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Cherwell

DISTRICT COUNCIL
NORTH OXFORDSHIRE

Committee: Overview and Scrutiny Committee

Date: Tuesday 24 March 2026

Time: 6.30 pm

Venue: 39 Castle Quay, Banbury, OX16 5FD

Membership

Councillor David Rogers (Chair)

Councillor Phil Chapman
Councillor John Broad
Councillor Frank Ideh
Councillor Simon Lytton
Councillor Dom Vaitkus

Councillor Dr Isabel Creed (Vice-Chair)

Councillor Gordon Blakeway
Councillor Gemma Coton
Councillor Harry Knight
Councillor Lynne Parsons
Councillor Barry Wood

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

AGENDA

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

1. **Apologies for Absence and Notification of Substitute Members**

2. **Declarations of Interest**

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

3. **Minutes** (Pages 7 - 12)

To confirm as a correct record the minutes of the meeting held on 27 January 2026.

4. Chair's Announcements

To receive communications from the Chair.

5. Urgent Business

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

6. Corporate Performance and Insight Strategy 2026/27 (Pages 13 - 38)

Report of the Head of Chief Executive Office.

Purpose of report

The report provides an overview of the proposed Corporate Performance and Insight Strategy 2026/27, including proposed key performance indicators and annual delivery plan milestones to be reported across the new financial year.

Recommendations

The Overview and Scrutiny Committee resolves:

- 1.1 To review the new Corporate Performance & Insight Strategy presented in Appendix 1, Key Performance Indicators as proposed in Appendix 2 and provide the Executive Committee with any comments and/or recommendations ahead of their meeting on 7th April 2026.
- 1.2 To note that the Annual Delivery Plan (ADP) Milestones 2026/27 (as approved as part of the Budget) are included in Appendix 3 for information.

7. Temporary Accommodation Policy Presentation (Pages 39 - 56)

Presentation of the Assistant Director of Wellbeing and Housing Services.

Purpose of the Presentation

To provide the Committee with a presentation on the progress on the Temporary Accommodation Policy. In addition, the presentation will cover the wider delivery of homelessness, housing advice and strategic housing services.

8. Response to the Planning Advisory Service: Review of Planning Committee Decision Making (Pages 57 - 108)

Report of the Assistant Director Planning.

Purpose of report

To advise the Committee on how the Council is responding to the Planning Advisory Service (PAS) Review of Planning Committee Decision Making.

Recommendations

The Overview & Scrutiny Committee resolves:

- 1.1 To note the work in progress in responding to the PAS recommendations and advice.
- 1.2 To identify any comments for consideration by the Executive.

9. Performance of S106 Delivery (Pages 109 - 130)

Report of the Assistant Director Planning and Development.

Purpose of report

To provide an overview of the Section 106 agreement and infrastructure delivery process, and a review of infrastructure delivery in Cherwell from a health perspective.

Recommendations

The Overview and Scrutiny committee resolves:

- 1.1 To note a presentation covering:
 - An overview of how section 106 obligations are agreed
 - An overview of how section 106 obligations monitored and delivered
 - Factors and constraints behind infrastructure delivery
 - A spotlight on s106 health contributions
- 1.2 To note key findings for health contributions currently held by the Council and trends in health contributions secured between 2019/20 and 2024/25.

10. Overview and Scrutiny Committee Annual Report - 2025-26 (Pages 131 - 148)

Report of Assistant - Director Law & Governance/Monitoring Officer

Purpose of report

For the Overview and Scrutiny Committee to consider and approve the draft annual report for 2025-26, for submission to full Council.

Recommendations

The Overview and Scrutiny Committee resolves:

- 1.1 To consider and provide feedback on the draft Overview and Scrutiny Committee Annual Report for 2025-26.

- 1.2 To delegate authority to the Assistant Director Law and Governance, in consultation with the Overview and Scrutiny Chair, to finalise the report for submission to full Council.

11. **Work Programme Update** (Pages 149 - 152)

An update on the indicative Overview and Scrutiny Work Programme for 2026-27.

Recommendation

The Overview and Scrutiny Committee resolves:

- 1.1 To note the indicative work programme for 2026-27

For Information - Scrutiny Guide

The Scrutiny Guide is attached for information and reference.

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

Information about this Meeting

Apologies for Absence

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

Declarations of Interest

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

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

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

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Queries Regarding this Agenda

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

Shiraz Sheikh
Monitoring Officer

Published on Monday 16 March 2026

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Cherwell District Council

Overview and Scrutiny Committee

Minutes of a meeting of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee held at 39 Castle Quay, Banbury, OX16 5FD, on 27 January 2026 at 6.30 pm

Present:

Councillor David Rogers (Chair)

Councillor Gordon Blakeway

Councillor John Broad

Councillor Gemma Coton

Councillor Frank Ideh

Councillor Simon Lytton

Councillor Lynne Parsons

Councillor Dom Vaitkus

Councillor Barry Wood

Apologies for absence:

Councillor Dr Isabel Creed (Vice-Chair)

Councillor Phil Chapman

Councillor Harry Knight

Also Present:

Councillor David Hingley, Leader of the Council and Portfolio Holder for Strategic Leadership

Officers:

Shiraz Sheikh, Assistant Director Law & Governance and Monitoring Officer

Stephen Hinds, Executive Director Resources

David Spilsbury, Head of Digital Innovation

David Peckford, Assistant Director Planning

Charlene Greenaway, Transformation Consultant

Heidi Radcliffe Hill, Interim Head of Chief Executive's Office

Lucy Wainwright, Transformation Programme Manager

Emma Faulkner, Principal Officer - Scrutiny and Democratic Lead

Martyn Surfleet, Democratic and Elections Officer

Officers Attending Virtually:

Nicola Riley, Interim Executive Director Neighbourhood Services

Celia Prado-Teeling, Performance Team Leader

46 **Declarations of Interest**

There were no declarations of interest.

