the exemption outweighs the public interest in disclosing the information.

79 **Thorpe Place Industrial Estate, Banbury – Roof Replacement**

The Assistant Director Property submitted an exempt report to approve the utilisation of Capital Programme funds of £365,000 to undertake landlords works to ensure a fit for purpose watertight roof to mitigate loss of rental

incomes and further claims for loss from occupiers at Thorpe Place Industrial Estate, Banbury.

**Resolved**

- (1) That a £365,000 budget be allocated to undertake roof replacement works at Thorpe Place industrial units, Banbury.

80 **Readmittance of the Press and Public**

**Resolved**

That the press and public be readmitted to the meeting.

81 **Motions**

The Chair advised that two motions had been submitted. In accordance with Procedure Rule 4.18, as the detail of both submitted motions fell within the remit of Executive, there would be no Council debate on the motions. The proposer of the motion would propose the motion and address Council, the seconder would confirm their seconding, and the Leader, Councillor Hingley, would respond to the motion. The motions would then be referred to Executive for consideration.

**Motion One: Consultation on move to three-weekly bin collections**

Councillor Reeves proposed and presented the following motion, which was duly seconded by Councillor Rogers. Councillor Hingley, Leader of the Council, responded to the motion.

"This Council considers that its plans to move to three-weekly bin collections from as early as April 2027 have, on balance, been poorly communicated to members of the public.

Mindful of the need for public support for such a significant change in a vital public service, this Council resolves to undertake a wider public consultation exercise than first envisaged, including but not limited to writing to all Town and Parish clerks with a view to more fully explaining the environment and commercial benefits of the policy to residents.

Given this authority's aspiration to be a "listening Council", it further resolves to listen to, and properly take on board, residents' views surrounding any proposed change to current bin collections."

**Motion Two: Keep Cherwell Tidy**

Councillor Biegel proposed and presented the following motion, which was duly seconded by Councillor Cherry. Councillor Hingley, Leader of the Council, responded to the motion.

“Cherwell is a district that members are proud to represent and we want the best for our communities.

We recognize and value the significant work already undertaken by Cherwell District Council to investigate, take enforcement action and clear incidents of fly-tipping and littering,

However, we also acknowledge that towns and villages from Banbury to Bicester and Kidlington continue to suffer from litter-strewn verges and streets, public litter bins being filled with household waste and repeated fly-tipping in hotspots.

Litter and fly-tipping harms the environment and wildlife, degrades our shared spaces and imposes costs on our taxpayers to clean up.

While strong enforcement action and prompt clearance is essential, we can further prioritize prevention with a campaign to increase awareness and encourage behaviour change.

This Council therefore resolves to:

1. Strengthen prevention with a Keep Cherwell Tidy district-wide awareness campaign

Including targeted messaging, signage in hotspot areas, and clear communication about enforcement outcomes and working in partnership with parish councils, schools, businesses and community groups to foster civic pride and shared responsibility for maintaining a clean and welcoming district

2. Maintain robust enforcement action against and prompt clearance of fly-tipping

Ensuring accountability for offenders while protecting public spaces and countryside.

3. Consider providing help and support for Keep Cherwell Tidy clean-up days

Work with partners to facilitate Keep Cherwell Tidy community clean up days and provide equipment, promotion and waste collection support where possible.”

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### **Councillor Wood Address**

The Chair invited Councillor Wood to address the meeting as this was the last Full Council meeting, he would be attending before standing down after 36 years as a district councillor.

Councillor Wood gave a reflective farewell, expressing gratitude to the voters who had elected him in 1983 to represent the Bicester East ward, where he served 12 years and subsequently the electors of the Fringford Ward from 2002 until 2016, and, following boundary changes, the enlarged Fringford and Heyfords ward from 2016. Councillor Wood described his time in local

government as enjoyable and rewarding, emphasising he hoped he had made a positive contribution to the lives of those he served.

Councillor Wood paid tribute to Conservative councillor colleagues past and present, acknowledging their support, friendship, and shared commitment to improving local services. Councillor Wood also noted the importance of cross-party relationships and expressed appreciation for the professionalism and leadership of successive Chief Executives, as well as the dedication of council staff in delivering high-quality services. Special thanks were given to the Leader's PA and Chair's secretary for the support provided during his over 20 years as Leader.

In closing, Councillor Wood offered personal thanks to his wife, Ibi, for her help and longstanding support and concluded by describing his time in local government as a fulfilling and worthwhile career, and extending well wishes to the community and the Council's future work.

The meeting ended at 7.42 pm

Chair:

Date:

<b>This report is public</b>	
<b>Annual Council Business Report 2026/2027</b>	
<b>Committee</b>	Council
<b>Date of Committee</b>	20 May 2026
<b>Portfolio Holder presenting the report</b>	Not applicable
<b>Date Portfolio Holder agreed report</b>	Not applicable
<b>Report of</b>	Monitoring Officer, Shiraz Sheikh

## Purpose of report

To note the results of the district elections held on 7 May 2026, to appoint the Leader of the Council and to consider the appointments and allocation of seats on Committees for municipal year 2026/2027 in accordance with the duty under Section 15 Local Government Housing Act 1989, to ensure that this reflects the political make-up of the Council following the elections. The political representation of members on committees needs to be considered on an annual basis.

## 1. Recommendations

**\*\* The recommendations are also included in the relevant section of the report \*\***

Council resolves:

- 1.1 To note the results of the District elections held on 7 May 2026.
- 1.2 To note the constitution of Political Groups and notification of Group Leaders which has been notified in accordance with Regulation 8 of the Local Government (Committees and Political Groups) Regulations 1990.
- 1.3 To appoint the Leader of the Council.
- 1.4 To note the appointment of the Deputy Leader of the Council, the membership of the Executive and Executive portfolios for the municipal year 2026/2027.
- 1.5 To agree the allocation of seats on committees that are subject to the political balance requirements as set out in Appendix 2 (to follow).
- 1.6 To agree that the allocation of seats on the Licensing Acts Committee reflects the General Licensing Committee.
- 1.7 To appoint members (and where required, substitute members) to serve on each of the committees in accordance with the nominations made by political groups (Appendix 3 - to follow).

- 1.8 To appoint a non-Executive representative to the Oxfordshire Joint Health Overview and Scrutiny Committee.
- 1.9 To appoint a representative and named substitute to the Health and Wellbeing Board.
- 1.10 To appoint a representative and named substitute to the Police and Crime Commissioner Scrutiny Panel.
- 1.11 To appoint an Executive member representative and an Executive member substitute to the Oxfordshire Leaders Joint Committee.
- 1.12 That authority be delegated to the Monitoring Officer to make changes required to the Constitution as a result of the changes referred to in this report.

## 2. Executive Summary

- 2.1 This report sets out the results of the District Elections, the membership of the Political Groups and Group Leaders and appointment of the Leader of the Council.
- 2.2 The Council is required to appoint Committees and other members bodies that are not part of the Executive. Membership of the Council’s Committees is agreed annually at the Annual Council Meeting.
- 2.3. The appointment of the Deputy Leader and the Executive are a matter reserved to the Leader of the Council.

## Implications & Impact Assessments

Implications	Commentary
<b>Finance</b>	There are no financial implications arising directly from this report. Michael Furness, Assistant Director Finance & S151 Officer, 12 May 2026
<b>Legal</b>	The allocation of seats to the Political Groups is in accordance with section 15(5) of the Local Government Act 1989 and related regulations mentioned in the report. It is a legal requirement for Council to appoint a Leader, agree proportionality after an election and make appointments to committees. It is for the Council Leader to appoint the Deputy Leader and the other Executive members, and to allocate portfolio holder responsibilities. Shiraz Sheikh, Monitoring Officer, 12 May 2026
<b>Risk Management</b>	None

<b>Impact Assessments</b>	<b>Positive</b>	<b>Neutral</b>	<b>Negative</b>	<b>Commentary</b>
<b>Equality Impact</b>				
<b>A</b> Are there any aspects of the proposed decision, including how it is delivered or accessed, that could impact on inequality?		X		
<b>B</b> Will the proposed decision have an impact upon the lives of people with protected characteristics, including employees and service users?		x		
<b>Climate &amp; Environmental Impact</b>				N/A
<b>ICT &amp; Digital Impact</b>				N/A
<b>Data Impact</b>				N/A
<b>Procurement &amp; subsidy</b>				N/A
<b>Council Priorities</b>	N/A, this report is pursuant to a statutory requirement			
<b>Human Resources</b>	N/A			
<b>Property</b>	N/A			
<b>Consultation &amp; Engagement</b>	The political groups have been consulted on aspects of this report.			