47 **Minutes**

The Minutes of the meeting of the Committee held on 16 December 2025 were agreed as a correct record and signed by the Chair.

48 **Chair's Announcements**

There were no Chair's announcements.

49 **Urgent Business**

There were no items of urgent business.

50 **Performance Monitoring Report Quarter 3 2025 - 2026**

The Committee considered a report from the Interim Head of the Chief Executive Office that detailed the council's performance position at the end of quarter 3 2025-2026.

In introducing the report, the Leader of the Council and Portfolio Holder for Strategic Leadership advised that the Council was performing well against its quarter 3 objectives, with 88% of measures on target or within tolerance.

Out of the 34 total measures, four reported red, 12 were amber and 18 were green. On the annual delivery plan there were 15 milestones to deliver in quarter 3, five of which had been achieved or were within the agreed tolerance, eight slightly behind target, and two were behind target.

Members were also advised that of the 12 targeted corporate key performance indicators, eight achieved their Q3 target or reported within the agreed tolerance, and three reported slightly behind target, and 1 was red.

Resolved

- (1) That having given due consideration, the Council's Performance Monitoring Report Quarter 3 2025 - 2026 performance be noted.

51 **Executive Response to the Overview & Scrutiny Recommendations**

The Committee considered the Executive responses to four sets of recommendations from Overview and Scrutiny Committee, following the presentation of the scrutiny reports to the Executive on 7 October 2025.

The Leader of the Council and Portfolio Holder for Strategic Leadership gave a brief introduction to the report.

Members were advised that as part of recommendation 1.2 regarding the progress and implementations of recommendations, actions would be logged in a tracking document that would be submitted to Committee as a progress check in approximately six months' time.

Resolved

- (1) That having given due consideration, the Executive Response to the Overview & Scrutiny Recommendations be noted.
- (2) That the progress/implementation of recommendations be monitored, with an update scheduled for the July 2026 meeting of the Committee.

52

Cherwell Futures Programme

The Committee considered a report of the Executive Director, Resources detailing updates on the Council's Cherwell Futures Programme, focused on governance improvements, standardisation, workforce development, and the agreement of priorities.

In introducing the report, the Leader of the Council and Portfolio Holder for Strategic Leadership gave a presentation detailing the progress of the Council's transformation through the Cherwell Futures Programme. The programme aimed to make financial savings from streamlined efficiencies whilst improving and protecting council services.

Members were advised that the programme was on track to achieve its medium-term financial target savings of 3-4 million pounds, through efficiency and structural savings.

In response to a question regarding whether there was oversight of the various project boards, the Leader of the Council and Portfolio Holder for Strategic Leadership explained that there was the Transformation and Change board as well as further oversight from Executive members.

In response to a question regarding whether the programme included any resources dedicated to ecological improvements, the Leader of the Council and Portfolio Holder for Strategic Leadership explained that the programme in its current form focussed on three main points; Customer Front Door, Planning Transformation and Environmental Services improvement, and that the forthcoming Climate Action Plan due to be published would detail further plans for ecology and greenhouse gas emissions for the District.

In response to a request from the Committee, officers agreed to produce a diagram to illustrate the makeup and relationship between the various project boards referenced in the presentation.

In response to a question regarding the impact of Local Government Reorganisation on staffing structures and potential redundancies, the Executive Director Resources explained that any impact would depend on a business case evaluation.

In response to a question regarding a possible delay in the introduction of new waste collection timetables ahead of Local Government Reorganisation to ensure that resources in the meantime were not in vain, the Executive Director, Resources explained that the Cherwell Futures Programme would not carry out abortive work and that any work commenced would be with the intention of positioning the District in the best possible place for leading processes during Local Government Reorganisation.

In response to a question regarding advanced technology integration and back up support for communication services such as internet and whether council data was securely stored, the Head of Digital and Innovation advised that the Council had back up for both internet and telephone lines, and that the Council operated on a cloud based service with cyber security was at the forefront of operations. Members were also advised that the Councils IT services were subject to mandatory comprehensive security assessments known as the Public Services IT Health Check that ensured services were resilient and compliant against cyber security threats.

Resolved

- (1) That having given due consideration, the Cherwell Futures Programme update be noted.

53 **Work Programme Update**

The Principal Officer - Scrutiny and Democratic Lead provided an update on the Committee's Work Programme 2025 – 2026.

Members were advised that the Temporary Accommodation update had been moved from the January meeting to March 2026, due to Officer availability.

Members were advised that officers were in discussion to ensure that the Performance of S106 delivery report was ready to be brought to the March committee.

Members were advised that the March meeting of the committee would include the draft Overview and Scrutiny Committee Annual Report ahead of its submission to Full Council.

Members were also advised of the following additions to the 2026-27 work programme; Kidlington Illegal Landfill Lessons learnt, Monitoring of the implementation of the Working Group recommendations to Executive.

Resolved

- (1) That having given due consideration, the Work Programme 2025 – 2026 be noted.

The meeting ended at 7.22 pm

Chair:

Date:

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This report is public	
Corporate Performance and Insight Strategy 2026/27	
Committee	Overview and Scrutiny Committee
Date of Committee	24 th March 2026
Portfolio Holder presenting the report	Councillor Chris Brant - Portfolio Holder Corporate Services
Date Portfolio Holder agreed report	12 March 2026
Report of	Head of Chief Executive Office

Purpose of report

The report provides an overview of the proposed Corporate Performance and Insight Strategy 2026/27, including proposed key performance indicators and annual delivery plan milestones to be reported across the new financial year.

1. Recommendations

The Overview and Scrutiny Committee resolves:

- 1.1 To review the new Corporate Performance & Insight Strategy presented in Appendix 1, Key Performance Indicators as proposed in Appendix 2 and provide the Executive Committee with any comments and/or recommendations ahead of their meeting on 7th April 2026.
- 1.2 To note that the Annual Delivery Plan (ADP) Milestones 2026/27 (as approved as part of the Budget) are included in Appendix 3 for information.

2. Executive Summary

- 2.1 The Corporate Performance and Insight Strategy 2026/27 set out how Cherwell District Council will use performance management, data, and insight to support effective governance, informed decision-making, and improved outcomes for residents and acts as the 'golden thread' linking the Vision, Strategy, Annual Delivery Plan and Services Plans. It provides a clear and proportionate framework through a structured reporting cycle. By focusing not just on targets but on meaningful insight and impact, the strategy strengthens transparency, statutory compliance, and value for money, while supporting continuous improvement, public trust, and resilient delivery of the Council's Corporate Plan.
- 2.2 The strategy includes the proposed Corporate and Directorate Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) for 2026/27 which are consistent with the prior year.

2.3. Please note that KPIs have been reviewed during the Service Planning Process. In addition, a benchmarking exercise to compare our indicators with those used by potential Local Government Reorganisation (LGR) partners, and best practice recommendations by the Local Government Association has been undertaken. Together these highlight opportunities to strengthen alignment and fill gaps within the current monitoring and reporting which will be considered for next year's Annual Planning Process.

Implications & Impact Assessments

Implications	Commentary			
Finance	<p>There are no financial implications as a direct consequence of this report.</p> <p>Kelly Wheeler, Finance Business Partner, 26 February 2026</p>			
Legal	<p>There are no legal implications as a direct consequence of this report. However, where KPIs intersect with the Council's statutory or regulatory obligations (for example in relation to our homelessness duties), it is important to ensure that they do not inadvertently create obligations that conflict with our legal requirements.</p> <p>It is always best practice to regularly review performance metrics and KPIs.</p> <p>The report sets out how the proposals seek to address the recommendations within the audit.</p> <p>Denzil – John Turbervill, Head of Legal Services 25 February 2026</p>			
Risk Management	<p>There are no risk implications as a direct consequence of this report. The proposal reinforces our commitment to transparency and auditability, mitigating related potential risks. For further details on potential risks please go to section 4.7.</p> <p>Celia Prado-Teeling, Performance & Insight Team Leader, 28 January 2026.</p>			
Impact Assessments	Positive	Neutral	Negative	Commentary
Equality Impact		x		N/A
A Are there any aspects of the proposed decision, including how it is delivered or accessed, that could impact on inequality?		x		N/A
B Will the proposed decision has an		x		N/A

impact upon the lives of people with protected characteristics, including employees and service users?				
Climate & Environmental Impact		x		N/A
ICT & Digital Impact		x		N/A
Data Impact	x			The proposals will have a positive impact in the way we manage, monitor and present performance data. Celia Prado-Teeling, Performance & Insight Team Leader, 28 January 2026
Procurement & subsidy		x		N/A
Council Priorities	All			
Human Resources	N/A			
Property	N/A			
Consultation & Engagement	N/A			

Supporting Information

3. Background

- 3.1 In 2025 the internal audit of Cherwell District Council's Performance Management Framework concluded that there is a generally sound system of governance and control in place, providing reasonable assurance overall regarding the Council's corporate performance. However, the audit identified a small number of significant and moderate weaknesses. Please find in the table a summary of the actions agreed during the audit to address weaknesses identified and how they are been addressed:

Finding	Agreed actions	Update
The performance management framework is not formally documented in a policy.	The development of the Performance Management Framework will be completed in quarter 2, as established in the Annual Delivery Plan 2025/26. The framework will set out the processes and expectations that form the golden thread between corporate, service and individual performance management, providing a consistent approach to the delivery of the council's priorities and objectives.	Delayed due to restructuring. The Corporate Performance & Insight Strategy (Appendix 1) will address this action.
The council does not optimise the functionality of the performance management system.	The Unity System is due for renewal in November 2026. The Performance & Insight Team will undertake an exercise to map out the technical needs for the organisation, in line with the new Performance Management Framework, to inform the decision on what system will be used going forward. This action will be supported and enabled by the Digital Innovation Team.	Work is underway to evaluate options; in the meantime, the Performance & Insight Team is working on optimising the system's functionality to support.
ADP Milestones could be more specific and include performance against allocated budgets.	As part of the development of the new Corporate Performance & Insight Strategy, clear expectations about target setting will be defined. There will be a requirement for milestones to be developed with a clear and precise plan on what actions will need to be taken for the achievement of each milestone.	This is an ongoing action. However, improvement has already been seen on making milestones and actions more specific in the 2026/27 Annual Delivery Plan.
	Budget allocations for Annual Delivery Plan targets will be considered for inclusion in the Performance Management Framework. Financial implications of the reported exceptional performance (amber and red) need to be added and monitor as part of quarterly reports.	The new Annual Planning Process will include better alignment between the ADP, service planning and budget planning. Also, this gap is addressed by the Corporate Performance & Insight Strategy. Additionally, financial implications of exceptional performance will be added to the 2026/27 reports.

3.2 Cherwell District Council approaches the 2026/27 financial year with a continued focus on its established corporate priorities: fostering economic prosperity across the district, strengthening community leadership and wellbeing, protecting, and enhancing the natural environment, and delivering high-quality place-making supported by secure, affordable, and sustainable housing. These priorities underpin the Council's strategic ambitions and set the context for how performance, progress, and service delivery are assessed throughout the year.