## Supporting Information

### 3. Background

- 3.1 Principal Councils are required to hold in every year an annual meeting of the full council. In an election year, this must be held on the eighth day after the retirement

of councillors or such other day within 21 days immediately following the day of retirement as the council may fix.

- 3.2 This meeting fulfills that requirement and ensures that the council has conducted the business required in legislation and the Council's Constitution to ensure governance arrangements are in place for the forthcoming municipal year.

## 4. Details

### 7 May 2026 District Election Results

- 4.1 Scheduled elections were held for one seat in each of the 16 district wards. Councillors were elected as set out below.
- 4.2 Following the resignations of councillors in the Banbury Calthorpe and Easington and Bicester West ward, by-elections were held alongside the scheduled elections on 7 May 2026. In these two wards, the candidate elected with the highest number of votes was elected for a four year term. The candidate with the second highest number of votes will serve the remainder of the term of the councillor who resigned.

Ward	Elected	Party	Term of office
Adderbury, Bloxham and Bodicote	David Hingley	Liberal Democrat	Four years
Banbury Calthorpe and Easington	Ian Harwood	Conservative	Four years
Banbury Calthorpe and Easington	John Jefferson Brown	Reform UK	One year
Banbury Cross and Neithrop	Yvonne Green	Reform UK	Four years
Banbury Grimsbury and Hightown	Rebecca Biegel	Labour and Co-operative	Four years
Banbury Hardwick	Paul Jeffreys	Reform UK	Four years
Banbury Ruscote	Mark Gorman	Reform UK	Four years
Bicester East	Bryonie Wells	Liberal Democrat	Four years
Bicester North and Caversfield	Julius Parker	Liberal Democrat	Four years
Bicester South and Ambrosden	Chris Pruden	Liberal Democrat	Four years
Bicester West	Michael Wilson	Reform UK	Four years
Bicester West	George Popescu	Reform UK	One year
Cropredy, Sibfords and Wroxton	Nicola Borkman	Liberal Democrat	Four years

Deddington	Eddie Fraser Reeves	Conservative	Four years
Fringford and Heyfords	Jean Conway	Liberal Democrat	Four years
Kidlington East	Fiona Mawson	Green	Four years
Kidlington West	Lisa Smith	Liberal Democrat	Four years
Launton and Otmoor	Timothy Faltermeyer	Liberal Democrat	Four years

## Recommendation

1.1 To note the results of the District elections held on 7 May 2026.

## Constitution of the Council and Constitution of Political Groups and Political Group Leaders

4.3 The current constitution of the Council (48 Members) is:

- 20 Liberal Democrat (41.67%)
- 8 Labour / Labour & co-operative party (16.67%)
- 8 Conservative (16.67%)
- 6 Reform UK (12.5%)
- 4 Green (8.33%)
- 2 Independent (4.16%)

4.4 The constitution of Political Groups and Group Leaders as notified to the Proper Officer is:

- Liberal Democrat (20 Members, all Liberal Democrat party members)
  - Group Leader: Councillor Lesley McLean
- Conservative (8 Members, all Conservative party members)
  - Group Leader: Councillor Edward Fraser Reeves
- Labour (8 Members, all Labour and Labour & Co-operative party members)
  - Group Leader: Councillor Rebecca Biegel
- Reform UK (6 Members, all Reform UK party members)
  - Group Leader: Councillor Paul Jeffreys
- Green (4 Members, comprising all 4 Green party members)
  - Group Leader: Councillor Ian Middleton

4.5 In accordance with Regulation 8 of the Local Government (Committees and Political Groups) Regulations 1990, Members have given notice of their wish to be regarded as Members of the Political Groups as set out below.

Liberal Democrat	Labour	Conservative	Reform UK	Green
Cllr Lesley McLean (Group Leader)	Cllr Rebecca Biegel (Group Leader)	Cllr Edward Fraser Reeves (Group Leader)	Cllr Paul Jeffreys (Group Leader)	Cllr Ian Middleton (Group Leader)
Cllr Chris Brant (Deputy Group Leader)	Cllr Dr Kerrie Thornhill (Deputy Group Leader)	Cllr David Rogers (Deputy Group Leader)	Cllr John Brown	Cllr Tom Beckett (Deputy Group Leader)
Cllr Gordon Blakeway	Cllr Besmira Brasha	Cllr Fiaz Ahmed	Cllr Mark Gorman	Cllr Fiona Mawson
Cllr Nicola Borkman	Cllr Mark Cherry	Cllr Ian Harwood	Cllr Yvonne Green	Cllr Linda Ward
Cllr Jean Conway	Cllr Becky Clarke MBE	Cllr Kieron Mallon	Cllr George Popescu	
Cllr Grace Conway-Murray	Cllr Dr Isabel Creed	Cllr Zoe McLernon	Cllr Michael Wilson	
Cllr Timothy Faltermeyer	Cllr Dr Henry Elugwu	Cllr Nigel Simpson		
Cllr David Hingley	Cllr Dom Vaitkus	Cllr Douglas Web		
Cllr Frank Ideh				
Cllr Simon Lytton				
Cllr Julian Nedelcu				
Cllr Julius Parker				
Cllr Robert Parkinson				
Cllr Rob Pattenden				
Cllr Chris Pruden				
Cllr Alisa Russell				
Cllr Lisa Smith				
Cllr Dorothy Walker				
Cllr Bryonie Wells				
Cllr John Willett				

- 4.6 The Labour Group and Conservative Group have the same number of members and will therefore both be referred to as the official opposition.
- 4.7 There are two Members not aligned to any political group: Councillor Les Sibley and Councillor Nick Cotter.

### **Recommendation**

- 1.2 To note the constitution of Political Groups and notification of Group Leaders which has been notified in accordance with Regulation 8 of the Local Government (Committees and Political Groups) Regulations 1990.

### **Leader of the Council**

- 4.8 The appointment of the Leader of the Council is a Council function in accordance with provisions of the Local Government Act 2000 as amended. The Leader of the Council comes from the majority political grouping.
- 4.9 In accordance with the provisions of the Local Government Act 2000 as amended and the Council's Constitution, the Leader of the Council will hold office for a four-year term until:
- they resign from the office
  - (following local elections) their successor becomes entitled to act as Leader
  - they are removed from office by resolution of the council.
- 4.10 Councillor David Hingley was appointed Leader of the Council at the Annual Council meeting on 22 May 2024. Councillor Hingley has notified the Proper Officer of his intention to resign as Leader of the Council.
- 4.11 Council is therefore required to appoint a Leader.

### **Recommendation**

- 1.3 To appoint the Leader of the Council.

### **Deputy Leader of the Council and Executive 2026/2027**

- 4.12 The Leader of the Council shall be the Chair of the Executive. It is their responsibility to determine the size and membership of the Executive (providing the membership comprises between two and nine members, not including the Leader). The Leader shall also determine the remit of each portfolio. Council does not have any decision-making in this regard.
- 4.13 All executive functions are vested in the Leader, and it is the Leader's responsibility to determine how such functions shall be delegated. This responsibility can be a simple re-affirmation of the existing delegation of executive functions to Executive, and Officers. Full Council does not have any decision-making role in this regard.
- 4.14 The Leader of the Council will advise Council of their appointment of Deputy Leader and the Executive Portfolios for the Municipal Year 2026/2027.

### **Recommendation**

- 1.4 To note the appointment of Deputy Leader of the Council, the membership of the Executive and the Executive Portfolios for 2026/2027.

### **Committee Appointments 2026/2027**

- 4.15 The current constitution of the Council is set out at paragraph 4.2. The current constitution of Political Groups is set out at paragraph 4.4.
- 4.16 The Council is required by the Local Government and Housing Act 1989 to review the political balance on its committees on an annual basis. Appendix 1 summarises how the rules operate.
- 4.17 Appendix 2 (to follow) sets out the arithmetical product of the rules for the Council's Committees. The figures in Appendix 2 show the adjustments which are necessary to achieve the balance across and within committees to comply with the rules.
- 4.18 The Licensing Acts Committee allocation of seats is not subject to the political balance requirements. Due to the crossover with the functions of the General Licensing Committee, it is recommended that, as agreed in 2025/2026, the make-up of the Licensing Acts Committee reflects the make-up of the General Licensing Committee, and the same Members are appointed to both Committees.
- 4.19 Appendix 3 (to follow) sets out Group nominations to serve on each of the committees in accordance with the political balance requirements.
- 4.20 Members appointed to Committees shall hold office until no later than the next Annual Council meeting, unless appointments are amended by Group Leaders and notified to the Proper Officer or a Member ceases to hold office.