3.3 To ensure clear alignment with its strategic aims, the Council has carried out a comprehensive review of its Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) for 2026/27. As part of the Service Planning Process, each team assessed whether current indicators remained fit for purpose, identified areas where adjustments were needed, and proposed new measures where these would add value. Targets for the forthcoming year were also set.

3.4 This internal work has been strengthened by a benchmarking exercise comparing Cherwell’s KPIs with those used by potential Local Government Reorganisation partners, West Oxfordshire District Council, Oxford City Council and Oxfordshire County Council, as well as reflecting recommendations from the Local Government Association. This comparison has helped to highlight opportunities for greater alignment, as well as any gaps in monitoring or reporting.

3.5 Taken together, these steps ensure that the refreshed KPI framework is both robust and future- focused, providing a reliable basis for tracking progress against the Council’s priorities and supporting well- informed decision- making as preparations for LGR continue.

4. Details

4.1 Corporate Performance & Insight Strategy 2026/27

4.1.1 The new Corporate Performance & Insight Strategy sets out how Cherwell District Council will use performance management, data, and insight to support effective governance, sound decision-making, and improved outcomes for residents. It provides a clear and proportionate framework that links the Council’s strategic priorities to service delivery, resource planning, and accountability, ensuring that performance management focuses not just on targets, but on what genuinely makes a difference to communities.

4.1.2 By integrating and understanding the connection between performance, risk, and financial management and presenting them within a structured reporting cycle, the strategy enables timely challenge, escalation, scrutiny and assurance through established leadership and democratic processes. It provides clear roles and responsibilities to reinforce ownership, transparency, and statutory compliance, while using public reporting to strengthen trust and accountability. Overall, the strategy supports continuous improvement, value for money, and resilient service delivery aligned to the Council’s Vision and Strategy.

4.2 Corporate and Directorate Key Performance Indicators – Proposed by services

4.2.1 The Performance and Insight Team reviewed and challenged existing Corporate and Directorate KPIs as part of the 2026/27 Service Planning Process.

4.2.2 Key Performance indicators per priority proposed by services are as follows, it is proposed that there are no changes year on year to these Corporate measures:

Priority	Corporate	Directorate
Quality Housing and Place Making	8	14
Environmental Stewardship	5	3
Economic Prosperity	2	4
Community Leadership	0	6
Organisational	1	1

Total KPIs	16	28
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Please note from the total 16 Corporate KPIs proposed, five are to be reported annually, one twice per year and 10 quarterly. For details, please go to Appendix 2.

4.2.3 For reference, the table below sets out the number of actions assigned to each priority area Annual Delivery Plan (ADP) for 2026/27 which complements the set of Key Performance Indicators that we report.

Priority	ADP Actions
Quality Housing and Place Making	8
Environmental Stewardship	4
Economic Prosperity	9
Community Leadership	4
Total Actions	25

4.3 Key Performance Indicators mapping ahead of LGR

4.3.1 In order to strengthen alignment with our potential LGR partners (for example Oxford City Council, West Oxfordshire District Council and Oxfordshire County Council), and ensure consistency in how performance is measured, monitored and reported, we have undertaken a comprehensive review of the Key Performance Indicators (KPIs), reported across the mentioned authorities. This analysis will inform recommendations for the 2027/28 Annual Business Planning process.

4.4 Local Government Association Benchmarking

4.4.1 As part of this work, we have also reviewed guidance issued by the Local Government Association on Performance management and Key Performance Indicators development.

4.4.2 According to the guidance effective performance frameworks should be firmly anchored to the corporate plan and wider strategic priorities, using established models such as the Balanced Scorecard or Theory of Change to provide structure. Measures ought to be few in number, focused on outcomes, and shaped by SMART or FABRIC principles, with each indicator clearly specifying its measure, comparator and target. To support better insight and decision-making, authorities should look beyond simplistic RAG ratings, instead drawing on trends, benchmarking and clear narrative context to properly reflect nuance and drive meaningful improvement.

4.4.3 The new Corporate Performance and Insight Strategy aligns well with these guidelines overall. However, there remains scope for further improvement, particularly around moving beyond simple RAG ratings and incorporating trends, benchmarking and clearer narrative context to reflect nuance more effectively. Advancing these elements forms a key part of our ambitions for the year ahead.

4.5 Local Outcomes Framework

- 4.5.1 In February 2026 the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government published the Local Outcomes Framework which sets out a clear set of national priorities for councils, focusing on tangible results rather than detailed central oversight. It aims to give local authorities greater stability and clarity, bringing key outcomes, such as safe housing, improved health, better early years support, and stronger neighbourhoods, together in one place, so central and local government assess progress through the same lens. The full framework including final metrics is due to be published in April 2026, and a digital tool will be launching later this year
- 4.5.2 It also sets out a defined list of priority outcomes, each supported by existing metrics, to help councils work with local partners to improve services and residents' quality of life. While some areas, like economic prosperity and child poverty, are shaped by wider forces, they provide important context for understanding local challenges. Overall, the framework is designed to support collaboration, transparency, and better decision- making across England.
- 4.5.3 Cherwell's KPIs have been initially reviewed against the KPIs proposed to date as part of the Local Outcomes Framework, some of our current ones align, however there is still further KPIs that can be added into our set to completely align, this is still a work in progress which the Performance and Insight team expects to conclude before the first reporting cycle of the new financial year

4.6 Summary of appendices

4.6.1 Please find below a summary of the appendices included in this report:

- Appendix 1 – Corporate Performance and Insight Strategy 2026/27: outlines Cherwell District Council's approach to managing performance and insight, setting out how reliable data, clear governance, and structured reporting cycles support better decision- making and service delivery. It explains the principles, tools, and responsibilities that ensure accountability and continuous improvement, helping the Council translate its strategic priorities into meaningful outcomes for residents.
- Appendix 2 – Proposed Performance KPIs 2026/27: contains all Key performance indicators proposed by services for the next year including owner, targets and frequency of reporting.
- Appendix 3 – Annual Delivery Plan 2026/27 with milestones: contains all external Annual Delivery Plan actions for 2026/27 with correspondent quarterly milestones.

4.7 Potential risks

4.7.1 The table below reflects the potential risks associated to rejecting the proposals presented in this report:

Risk ID	Risk Description	Potential Impact	Likelihood	Severity	Mitigating Actions
R1	Absence of quarterly milestones for some ADP actions leads to perceived inactivity during reporting periods.	Misinterpretation of progress, reduced transparency, and potential reputational impact.	Low–Medium	Medium	Refine milestones' setting to ensure further clarity during 2027/28 Annual Planning process; public reports will ensure narrative updates reflect ongoing work
R2	Performance system functionality may not keep pace with the evolving framework ahead of system renewal.	Inefficient reporting, reduced data quality, and delays to performance analysis.	Medium	Medium–High	Optimise system; complete organisational needs analysis; work with Digital Innovation Team on improvements.
R3	Lack of publicly reported organisational-level actions creates an external gap in representing internal improvement activity.	Reduced transparency and incomplete external narrative of organisational performance.	Low	Medium	Capture organisational performance in Corporate KPIs for 2027/28; cover internal improvement work through performance cover reports during 2026/27
R4	Misalignment with peer authorities and potential LGR partners limits comparability of performance.	Reduced ability to benchmark, inconsistent reporting, and missed opportunities for harmonisation.	Medium	Medium	Integrate benchmarking findings; conduct annual KPI alignment exercise; reflect LGA guidance during the 2027/28 Annual Planning Process.

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 review approve the proposed Corporate Performance and Insight Strategy 2026/27 and provide comments and/or recommendations for the Executive committee's consideration.

Option 2: To do nothing or delay the decision(s). This option is not recommended, as democracy deadlines need to be met ahead of reporting cycle for the next financial year.

6. Conclusion and Reasons for Recommendations

6.1 The proposed Corporate Performance and Insight Strategy 2026/27 offers a clear and proportionate framework that strengthens governance, transparency and informed decision-making across the Council, ensuring that performance activity is firmly aligned with corporate priorities and future requirements. Having addressed the recommendations from the internal audit, the strategy provides a robust foundation for delivering consistent, evidence-based insight in the year ahead. Endorsing the strategy and associated appendices is therefore recommended, as doing so will safeguard continuity, reinforce statutory and democratic accountability, and mitigate risks linked to delay, particularly in relation to planning cycles, system optimisation and preparation for potential Local Government Reorganisation.

Decision Information

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

Document Information

Appendices	
Appendix 1	Corporate Performance and Insight Strategy 2026-27
Appendix 2	Proposed Performance KPIs 2026/27
Appendix 3	Annual Delivery Plan 2026/27 with milestones
Background Papers	N/A
Reference Papers	N/A
Report Author	Celia Prado-Teeling
Report Author contact details	Celia.Prado-Teeling@Cherwell-DC.gov.uk
Executive Director Approval	Gordon Stewart, Chief Executive Officer Heidi Radcliffe-Hill, Interim Head of Chief Executive's Office

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Cherwell District Council Corporate Performance and Insight Strategy

Performance Team Leader
Date Produced: February 2026
Date of Next Review: January 2027

1. Introduction

For Cherwell District Council, integrating performance, finance and risk is essential to making sound, evidence-based decisions that protect services and deliver the best outcomes for local residents and businesses. By viewing these elements together, we can target our resources more wisely, address issues early and ensure plans and budgets genuinely reflect the council's priorities and risk appetite. To achieve this integration an Annual Business Planning process has been established, encompassing Budget and Service planning.

The strategy is a fundamental output of our Annual Business Planning process together with the Budget and the Corporate Risk Management Strategy, whilst these documents stand alone, joining the process of yearly reviewing and periodically reporting on them ensures an integrated view and analysis of all elements, allowing for informed decision making and effective scrutiny.

Performance and insight management is one of the foundations of a successful organisation, it goes beyond meeting targets, ensuring meaningful outcomes, align services with strategic and cost-effective plans, and creates a balanced, consistent, and community-focused organisation. Through this practice, we translate strategy into achievable goals, provide assurance, and evidence the outcomes being delivered to meet the ambition of the Vision and Strategy to 2030.

Our approach is to make data accessible, accurate, timely, and relevant, enabling continuous improvement. This means supporting staff, partners, and communities to feel informed and engaged, fostering trust, transparency, and participation. Performance management, together with data analysis, reinforces our commitments and guides cultural change, compliance, and accountability. It helps us to plan for the future, manage change, and create a resilient organisation aligned with people's needs, while cultivating pride in our district.

Performance and insight management is not just numbers and reports; it is about understanding what truly makes a difference to people. By gathering insight and benchmarking, we focus on service quality, track delivery against our commitments and priorities.

2. Purpose

The council's Corporate Performance and Insight strategy forms the foundation of strong governance, service innovation, and public trust. It provides clarity and direction, enabling teams to navigate uncertainty and achieve results.

Cherwell is committed to embedding a culture of awareness and compliance with policies and principles, ensuring ethical leadership and strategic agility. This approach promotes inclusive engagement and champions equality, diversity, and fairness—guided by honesty and clarity. Decisions are informed not only by data but by meaningful insight and robust performance management, ensuring outcomes that reflect real community needs.