### **Recommendations**

- 1.5 To agree the allocation of seats on committees that are subject to the political balance requirements as set out in Appendix 2 (to follow).
- 1.6 To agree that the allocation of seats on the Licensing Acts Committee reflects the General Licensing Committee.
- 1.7 To appoint members (and where required, substitute members) to serve on each of the committees in accordance with the nominations made by political groups (Appendix 3 – to follow).

### **Appointment of Representatives to Joint Bodies**

- 4.21 Council is required to agree at its Annual Meeting appointments to the joint bodies of which the Council is a member and has a seat / seats in line with the Terms of Reference of that joint body. Appointments are made for the municipal year and the Members appointed hold office until no later than the next Annual Council meeting, unless the nomination is amended or they cease to hold office.

#### Oxfordshire Joint Health Overview and Scrutiny Committee

- 4.22 Oxfordshire County Council (OCC) has responsibility to "review and scrutinise any matter relating to the planning, provision and operation of the health services in its

area” and to make referrals to the Secretary of State about proposals where it considers proposals for service change, or consultations, have been inadequate. It discharges that responsibility to the Oxfordshire Joint Health Overview and Scrutiny Committee (‘the Committee’).

- 4.23 OCC, Cherwell District Council (CDC), Oxford City Council, South Oxfordshire District Council, The Vale of White Horse District Council and West Oxfordshire District Council (“the Constituent Councils”) have under powers in Section 8(2)(a) of the Health and Social Care Act 2001 and associated Regulations, formed a joint committee between the Councils to discharge the functions of Oxfordshire County Council given to it under that Act.
- 4.24 The voting membership of the Committee comprises 12 non-executive members of the Constituent Councils, including 1 Member from each district/city Council.
- 4.25 Council is asked to appoint a (CDC) representative to the Oxfordshire Joint Health Overview and Scrutiny Committee for the municipal year 2026/2027. The representative cannot be a member of the Executive.

#### Health and Wellbeing Board

- 4.26 Oxfordshire County Council and the NHS have a duty to establish a Health and Wellbeing Board. The Board is the principal structure in Oxfordshire with responsibility for promoting the health and wellbeing of the people of the county.
- 4.27 The rules on political proportionality do not apply to the Health and Wellbeing Board not to any sub-committees set up by it.
- 4.28 The membership of the Board includes elected Member representatives and officers from the Oxfordshire local authorities, local GPs and Healthwatch Oxfordshire. The Board’s Terms of Reference set out that the representative from each district/city Council must either be the Leader or the relevant Executive/Cabinet member.
- 4.29 Council is asked to appoint a representative and named substitute to the Health and Wellbeing Board for the municipal year 2026/2027.

#### Thames Valley Police and Crime Panel

- 4.30 The Thames Valley Police and Crime Panel examines and reviews how the Police and Crime Commissioner for Thames Valley carries out their responsibilities of ensuring that Thames Valley Police runs effectively and supports the Police and Crime Commissioner in their work.
- 4.31 The Panel’s Terms of Reference set out that the membership included 14 elected Members, including one from each of the Oxfordshire district/city Councils.
- 4.32 The Panel’s Terms of References state: “Appointments of elected Members to the Panel shall be made by each of the Authorities in accordance with their own procedures and in making their appointments to the Panel each individual authority shall have regard to the requirement in the Act that appointments shall be made with a view to ensuring that the ‘balanced appointment objective’ is met so far as is

reasonably practicable. It is recognised that each Authority may choose to appoint from within the membership of the majority group.”

- 4.33 Council is asked to appoint a representative and named substitute to the Police and Crime Commissioner Scrutiny Panel for the municipal year 2026/2027.

#### Oxfordshire Leaders Joint Committee (OLJC)

- 4.34 The Oxfordshire Leaders Joint Committee is a joint committee of the six councils of Oxfordshire (“constituent authorities”) formed to enable and facilitate the Constituent members working together to deliver the aims of the Oxfordshire Strategic Vision for Long Term Sustainable Development.
- 4.35 As the Joint Committee is constituted to be able to discharge executive functions if delegated to it by the constituent authorities, then the appointed person must be from the Cabinet/Executive of the constituent authorities. There should be one member from each constituent authority. It is custom and practice for this person to be the Leader of the Council.
- 4.36 Each constituent authority shall appoint a substitute (also being an Executive member). The substitute member shall have the same rights of speaking and voting at the meetings as the member for whom the substitution is made. It is permissible to appoint a specific individual substitute or any Cabinet/Executive member.
- 4.37 Council is asked to appoint an Executive member as the council’s representative and named substitute (also an Executive member) to the Oxfordshire Leaders Joint Committee for the municipal year 2026/2027.
- 4.38 There is provision within the OLJC Terms of Reference for the establishment of Task and Finish Groups, but none have been established to date.
- 4.39 In the event that decisions delegated to this OLJC require it, a Joint Scrutiny Committee consisting of each Constituent Authority’s Chair of its Scrutiny Committee, may be convened. Notwithstanding, decisions of the OLJC may be scrutinised by each Constituent Authority as part of its own arrangements.

#### **Recommendations**

- 1.8 To appoint a non-Executive representative to the Oxfordshire Joint Health Overview and Scrutiny Committee.
- 1.9 To appoint a representative and named substitute to the Health and Wellbeing Board.
- 1.10 To appoint a representative and named substitute to the Police and Crime Commissioner Scrutiny Panel.
- 1.11 To appoint an Executive member representative and an Executive member substitute to the Oxfordshire Leaders Joint Committee.

## 5. Alternative Options and Reasons for Rejection

- 5.1 The following alternative options have been identified and rejected for the reasons as set out below.

Option 1: To amend the appointments. This is not recommended as nominations have been submitted by Group Leaders following consultation with their Groups and in accordance with the proportionality calculations.

## 6 Conclusion and Reasons for Recommendations

- 6.1 The Council is required to note the results of the District Council elections, appoint a Leader, note the appointment of the Executive and portfolio allocation, agree the allocation of seats on committees that are subject to the political balance requirements and not subject to political balance requirements, to agree the appointments to each of the Committees in accordance with the nominations made by political groups and agree appointments to joint committees.

### Decision Information

Key Decision	N/A
Subject to Call in	N/A
If not, why not subject to call in	N/A
Ward(s) Affected	All

### Document Information

Appendices	
Appendix 1	Local Government & Housing Act 1989 – Political Balance
Appendix 2	Allocation of seats on committees subject to political balance requirements and not subject to political balance requirements 2026/2027
Appendix 3	Committee appointments 2026/2027
Background Papers	None
Reference Papers	None
Report Author	Natasha Clark, Governance and Elections Manager
Report Author contact details	<a href="mailto:democracy@cherwell-dc.gov.uk">democracy@cherwell-dc.gov.uk</a> 01295 221534

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## **Appendix 1: Local Government & Housing Act 1989 - Political Balance**

### **General Description of the Rules**

1. For most local authority committees and sub-committees and for certain other appointments, the 1989 Act requires the Council to allocate seats to political groups in accordance with the groups' proportionate strength on the Council as a whole.
2. The political balance requirement applies only where political groups have been set up, but where it does apply the allocation to committees has to be reviewed annually. A review is also required on the formation of a new political group or if requested by a member newly joining a group.
3. A committee must review the allocation of seats on its sub-committees following any change in the committee's membership as a result of a 1989 Act review.

### **The Allocation**

4. The allocation process depends on the proportionate strengths of the political groups and the nature of the committee, sub-committee or other body concerned. The following rules apply:
  - (i) Where a group has an overall majority on the Council, that group is entitled to a majority of the seats on each committee and sub-committee.
  - (ii) Each political group is entitled to its proportion of the total number of seats on all the committees added together, according to the ratio of the number of members of the group to the number of members of the Council.
  - (iii) Subject to (i) and (ii) above, each group is entitled to its proportion of the number of seats on each individual committee.
  - (iv) For sub-committees and some other bodies, a group is entitled to its proportion of the number of seats regardless of the total number of seats involved (but still subject to the majority rule in (i) above).
  - (v) The allocations of seats to political groups are rounded up or down to the nearest whole number. Where the allocations leave a seat or seats unfilled on a committee, sub-committee or other body those seats must be allocated to any independent members of the Council.
5. Except where a "no dissent" alternative (as described below) is adopted, application of these principles, "so far as reasonably practicable", is mandatory. Once the allocations have been agreed under this procedure, the appointment of individual members must then be made in accordance with the wishes of the respective groups.