Through this strategy, the council aims to anticipate challenges, adapt to change, and deliver services that build resilience and public confidence. It goes beyond numbers—focusing on impact, improvement, and trust—so that every action strengthens its ability to serve communities effectively.

In line with this ambition, the council's approach to performance reporting aims to place greater emphasis on outcomes rather than simply counting outputs. While outputs record the tasks completed or services delivered, outcomes demonstrate the real-world difference these activities make for our residents, communities, and the local economy. By prioritising outcome-focused reporting, Cherwell can better understand whether its interventions are achieving the intended impact, ensure that resources are directed where they add most value, and provide a more honest and meaningful account of progress. This shift strengthens transparency, supports improved decision-making, and reinforces the council's commitment to delivering tangible benefits for the people it serves.

3. Principles

Grounded in statutory duties (e.g., Local Government Act 1999), it implies simplicity, transparency, and accountability into everything it does. With this in mind, our strategy is designed to translate collective priorities into meaningful actions, with ongoing dialogue and feedback throughout the organisation's financial year.

Involving everyone in co-designing service standards and solutions, within each measure defined, we ensure that improvement is driven by insight, from live and participant voices, exposing shared responsibility, and presenting meaningful impact to our residents, not just dashboards.

Cherwell's strategy aims to help services identify issues early, supporting development through constructive feedback, and aligning resources with community organisation and community needs; all whilst maintaining compliance, reinforcing confidence, and fostering ethical, responsive governance.

Supporting and enabling services, and senior staff, to use appropriate, compliant, and well-structured dashboards, reports, insights, and challenging services performance through a central management tool, in turn enabling and optimising plans, consequently, helping everyone to come to better decisions. This includes:

- Strategic Direction: Establishing clear, long-term goals using frameworks like the golden thread from the Vision, Strategy, Annual Delivery Plans, and Service Plans.
- Collaboration & Governance: Preventing siloed working, aligning resources, and supporting ethical leadership, and enhanced transparency.
- Data-Driven Decisions: Leveraging data collaboration for evidence-based policy and resource allocation.
- Performance Management: Using Key Performance Indicators (KPIs), a traffic light monitoring system and benchmarking, when possible, to drive efficiency and continuous improvement.
- Sustainability & Inclusion: Promoting environmental resilience, equality, diversity, and inclusion while fostering community engagement and legitimacy.
- Leadership Development: Equipping leaders with reliable data to navigate complexity and build strategic thinking and adaptability.

Corporate Performance and Insights' Management extends beyond measurement of key performance indicators, it shapes culture, drives collaboration, and strengthens governance; It acts as a proactive mitigation against risks, supports strategic agility, and ensures resources are used effectively. By embedding transparency and evidence-based decision-making, we enhance public trust and democratic legitimacy, fostering learning, innovation, and adaptability, enabling the organisation to respond confidently to changing priorities while demonstrating value for money and informed policy development.

4. Background

Our organisation's Corporate Plan (set for 2024–2026) is constituted of four strategic priorities:

- **Economic Prosperity**
 - Focus on creating vibrant economic centres and thriving rural villages by:
 - Revitalising town centres and supporting rural businesses.
 - Promoting green initiatives and sustainable growth.
 - Enhancing skills, attracting investment, and boosting tourism.
- **Community Leadership**
 - Strengthen community collaboration and resilience by:
 - Promoting health and wellbeing with an emphasis on reducing inequality.
 - Encouraging active lifestyles, cultural development, and crime reduction.
 - Advancing equality, diversity, and inclusion.
- **Environmental Stewardship**
 - Safeguard the environment and promote biodiversity by:
 - Committing to net-zero goals and improving air quality.
 - Driving circular economy principles: reduce, reuse, recycle.
 - Supporting green economy initiatives and partner-led sustainability projects.
- **Quality Housing and Place-Making**
 - Deliver sustainable and strategic development by:
 - Providing high-quality, secure, and affordable housing for diverse needs.
 - Enforcing standards, preventing homelessness, and supporting vulnerable residents.
 - Promoting green building practices and long-term community planning.

5. Methodology

The council sets annual priorities to guide resource allocation and strategic direction. Cherwell District Council's performance and insight strategy integrates planning, governance, and evidence-based analysis to ensure accountability, transparency, and effective service delivery. It is structured around four components: strategic alignment, governance and assurance, evidence-based analysis, and transparent reporting.

Cherwell District Council's performance management methodology is built on a structured, evidence-based approach, combining strategic planning, supportive governance, and robust quality assurance to maintain accountability, transparency, and effective service delivery. Acting as checks and balances, this framework enables informed decision-making and strong recommendations through rigorous analysis.

The methodology is organised into four key components:

1. Strategic Alignment – Linking objectives to corporate priorities and resource allocation – the ‘golden thread.’
2. Governance and Assurance – Applying quality checks and challenge mechanisms for accountability, through a two-fold approach: Service level management and monitoring and CLT/Democracy monitoring and reporting quarterly.
3. Evidence-Based Analysis – Using data-driven insights to inform decisions and improve outcomes.
4. Transparent Reporting – Ensuring clarity and openness in performance results and recommendations.

5.1 Delivery & Performance Framework

To achieve successful performance management delivery, recommendations are made proficiently and accurately, to define and clarify processes which must be carried out by collecting, challenging and confirming data and the impact it brings to the organisation strategy table, in turn so that plans can be reviewed and re-framed, and this may occur monthly, quarterly, or yearly where input for reporting is agreed, with a view to:

- What happens: when KPIs (goals), feedback, and complaints performance data are collected, from diverse sources and tools within the organisation for each pre-determined period.
- Why: there is a need to give a quick view of each service goal (KPI/measure), and its alignment with the delivery of service priorities, determined by a RAG (Red/Amber/Green) status, helping leadership and members understand how each service is doing, what is working and what needs to be done to improve.
- Who sees it: depending on the stage of the cycle, monthly at service/director level, and quarterly presenting the relevant results to Corporate Leadership Team, Executive and Overview & Scrutiny Committee.