### **Alternatives where "No Dissent"**

6. The requirement to allocate seats according to political groups' proportionate strengths can be overridden by some other arrangement, either in relation to all committees, sub-committees and other bodies or in relation to any individual committee, sub-committee or other body, provided that no councillor votes against the alternative arrangement when it is proposed.

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<b>This report is public</b>	
<b>Annual Report of the Accounts, Audit and Risk Committee 2025/26</b>	
<b>Committee</b>	Council
<b>Date of Committee</b>	20 May 2026
<b>Portfolio Holder presenting the report</b>	Deputy Leader and Portfolio Holder for Finance, Property & Regeneration, Councillor Lesley McLean
<b>Date Portfolio Holder agreed report</b>	6 March 2026
<b>Report of</b>	Assistant Director of Finance (Section 151 Officer), Michael Furness

## Purpose of report

This report presents the annual report of the Accounts, Audit and Risk Committee for the municipal year 2025/26. It has been prepared to enable the committee to demonstrate to Council how it has fulfilled its terms of reference.

## 1. Recommendations

Council resolves:

- 1.1 To note the contents of the Annual Report of the Accounts, Audit and Risk Committee for the municipal year 2025/26.

## 2. Executive Summary

- 2.1 Per the constitution, the Accounts, Audit and Risk Committee (AARC) is a key component of Cherwell District Council's corporate governance framework.
- 2.2 Its purpose is to provide an independent and high-level focus on the adequacy of the risk management framework, the internal control environment, the integrity of financial reporting, and governance processes. By overseeing internal and external audit, it makes an important contribution to ensuring the effective assurance arrangements are in place.
- 2.3 AARC is expected to fulfil a number of responsibilities in connection with this purpose. Broadly, these are across the areas of governance, risk, and control, internal audit, external audit, financial reporting, and treasury management. It is also specifically required, under accountability responsibilities, to publish an annual report on its work, including a conclusion on the compliance with the CIPFA guidance. This guidance is taken to mean CIPFA's position statement on audit committees in local authorities (2022 edition) and the accompanying 'Audit committee: practical guidance for local authorities and police' (2022 edition).

- 2.4 This report has been prepared to allow the committee to demonstrate to Council that it has achieved its purpose by fulfilling its delegated functions during 2025/26, and that its work aligns with the principles in CIPFA's position statement (and accompanying guidance).
- 2.5 Members of AARC have agreed at their meeting in March 2026 that the report provides a complete and accurate representation of its work during 2025/26.

## Implications & Impact Assessments

Implications	Commentary			
<b>Finance</b>	There are no financial implications arising directly from this report. Michael Furness, Assistant Director of Finance, 2 March 2026			
<b>Legal</b>	There are no legal implications arising directly from this report. Shiraz Sheikh, Assistant Director of Law, Governance and Monitoring Officer, 3 March 2026			
<b>Risk Management</b>	There are no risk implications arising directly from this report. Celia Prado-Teeling, Performance Team Leader, 3 March 2026			
Impact Assessments	Positive	Neutral	Negative	Commentary
<b>Equality Impact</b>				N/A
<b>A</b> Are there any aspects of the proposed decision, including how it is delivered or accessed, that could impact on inequality?		X		N/A
<b>B</b> Will the proposed decision have an impact upon the lives of people with protected characteristics, including employees and service users?		X		N/A
<b>Climate &amp; Environmental Impact</b>		X		N/A
<b>ICT &amp; Digital Impact</b>		X		N/A
<b>Data Impact</b>		X		N/A
<b>Procurement &amp; subsidy</b>		X		N/A

<b>Council Priorities</b>	This report relates to the council's efficient and effective functioning which supports the priorities set out in the 2025/26 business plan. The Accounts, Audit and Risk Committee fulfils a vital role in overseeing, and obtaining assurances, on the continued effectiveness of the council's governance arrangements.
<b>Human Resources</b>	N/A
<b>Property</b>	N/A
<b>Consultation &amp; Engagement</b>	The draft annual report was considered by AARC at its March meeting and recommended for submission to Council.

## Supporting Information

### **3. Background**

- 3.1 Under the constitution, Council has delegated a number of functions to its sub-committees. The AARC is one such committee, and it has a key role to play in Cherwell District Council's governance framework. Council specifically requires an annual report to be presented to it in order to gain the assurance it needs that the committee has fulfilled this role.
- 3.2 CIPFA's 2022 position statement on audit committees in local authorities sets out the purpose of an audit committee, the importance of its independence from executive decision making, its core functions, its membership (including attributes and characteristics), its engagement with key stakeholders, and its influence and impact.
- 3.3 CIPFA's 2022 audit committee practical guidance expands upon the position statement, giving both officers and committee members more information on how to interpret and apply the requirements of the position statement.
- 3.4 The position statement strongly encourages audit committees to support transparency by reporting regularly on their work to those charged with governance.
- 3.5 This report aims to capture the work of the committee during 2025/26 and so demonstrate that it continues to fulfil its terms of reference, and to meet the principles and practice expected of it per CIPFA's position statement.

### **4. Details**

- 4.1 The detail of this report is included in appendix 1 – Annual Report of the Accounts, Audit and Risk Committee 2025/26.

## 5. Alternative Options and Reasons for Rejection

- 5.1 The nature of this report is such that alternative options are not appropriate. To discharge its functions under the terms of reference for AARC, and to demonstrate conformance with CIPFA's requirements, the committee must prepare an annual report for presentation to Council.

## 6 Conclusion and Reasons for Recommendations

- 6.1 This report is submitted to Council for noting. To discharge its functions under the terms of reference for AARC, and to demonstrate conformance with CIPFA's requirements, the committee must prepare an annual report for presentation to Council.

### Decision Information

Key Decision	N/A
Subject to Call in	N/A
If not, why not subject to call in	N/A
Ward(s) Affected	All

### Document Information

Appendices	
Appendix 1	Annual Report of the Accounts, Audit and Risk Committee 2025/26
Background Papers	None
Reference Papers	None
Report Author	Ed Lambert-Martin, Audit Manager (Veritau)
Report Author contact details	<a href="mailto:Ed.Lambert-Martin@veritau.co.uk">Ed.Lambert-Martin@veritau.co.uk</a> 01904 552932
Executive Director Approval (unless Executive Director or Statutory Officer report)	Report of Statutory Officer - Section 151 Officer

# **Accounts, Audit and Risk Committee Annual Report**

**Report of the work of the Accounts, Audit and  
Risk Committee during 2025/26**

## APPENDIX 1

### Contents

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The role of the Accounts, Audit and Risk Committee	4
How the committee has discharged its responsibilities during 2025/26 (overview)	5
Key activities in 2025/26	7

### Chairman's introduction

As the Chair, I am very pleased to present this annual report which sets out the role of the Accounts, Audit and Risk Committee and summarises the work we have undertaken during the financial year 2025/26.

The committee is a key component of the council's governance framework. It provides independent oversight and receives the necessary assurances that the council continues to practice good governance and exhibits strong public financial management.

I was appointed to the role of Chair of this committee in May 2025. During my tenure so far, I have observed that the committee is well supported by officers, who consistently provide a high standard of reports and presentations. I would like to place on record my thanks to the finance team, governance officers, the risk and performance team, and to our internal and external auditors, for their input and contribution to the work of the committee.

I would also like to take this opportunity to give my personal thanks to all fellow committee members who have contributed and supported the work of the committee in such a meaningful and positive way over the past year.

### **COUNCILLOR SIMON LYTTON**

Chair – Accounts, Audit and Risk Committee

### The role of the Accounts, Audit and Risk Committee

The Accounts, Audit and Risk Committee has adopted the Chartered Institute of Public Finance and Accountancy's (CIPFA) "Position Statement: Audit Committees in Local Authorities and Police 2022". It also operates in accordance with CIPFA's "Audit Committees, Practical Guidance for Local Authorities" (2022 edition). CIPFA's position statement defines the purpose of local authority audit committees as follows:

*"Audit committees are a key component of an authority's governance framework. Their purpose is to provide an independent and high-level focus on the adequacy of governance, risk and control arrangements. The committee's role in ensuring that there is sufficient assurance over governance risk and control gives greater confidence to all those charged with governance that those arrangements are effective.*

*In a local authority the full council is the body charged with governance. The audit committee may be delegated some governance responsibilities but will be accountable to full council.*

*The committee has oversight of both internal and external audit together with the financial and governance reports, helping to ensure that there are adequate arrangements in place for both internal challenge and public accountability."*

The key functions of the Account's Audit and Risk Committee are set out in its terms of reference, which form part of the council's constitution.

**APPENDIX 1**

**How the committee has discharged its responsibilities during 2025/26 (overview)**

<b>Core functions</b>	<b>May 2025</b>	<b>July 2025</b>	<b>September 2025</b>	<b>November 2025</b>	<b>January 2026</b>	<b>March 2026</b>
<b>Governance, risk, and control</b>						
Counter Fraud Annual Report 2024/25 (Veritau)						
Annual Health and Safety Report 2024/24						
Risk monitoring report – Year end 2024/25						
Housing management performance inc. complaints handling code						
Annual Governance Statement 2024/25						
Risk monitoring report – Q1 2025/26						
Monitoring Officer annual report 2024/25, inc. LGSCO annual report						
Health and Safety report Q1 2025/26						
Environmental, Social and Governance considerations						
Support to Subsidiaries						
Counter fraud progress report						
Risk monitoring report – Q2 2024/25						
Risk management strategy and guidance						
Health and safety report Q2 2025/26						
Local Code of Corporate Governance						
Annual Governance Statement 2024/25 – Update on actions						
Health and Safety Security at Castle Quay Offices						
Counter fraud work programme 2026/27 (Veritau)						
Health and Safety Q3 report						
Risk monitoring report – Q3 2025/26						
Housing Benefit Risk Based Verification Policy						
<b>Internal audit</b>						

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**APPENDIX 1**

Head of Internal Audit Annual Report 2024/25 (Veritau)						
Rutten Lane planning application: review outcomes and action plan						
Internal audit progress report						
Internal audit work programme 2026/27						
<b>External audit</b>						
External audit update 2024/25 (Bishop Fleming)						
External audit – Draft auditor’s annual report 2024/25						
External audit – Draft letter of representation 2024/25						
External audit plan 2025/26						
<b>Financial reporting</b>						
Housing benefit subsidy audit 2021/22						
Draft statement of accounts 2024/25						
Financial Management Code – forecast self-assessment update 2025/26						
Final statement of accounts 2024/25						
Accounting policies 2025/26						
<b>Accountability arrangements</b>						
Accounts, Audit and Risk Committee annual report 2025/26						
<b>Treasury management</b>						
Treasury management annual performance report 2024/25						
Treasury management report – Q1 report 2025/26						
Treasury management report – mid-year review 2025/26						
Draft Capital and Investment and Treasury Management Strategies						
Treasury management report – Q3 2025/26						

### Key activities in 2025/26

The committee is considered to have effectively discharged its responsibilities for 2025/26, as set out in its terms of reference. It has also performed the core functions described in CIPFA's position statement and adopted its principles and expected practices (as well as those contained in CIPFA's accompanying guidance).

The key activities of the committee are summarised below, aligned to the functional responsibilities in its terms of reference.

#### **Governance, risk, and control**

In July 2025, the committee approved the 2024/25 annual governance statement (AGS) for inclusion in the council's final statement of accounts. It received an update against the AGS actions in January 2026.

Also in January 2026, the committee approved an updated version of the council's Local Code of Corporate Governance.

The Committee received quarterly updates on risk management via risk monitoring reports. This saw the committee presented with the leadership risk register in July, September, and November 2025, and in March 2026.

The committee received an annual health and safety report in May 2025 and quarterly health and safety reports throughout the year. In addition, it received a report on health and safety and security at its Castle Quay offices.

The committee received the counter fraud annual report in May 2025 and received progress reports (detailing proactive and reactive work undertaken by the service) in July and November 2025, and in March 2026. The 2026/27 counter fraud work programme was approved by the committee at its 18 March 2026 meeting.

In July and September 2025, the committee received reports from the Monitoring Officer on matters relating to standards and corporate complaints. In September 2025, the committee received reports informing it of the level of support the council provides to its subsidiaries.

#### **Internal Audit**

The committee received the 2024/25 head of internal audit report in May 2025. The report gave the annual opinion on the strength of the council's framework of risk management, governance, and internal control. This is one of the most important outcomes from internal audit and should be used in preparing the council's annual governance statement. An opinion of reasonable assurance was reached by the council's internal audit provider. The same report provided the committee with reassurance that internal audit work had been performed in conformance with professional standards, as demonstrated by the external quality assessment outcome.

Throughout the year, the committee received regular progress reports (in July and November 2025, and in March 2026) against the internal audit work programme that it agreed in March 2025. These reports provided an overview of programme delivery, summarised the outcomes from internal audit engagements, and presented the results of follow-up activity (i.e. work done to confirm that actions agreed with management have been completed).

## **APPENDIX 1**

The committee has continued to review material weaknesses identified from internal audit engagements, and to provide appropriate challenge on outcomes. Officers have also attended committee to provide assurance on how more significant issues were being addressed.

The committee also met with the Assistant Director – Audit Assurance (Head of Internal Audit) (Veritau) in private session in January 2026 and satisfied itself that the council's internal audit service is free to carry out its duties without undue restriction.

### **External Audit**

The council's external auditors are Bishop Fleming. The committee received a verbal update from the auditors in September 2025 and the draft auditor's annual report in November 2025. The final statement of accounts was presented in March 2026.

The committee met with its external auditors, in private session, in January 2026. The committee is satisfied that external audit is free to carry out their duties without undue restriction. The committee is also assured that, if identified, the council's external auditors would bring any material issues to the attention of the committee.

### **Financial Reporting**

In addition to matters of financial reporting presented to the committee in connection with the work of external audit, the committee has also received and reviewed the final statement of accounts for 2022/23 and the draft and final statements for 2023/24 (including the audit completion report and annual report prepared in relation to these accounts).

The 2024/25 draft statement of accounts was presented to the committee in July 2025, with the final accounts then presented in March 2026.

In March 2026, the committee also reviewed and approved the council's accounting policies to be included in the 2025/26 statement of accounts.

### **Accountability arrangements**

The committee prepared an annual report demonstrating how it has fulfilled its terms of reference and conformed with CIPFA's position statement during 2025/26. The report was considered and approved at its 18 March 2025 meeting.

CIPFA recommends that the committee undertakes a regular self-assessment exercise against the position statement. The committee last completed a self-assessment in February 2023. This concluded that the committee demonstrated a high degree of conformance with CIPFA's expected and good practice principles, and that it had been discharging its responsibilities effectively. The committee intends to undertake a self-assessment during the 2026/27 financial year.

### **Treasury management**

The committee have provided effective scrutiny of the treasury management strategy and policies through receiving regular reports of activity, reviewing the treasury risk profile and adequacy of treasury risk management.

The committee received a report on the council's treasury management performance for 2024/25 at its May 2025 meeting. It then received quarterly updates on treasury management performance in 2025/26 over the remainder of the year, and, in January 2026,

## **APPENDIX 1**

recommended that both the capital and investment strategy and the draft treasury management strategy for 2026/27 be approved by Executive.

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<b>This report is public</b>	
<b>Overview and Scrutiny Committee Annual Report 2025/20266</b>	
<b>Committee</b>	Council
<b>Date of Committee</b>	20 May 2026
<b>Portfolio Holder presenting the report</b>	Not applicable as this is a report of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee
<b>Date Portfolio Holder agreed report</b>	N/A
<b>Report of</b>	Assistant Director – Law & Governance/Monitoring Officer, Shiraz Sheik

## Purpose of report

For Council to consider and note the Overview and Scrutiny Committee Annual Report for 2025-26.

### 1. Recommendations

Council resolves:

- 1.1 To note the Overview and Scrutiny Committee Annual Report for 2025/2026.

### 2. Executive Summary

- 2.1 The Overview and Scrutiny Committee (OSC) has a constitutional obligation to “report annually to Council on function of their workings and make recommendations for future work programmes and amended working methods if appropriate” (Constitution Part 4a, Committee Terms of Reference, section 5.2 point C).