Our performance monitoring structure is set into three levels of reporting:

- **Service and Directorate level:** this is when performance management happens at an individual service level with any issues being escalated as required. This monitoring includes operational and directorate level KPIs and projects.
- **Corporate level:** this is when performance management is reviewed at a strategic leadership level and through the democratic cycle. This review includes strategic level KPIs and Annual Delivery Plan Actions), and those escalated (performance exceptions) from the Directorate level. At this level Performance is reported and scrutinised quarterly by the following:
 - DLT (Departmental Leadership Team) – reviews operational performance at department level.
 - CLT (Corporate Leadership Team) – consolidates departmental reports for corporate oversight.
 - ELT (Extended Leadership Team) – aligns performance with the organisation’s four strategic priorities.
 - O&S (Overview & Scrutiny Committee) – Formal report where members conduct a deep-dive into performance outcomes, with call-in powers for decisions, and comments to the Executive.
 - Executive (Executive Committee) – Formal report including performance results, financial updates, and risk register status for the period, for executive to intake O&S comments and make final decisions or take note of the presented outcomes.

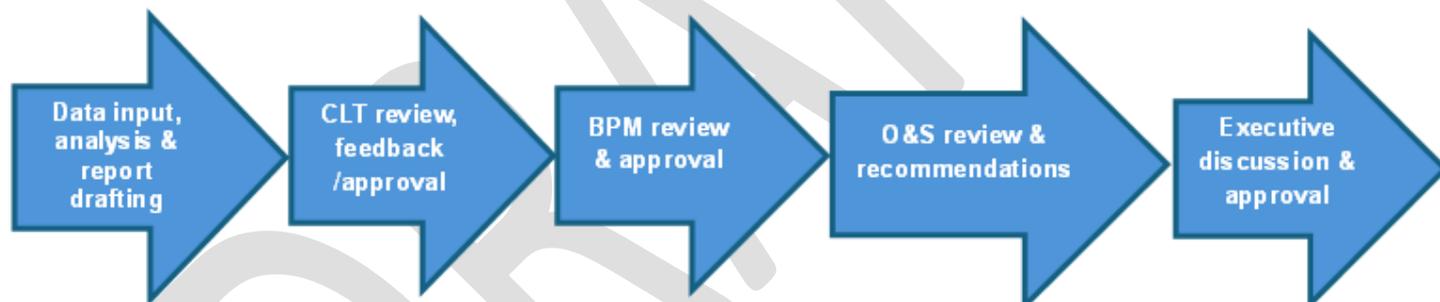
- **End of Year Report:** Additionally, an End of Year Performance Report is presented during the first quarter of the financial year, this is a report summarising not just the performance position for year-end, but also the achievements across the council during the year.

5.2 Performance Reporting Cycle

Cherwell District Council has a comprehensive performance reporting cycle that ensures accuracy and transparency throughout the organisation. This cycle progresses from operational monitoring to leadership oversight, then to governance review, and ultimately to public accountability through quarterly and annual reports, reinforcing compliance with transparency standards and providing a clear structure for reporting and decision-making.

The quarterly cycle begins with reminder emails prompting services to update their Corporate and Strategic KPIs, followed by data submission into the Performance system. The Performance and Insight Team analyses the data and drafts the report for the Corporate Leadership Team (CLT), who review, challenge, and approve it.

A combined performance monitoring report, including Finance and Risk, and reflecting CLT feedback, is then taken to the BPM meeting for further review and recommendations ahead of the Performance element of the report being scrutinised by the Overview and Scrutiny Committee, who send comments, questions and recommendations to be ultimately discussed and answered by the Executive Committee who sees the full report (Finance, Performance and Risk). As per below:



5.3 Performance Management Tools

- **Performance Management System (currently Unity by Ideagen):** Repository for Key Performance Indicators' data. Performance indicators are reported quarterly (except for a small number reported annually); their status progression is scored using a RAG rating (Red, Amber, Green), by defining Green as on/above target or within the agreed tolerance, Amber as slightly behind target (as determined by the set tolerance, with an average of less than 10%); and Red very behind target (as determined by the set tolerance, with an average of more than 10%).
- **Annual Delivery Plan:** Cherwell's Annual Delivery Plan translates the council's long-term vision and corporate priorities into specific yearly key actions aligned with strategic goals such as economic growth, environmental sustainability, and community well-being. The plan provides clear direction, ensures accountability through quarterly monitoring and governance oversight, and enables the council to respond effectively to local and national challenges while maintaining transparency and progress tracking. The ADP yearly actions are broken down for reporting purposes into quarterly milestones, which are included in the Quarterly Performance Reports.

- **Dashboards:** Service, Directorate and Corporate level dashboards are currently under development, with the longer-term aspiration to compile all performance data with updates in real time, aiming to support managers to monitor, manage and discuss their correspondent performance with their teams, portfolio holders, and/or line manager.
- **Benchmarking:** An annual benchmarking process is undertaken to compare the council's services, processes, and outcomes against other councils or recognised best practices to identify areas for improvement and ensure value for money. It helps set realistic service delivery targets, improve efficiency, and enhance community satisfaction by learning from high-performing councils. By analysing indicators such as waste collection rates, planning application turnaround times, or customer service responsiveness, benchmarking provides a clear reference point for continuous improvement and supports transparency and accountability in local government operations.