## Implications & Impact Assessments

<b>Implications</b>	<b>Commentary</b>
<b>Finance</b>	There are no financial implications arising directly from this report. Rachel Ainsworth (FBP for Resources), 6 May 2026
<b>Legal</b>	Effective scrutiny is an important part of the decision making process in local government decision making. Having appropriate arrangements in place helps to provide good quality decision making for the Council.

	<p>The Local Government Act 2000 established the requirement for overview and scrutiny committees in a local government context and our committee and this report help to ensure that we are complying with our statutory requirements.</p> <p>The report sets out the work which it has undertaken and the recommendations and follow-up actions which have been carried out as a result of its reviews.</p> <p>There are no legal implications arising directly as a result of this report.</p> <p>Shiraz Sheikh, Monitoring Officer, 12 May 2026</p>			
<b>Risk Management</b>	<p>There are no risk implications arising directly from this report. However, agreeing the recommendations of this report mitigates the risk of not being compliant with the Committee and Council's constitutional obligation.</p> <p>Celia Prado-Teeling, Performance &amp; Insight Team Leader, 12 May 2026</p>			
<b>Impact Assessments</b>	Positive	Neutral	Negative	Commentary
<b>Equality Impact</b>				Not applicable.
<b>A</b> Are there any aspects of the proposed decision, including how it is delivered or accessed, that could impact on inequality?		X		
<b>B</b> Will the proposed decision have an impact upon the lives of people with protected characteristics, including employees and service users?		X		
<b>Climate &amp; Environmental Impact</b>				Not applicable.
<b>ICT &amp; Digital Impact</b>				Not applicable.
<b>Data Impact</b>				Not applicable.
<b>Procurement &amp; subsidy</b>				Not applicable.

<b>Council Priorities</b>	The work of OSC during 2025-26 covered all of the Council's priorities
<b>Human Resources</b>	N/A
<b>Property</b>	N/A
<b>Consultation &amp; Engagement</b>	The Overview and Scrutiny Committee considered a draft of this report at their meeting on 24 March 2026.

## Supporting Information

### 3. Background

- 3.1 The Overview and Scrutiny Committee (OSC) has a constitutional obligation to “report annually to Council on function of their workings and make recommendations for future work programmes and amended working methods if appropriate” (Constitution Part 4a, Committee Terms of Reference, section 5.2 point C).

### 4. Details

- 4.1 The annual report provides a summary of the subjects covered by OSC during the previous Municipal Year, highlighting key observations and outcomes of discussions.
- 4.2 Councillor David Rogers was Chair of the Committee from November 2025, and has provided the foreword. Councillor Rogers will present the report to Council.

### 5. Alternative Options and Reasons for Rejection

- 5.1 The following alternative options have been identified and rejected for the reasons as set out below.

Option 1: Not to agree the recommendations. This is rejected, as this would lead to the Committee not meeting its constitutional obligation.

### Conclusion and Reasons for Recommendations

- 6.1 The recommendations as set out are in the best interests of the Council and ensures OSC fulfils its constitutional obligation.

## Decision Information

<b>Key Decision</b>	N/A
<b>Subject to Call in</b>	N/A
<b>If not, why not subject to call in</b>	N/A
<b>Ward(s) Affected</b>	All

## Document Information

<b>Appendices</b>	
<b>Appendix 1</b>	Overview and Scrutiny Committee Annual Report 2025-26
<b>Background Papers</b>	None
<b>Reference Papers</b>	None
<b>Report Author</b>	Emma Faulkner, Principal Officer – Scrutiny & Democratic Lead
<b>Report Author contact details</b>	<a href="mailto:Democracy@cherwell-dc.gov.uk">Democracy@cherwell-dc.gov.uk</a> 01295 221534
<b>Executive Director Approval (unless Executive Director or Statutory Officer report)</b>	Report of Statutory Officer, Monitoring Officer



*Cherwell*

DISTRICT COUNCIL  
NORTH OXFORDSHIRE

# Overview and Scrutiny Annual Report 2025/26

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## **Foreword**

It is my pleasure to present the Overview and Scrutiny Committee's Annual Report for 2025–2026. This report highlights the important role scrutiny continues to play in strengthening governance, promoting transparency, and supporting effective decision-making across Cherwell District Council.

Over the past year, the Committee has undertaken a wide-ranging programme of work, reviewing key areas such as housing delivery, community safety, environmental services, and corporate performance. Through both pre-decision scrutiny and post-decision review, Members have constructively challenged proposals, contributed to policy development, and helped ensure that the Council continues to deliver value for residents.

I am particularly pleased with the breadth of issues considered, from the Housing Delivery Action Plan and Temporary Accommodation policy, to oversight of the Cherwell Futures transformation programme and scrutiny of fly-tipping and safeguarding arrangements. These demonstrate the Committee's commitment to focusing on matters of real importance to our communities.

The Committee has also continued to strengthen accountability by engaging with partners such as Thames Valley Police and the Cherwell Safer Communities Partnership, ensuring that local priorities are robustly examined and outcomes clearly understood.

I would like to thank all Members of the Committee for their dedication and collaborative approach during the year, as well as officers and partner organisations who have supported our work and contributed valuable evidence. I would especially like to acknowledge Councillors Lynne Parsons and Phil Chapman, who started the year as Chair and Vice-Chair respectively, and lead on building the work programme for the year which myself and Councillor Dr Isabel Creed took ownership of when we were elected to our roles in November.

Looking ahead, the Committee will continue to build on this year's work, monitoring the impact of its recommendations and maintaining a strong focus on improving outcomes for residents.

**Councillor David Rogers**  
**Chairman, Overview and Scrutiny Committee**  
**November 2025 - 2026**

# 1. Overview and Scrutiny at Cherwell District Council

- 1.1. Cherwell District Council established one Overview and Scrutiny Committee to undertake the statutory scrutiny function. This committee meets throughout the year to consider a range of issues across the Council departments and services to provide accountability and contribute to policy and service review.
- 1.2. Overview and Scrutiny Committees are led by elected Members of local authority councils and provide a check and balance to Council decision making and a vehicle for Members of the Council who are not part of the Council's Executive to contribute to the decision making process.
- 1.3. The Membership of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee this year was:
  - Councillor David Rogers (Chair, November to Municipal Year End)
  - Councillor Dr Isabel Creed (Vice Chair, November to Municipal Year End)
  - Councillor Lynne Parsons (Chair June to November)
  - Councillor Phil Chapman (Vice Chair, June to November)
  - Councillor Gordon Blakeway
  - Councillor John Broad
  - Councillor Gemma Coton
  - Councillor Frank Ideh
  - Councillor Harry Knight
  - Councillor Simon Lytton
  - Councillor Zoe McLernon (June to November)
  - Councillor Dr Chukwudi Okeke (June to November)
  - Councillor Dom Vaitkus (November to Municipal Year End)
  - Councillor Barry Wood
- 1.4. The Committee meets eight times a year (in addition to any special meetings) to consider issues across the range of council policy and service areas, which it selects and sets out in its Annual Scrutiny Work Programme. In addition to considering issues at its main committee meetings, the Overview and Scrutiny Committee may establish Scrutiny Working Groups to consider matters in more depth and more informally outside of the main committee and report back.
- 1.5. After considering any issue, the Committee may make reports and recommendations to the Council's Executive, which is required to respond, setting out any actions it will take.
- 1.6. The Overview and Scrutiny is a key part of the Council's overall governance arrangements and central to the Council's democratic decision making. Through its scrutiny inquiries, the Committee also helps to drive improvement and development of Council services, as well as providing greater public accountability and transparency to decision making. It can help test out if policies, proposals and services are effective and provide best value.

- 1.7. In carrying out its scrutiny inquiries, the Overview and Scrutiny Committee and its Scrutiny Working Groups can require Members of the Executive and senior officers to answer questions in committee, consider commissioned reports from Council departments and hear evidence from external organisations and people, including expert witnesses. This can help to add value to the decision making process by drawing on the knowledge of people and organisations both inside and outside of the Council and considering different perspectives.
- 1.8. Through out the year this has included pre-decision scrutiny, where the Overview and Scrutiny Committee considers an issue before the Executive makes a decision, which provides an opportunity for the Committee to contribute before the final decision is made.
- 1.9. The Overview and Scrutiny Committee also has the power to “call in” a decision of the Executive for review before the decision is implemented. Any five members of the Council can also trigger referral of an Executive decision for review by the Overview and Scrutiny Committee. Although this provision is used by exception, this provides an additional democratic check where Members may wish for an Executive decision to be more widely considered. There were no Call In requests in 2025-2026.
- 1.10. More information on the Council’s Overview and Scrutiny Committee and links to all of its meetings and published papers can be accessed online via the dedicated Overview and Scrutiny pages of the [Cherwell District Council website](#)

## **2. Scrutiny Inquiries in 2025 - 2026**

- 2.1. The Overview and Scrutiny Committee met throughout 2025-2026 to review Council policies and services across the range of Council departments. These included reviewing the performance and outcomes of Council services to provide accountability, as well as contributing to Council policy and service development.
- 2.2. The following short scrutiny inquiries were undertaken in 2025 - 2026:
- Housing Delivery Action Plan
  - Council performance throughout 2025-2026 – quarterly performance reviews.
  - Crime and Disorder Scrutiny – Cherwell Safer Communities Partnership and Thames Valley Police
  - Safeguarding Self-Assessment
  - Kerbside Glass Collection service
  - Graven Hill Village Development Company oversight
  - Flytipping
  - Executive Response to Overview and Scrutiny Recommendations
  - Cherwell Futures Programme oversight
  - Draft Performance Outcomes Framework for 2026-27
  - Update on implementation of new Temporary Accommodation policy
  - Action Plans stemming from Planning and Development
  - Performance of S106 delivery
- 2.3. The Committee did not have any in-depth inquiries conducted via Working Groups this year.

### **Housing Delivery Action Plan**

- 2.4. On 3 June 2025 the Committee received a draft Housing Delivery Action Plan from Planning and Development. The draft was in response to the Annual Monitoring report (AMR) that had been presented to the February 2025 meeting of Executive.
- 2.5. The plan outlined the actions required by the Council to improve housing delivery and achieve the requisite five year housing land supply.
- 2.6. The Committee made seven recommendations to Executive, for them to consider during their deliberations on the report on 10 June:

- (1) That the Executive is cognisant of the large numbers of people on the housing waiting lists.
- (2) That implementation of the Housing Delivery Action Plan include prioritisation of staffing and resources.
- (3) That more details on the resources to deliver the Housing Delivery Action Plan be provided by The Assistant Director - Planning and Development.
- (4) That the Leader write to central Government on any delays that might be caused by delays in responses by Government departments.
- (5) That suitable measures be taken to ensure that Section 106 agreements are processed on time to avoid delays.
- (6) That further consideration be given to necessary infrastructure developments to deliver the Housing Delivery Action Plan.
- (7) That further consideration be made to risk management of the delivery of the Housing Delivery Action Plan.

2.7 Executive thanked the Overview and Scrutiny Committee for their feedback and confirmed that all points raised would be taken on board.

### **Crime and Disorder Scrutiny – Cherwell Safer Communities Partnership and Thames Valley Police**

- 2.8 The December meeting of the Committee was dedicated to the Crime and Disorder aspect of the Committee's remit. This involved officers from the Cherwell Community Safety Partnership, Thames Valley Police and the Police and Crime Commissioner being invited to update the Committee on their work during the previous 12 months.
- 2.9 The Committee received a detailed update from officers regarding the Cherwell Community Safety Partnership (CCSP), with specific focus on the CCSP plan for 2025-26 and the six key priority areas.
- 2.10 The Police and Crime Commissioner Matthew Barber updated the Committee on the increasing Police force as a result of an ongoing recruitment drive, a reduction in call wait times relating to the non-emergency 101 service, and the introduction of a new AI Chat-bot called Bobbi.
- 2.11 Chief Constable Jason Hogg and Chief Superintendent Ben Clarke explained some of the operations that had taken place across the district aimed at reducing hate crime, anti-social behaviour and retail theft. They also provided detailed statistics on year-to-date crime figures.

## **Safeguarding Self-Assessment**

- 2.12 In November 2025 the Committee considered the annual Safeguarding Self-Assessment.
- 2.13 The Deputy Designated Safeguarding Lead gave a presentation that advised the Committee the annual audit was on hold for 2025, due to changes being made to the Safeguarding Partnership.
- 2.14 The Self-Assessment audit had been replaced with a professional curiosity survey, and feedback from learning from reviews workshops were reviewed.
- 2.15 The findings of the survey including frontline practitioners fostering safe curiosity, building collaborative inter-agency relationships, engaging with learning and leveraging peer support.
- 2.16 An update was also given on safeguarding cases reported to date. The figures continued to show an increase in reports, however the officers explained to the Committee that not all reported cases were confirmed subsequently confirmed to be safeguarding issues. The figures confirmed that the update of safeguarding training was good, and officers were confident to complete a 'See It, Report It' report if they were unsure about things they had seen.

## **Kerbside Glass Collection**

- 2.17 Also in November 2025 the Committee received a report detailing options for kerbside glass collection.
- 2.18 The changes were proposed as a result of the Environment Act, which required all local authorities to collect glass by April 2026.
- 2.19 Cherwell was proposing to introduce the collections from January 2026, ahead of the statutory requirement.
- 2.20 The report also detailed future requirements of the act, including a deposit return scheme for drinks containers, and greater responsibilities for packaging producers to reimburse councils for the costs associated with collection and treatment of packaging materials.
- 2.21 Officers advised the Committee that more details regarding the introduction of various elements of the Act were anticipated during 2026, with further reports being scheduled for Executive consideration as required.

## **Flytipping**

- 2.22 Following concerns amongst the Committee regarding the level of fly tipping in some parts of the District, officers were invited to present details of the Council's approach and response to fly tipping reports.

- 2.23 Although the number of fly tips annually had increased in Cherwell, officers explained that the increase was lower than the average for other comparable councils. 60% of reported fly tips in 2023-24 involved household waste, an increase of 5% for the 2022-23 period.
- 2.24 Officers from Environmental Protection explained that the team analysed reported incidents on a ward-by-ward basis to identify target areas. Reporting software was also being improved to ensure that as much evidence as possible was recorded, to assist with identifying and prosecuting offenders.
- 2.25 The Committee also expressed concerns regarding the large-scale fly tip that had been reported near the River Cherwell in Kidlington. Officers clarified that due to the scale and nature of the case, the incident was being treated as an illegal land fill. The classification of the incident meant it was owned by the Environment Agency, working alongside Thames Valley Police as required.
- 2.26 The Committee agreed to add consideration of the Kidlington illegal land fill incident to their outline work programme for 2026-27, subject to agreement from the Committee in the new municipal year.

### **Cherwell Futures Programme oversight**

- 2.27 In January 2026 the Committee received an oversight of work completed to date in relation to the Cherwell Futures transformation programme.
- 2.28 The Leader of the Council, Councillor David Hingley, gave a presentation that detailed the three main themes of the programme; the Customer front door, planning transformation, and environmental services improvements. The programme was currently on track to achieve the target savings of £3 to £4 million pounds across the medium-term financial period.
- 2.29 The officers explained that whilst the transformation work was underway, the timetable in relation to Local Government Reorganisation was being monitored. This gave the various themes opportunities to evolve in relation to LGR decisions as and when necessary, to prevent work being aborted.

### **Corporate Performance and Insight Strategy 2026-27**

- 2.30 In March 2026 the Committee were presented with details of the new Corporate Performance and Insight Strategy and Annual Delivery Plan milestones for 2026-27.
- 2.31 Both documents outlined how performance management, data and insight would be used to support effective governance, informed decision-making and improved outcomes for residents over the coming year.
- 2.32 The strategy included proposed corporate and directorate specific key performance indicators, which had been reviewed during the annual service planning process and were consistent with the previous year.

- 2.33 The Committee were asked to provide comments or recommendations to Executive, who were considering the strategy at their April meeting.
- 2.34 The Committee requested that Executive give consideration to additional performance measures relating to the evaluation of the investment in Castle Quay, ensuring that social impact, environmental outcomes and growth potential were monitored alongside the existing financial and treasury management indicators. Executive noted the recommendation.

### **Update on implementation of new Temporary Accommodation policy**

- 2.35 Also in March 2026 the Committee received a detailed presentation in relation to the Temporary Accommodation Policy.
- 2.36 Following Executive approval of a new Temporary Accommodation Policy in July 2025, the Committee requested an update on performance of the new policy.
- 2.37 The presentation explained the definition of Temporary Accommodation and when it was used, as well as:
- The purpose of the policy
  - Strategic links with wider housing strategies
  - Usage, rates and trends in temporary accommodation
  - Changes in delivery and management
  - Work being undertaken in relation to homelessness prevention and vulnerable groups
  - Improving access to long term housing options

- 2.38 The Committee thanked the officers for the comprehensive presentation, and answers to their detailed questions.

### **Action Plans stemming from Planning and Development – Response to Planning Advisory Service Review of Planning Committee Decision Making**

- 2.39 Following on from the Housing Delivery Action Plan discussion in June 2025, the Committee requested updates on all action plans stemming from the Planning and Development team.
- 2.40 The first of these updates was presented in March 2026, and related to the Planning Advisory Service (PAS) Review of Planning Committee decision making.
- 2.41 PAS carried out a review in May 2025, with a detailed report issued to the Council in August that included nine recommendations for improvement. Some of the recommendations crossed over with the Committee's own recommendations following the spotlight review carried out in February 2025 (see para 3.14 to 3.17 below).

- 2.42 The report received by Overview and Scrutiny detailed the response, current status and actions taken in relation to the PAS recommendations.
- 2.43 The Committee were asked to consider the update and make any comments or recommendation to the Executive, who considered the report at their April meeting.
- 2.44 Paragraph 6.1 of the PAS report referred to many councils having dispensed with the questions stage before debate on a planning application, and commented that CDC would need to consider whether it should do the same.
- 2.45 Overview and Scrutiny Committee expressed support for the dispensing of questions prior to debate, and the comment was formally submitted to Executive.

### **Performance of S106 delivery**

- 2.46 The final substantive item considered by the Committee in 2025-26 related to the performance of Section 106 (S106) delivery.
- 2.47 Officers received a presentation that covered how S106 agreements are agreed; how they are monitored and delivered; factors and constraints behind infrastructure delivery; and a spotlight on health contributions.
- 2.48 Regarding health contributions, the Planning Enforcement Team Leader explained that funds were held by the Council until they were requested for a project by the Buckinghamshire, Oxfordshire and Berkshire West Integrated Care Board (BOB ICB).
- 2.49 £580,000 was currently held by the Council for healthcare infrastructure, and no funds had been requested since 2019/20. The Planning Enforcement Team Leader advised that details of all funds held were included in the infrastructure planning statement, that was published on the Council's website for transparency.
- 2.50 The Committee thanked the officers for the detailed presentation and responses to questions, and agreed that a similar session should be held in future in relation to specific infrastructure projects such as playparks.

### **3. Scrutiny Working Groups**

- 3.1. Scrutiny Working Groups are informal working parties that are established by the Overview and Scrutiny Committee to consider particular matters. They are made up of non-Executive Members of the Council appointed by the Committee.
- 3.2. There were no new Scrutiny Working Groups established during 2025-26, but the recommendations of the previous groups were officially presented to Executive for their consideration.
- 3.3. Scrutiny Committees have statutory powers to make recommendations to the Executive, as detailed in Section 9F of the Local Government Act 2000. The Executive has a statutory duty to respond to recommendations made, detailed in section 9FE of the same Act.
- 3.4. When Executive have received notice of recommendations, they have two months to respond.
- 3.5. All four sets of recommendations were presented to Executive in October 2025, with responses agreed in December 2025. Overview and Scrutiny noted the updates at their meeting in January 2026.
- 3.6. The following paragraphs are a reminder of the recommendations made by the various working groups.

### **Equalities and Diversity**

- 3.7. This Scrutiny inquiry was established to review the Council's Equality, Diversity and Inclusion strategies. This included reviewing the implementation of the Council's *Including Everyone* framework, reviewing the performance against the Council's Equality, Diversity and Inclusion objectives, reviewing the development of the Council's new Equality, Diversity and Inclusion objectives for 2025-2026 and reviewing the arrangements for engagement and feedback with groups with 'protected characteristics' to help inform policy and approach.
- 3.8. At the end of the scrutiny inquiry the Scrutiny Working Group put forward a draft report and ten recommendations to the Executive, which were adopted by the Overview and Scrutiny Committee in March 2025.
- 3.9. These included recommendations for a refreshed Council Equality Diversity and Inclusion (EDI) strategy and framework, EDI audits of public facing council services, a review of all policies plans and projects to make sure that they have up to date Equality Impact Assessment assessments, a review of the Council's recruitment process, an EDI audit of the Council's website and

communications, and a refresh of the council's EDI objectives and KPIs to make sure they are focused and measurable.

## **Climate Action**

- 3.10. Cherwell Council declared a Climate Emergency in 2019 and as part of this committed to ensure its own operations and activities are carbon Net Zero by 2030 to do its part to support the district as a whole to become Net Zero. To achieve this, the Council has published a Climate Action Framework and an associated Climate Change Action Plan 2023-2024.
- 3.11. The Climate Action Scrutiny inquiry was established to review the implementation and development of the Council's Climate Action strategy and action plan in pursuit of the corporate Net Zero targets. This included reducing the District Council's own greenhouse gas emissions, as well as reducing the area of the district's greenhouse gas emissions as a whole.
- 3.12. At the completion of its work in 2024-25, the Scrutiny Working Group agreed on eight recommendations to the Council's Executive..
- 3.13. These included recommendations for a new Council Climate Action Strategy, an evaluation of interim options to replace the Council fleet of vehicles, and hypothecated investment in Cherwell Council district corporate capacity to manage and optimise renewable energy and new technologies.

## **Planning Application Appeals**

- 3.14. A Planning Application Appeals Scrutiny Working Group was established, made up of all Members of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee.
- 3.15. In February 2025 the working group considered an overview of planning application appeals performance, having particular regard to planning application refusals overturned at appeal (Planning Committee and delegated decisions), the reasons for cost implications and lessons learnt.
- 3.16. This allowed members to examine the evidence and put questions to the Executive Portfolio Holder for Planning and Development Management, Councillor Jean Conway - Portfolio Holder, and the council's lead planning officers.
- 3.17. Members put questions covering various topics such as the applications process, performance, speed of applications, and costs implicated, as well as applications overturned against officer recommendation. Members agreed five recommendations to the Executive under the following key themes:
  - Lessons Learnt
  - Member Training
  - Action Plan
  - Monitoring Improvement

### **Cherwell Safer Communities Partnership**

- 3.18. At their meeting on 11 March 2025, OSC received presentations from the Head of Regulatory Services and Community Safety, the Police and Crime Commissioner, and the Chief Superintendent of Thames Valley Police, in relation to the Cherwell Safer Communities Partnership.
- 3.19. Following questions regarding an updated Community Safety Partnership plan for 2024 onwards, the Committee resolved to recommend 'that the Executive, as a matter of urgency, ensure that the Cherwell Safer Community Partnership Plan be reviewed and updated and presented to this committee early in the next municipal year'.

### **Next steps relating to recommendations**

- 3.20. The Committee will continue to track progress and outcomes of the various recommendations during the 2026-27 Municipal Year.

## 4. Scrutiny Resources and Member Development

- 4.1. The [Cherwell District Council Scrutiny Guide](https://modgov.cherwell.gov.uk/documents/s58559/Scrutiny%20Guide%202024.pdf), which sets out key aspects of how Overview and Scrutiny works at Cherwell Council is available here: <https://modgov.cherwell.gov.uk/documents/s58559/Scrutiny%20Guide%202024.pdf>
- 4.2. The [Statutory Scrutiny Guidance](#) published by the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government is available here: [Statutory Scrutiny Guidance 2024](#).
- 4.3. [The Centre for Governance and Scrutiny](#) also publish a wealth of information on Overview and Scrutiny, including the [Good Scrutiny Guide](#).



Cherwell Council  
Scrutiny Guide



CfGS Good Scrutiny  
Guide



Statutory Scrutiny  
Guidance 2024

## **The Overview and Scrutiny Committee**

The Overview and Scrutiny Committee is appointed by Cherwell District Council to carry out the local authority scrutiny functions.

### **Formal Minutes**

Minutes of proceedings are available to view or download from the Council website at <https://modgov.cherwell.gov.uk/mgCommitteeDetails.aspx?ID=116>

### **Committee Staff**

The current staff of the committee are:

Emma Faulkner - Principal Officer - Scrutiny and Democratic Lead

Martyn Surfleet - Democratic and Elections Officer.

### **Contacts**

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Cherwell District Council

May 2026

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