6. Roles and Responsibilities

Accountability is embedded through documented approvals, compliance checks, and audit trails to ensure all performance and engagement activities meet statutory and corporate standards as follows:

- **Service Leads:** Initiate, define and align performance objectives linked to the council's Vision and Strategy, Annual Delivery Plan, and Service Plans. They must ensure activities meet best value, equality, GDPR, and transparency requirements, and retain legal ownership or responsibility for consultations and engagement, even when delegated. This is also applicable for reporting, where services must submit outcomes to the performance management system, and integrate findings into monthly and quarterly performance reports, additionally to provide feedback to participants, where consultations were used. Ultimately, own their service performance end-to-end from creating proposing the service, and corporate and directorate KPIs to monitoring them through the service performance dashboard.
- **Performance & Insight Team:** Holds benchmarking, analysis and quality assurance roles. Providing advice to guide services on legal standards, best practice, and question or challenge design for performance, insight and consultations, using tools and support to provide approved platforms (e.g. Citizen Space, Unity, JADU), templates, and best use and application of strategies. The team owns the performance management system, developing tailor-made dashboards and reports, and providing training for services to manage their own dashboards. Overall, the team provides an internal challenge function, offering the checks and balances that strengthen decision-making and continuous improvement across the council.
- **Senior Officers, Assistant Directors and Executive Directors:** Are responsible for formal approvals, authorising plans, and ensuring alignment with strategic priorities, maintaining accountability, and retain ultimate responsibility for compliance and integrity of processes. Although able to delegate protocols, ultimately continue to hold responsibility for tasks while maintaining oversight, and ensure performance integration outcomes, of priorities informed through monthly dashboards, quarterly reports, and annual governance reviews.
- **Leadership Team:** Collectively the Leadership Team is responsible for championing and embedding the principles this strategy across their services from the top down.

Clear roles and responsibilities, are defined and established to:

- Strengthen Performance Reporting: Innovative tools (e.g., Unity dashboards, Citizen Space) allow better integration of non-data insights into monthly, quarterly, and annual cycles.
- Drive Continuous Improvement: Learning from past consultations and complaints ensures services adapt and improve, meeting Best Value Duty¹ and governance standards.
- Support Strategic Outcomes: Embedding lessons learned into the Annual Delivery Plan and risk reviews enhances decision-making and accountability.
- Build a Learning Culture: Encourages teams to challenge existing processes, adopt best practice, and benchmark against other councils via LG Inform².

7. Culture, Awareness and Training

To ensure Performance and Insight are effectively implemented, all Cherwell District Council members and officers, should have a clear understanding of this strategy. Performance management awareness should integrate into everyone's everyday thinking, behaviours, and actions.

Having developed a robust strategy with defined roles, responsibilities, and reporting lines, it is vital to equip members and officers with the knowledge and skills necessary to manage performance processes effectively. A training plan is being developed to meet organisational needs, including e-learning modules, workshops, and formal compliance training.

8. Strategy Review

The Corporate Performance and Insight Strategy will be reviewed annually as part of the council's Annual Business Planning Process. Each review will consider:

- The national and local context, including emerging trends and developments.
- Relevant policy and legislative changes that may influence our priorities or ways of working.
- The council's evolving business needs, ensuring the strategy continues to support effective decision-making and service delivery.

Once the review is completed it will be approved through the Democratic cycle ahead of the end of the Financial Year.

¹ Statutory guidance on the Best Value Duty for local authorities in England, issued under section 26 of the Local Government Act 1999. <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/best-value-standards-and-intervention-a-statutory-guide-for-best-value-authorities>

² LG Inform is the local area benchmarking tool from the Local Government Association <https://lginform.local.gov.uk/>

Appendix 2 - Key Performance Indicators 2026-27

Quality housing and placemaking								
Measure Name	Corporate or Directorate monitoring	Portfolio Holder	AD/Director	Frequency	Targeted or Monitoring Only	Target 26/27	Bigger is better or Smaller is better (against target)	Continue/Stop/New (if no include reasons for stopping)
Number of homeless households living in nightly charged (hotel) temporary accommodation (TA).	Corporate	Cllr N Cotter	Nicola Riley Kristian Aspinall	Quarterly	Targeted	25	Smaller is better	Continue
% of Homelessness cases successfully prevented rather than relief/main duty being applied	Corporate	Cllr N Cotter	Nicola Riley Kristian Aspinall	Quarterly	Targeted	60%	Bigger is better	Continue
Average time taken to process Housing Benefit New Claims and council tax reduction	Directorate	Cllr L McLean	Michael Furness Stephen Hinds	Quarterly	Targeted	18 days	Smaller is better	Continue
Average time taken to process Housing Benefit Change Events and council tax reduction	Directorate	Cllr L McLean	Michael Furness Stephen Hinds	Quarterly	Targeted	8 days	Smaller is better	Continue
% of Major Planning Applications determined to National Indicator	Corporate	Cllr J Conway	David Peckford Ian Boll	Quarterly	Targeted	60%	Bigger is better	Continue
% of Non-Major Planning Applications determined to National Indicator	Corporate	Cllr J Conway	David Peckford Ian Boll	Quarterly	Targeted	70%	Bigger is better	Continue
% of Major Applications overturned at appeal	Corporate	Cllr J Conway	Paul Seckington Ian Boll	Quarterly	Targeted	10%	Smaller is better	Continue
% of Non-Major Applications overturned at appeal	Corporate	Cllr J Conway	Paul Seckington Ian Boll	Quarterly	Targeted	10%	Smaller is better	Continue
Net Additional Housing Completions to meet Cherwell needs	Corporate	Cllr J Conway	David Peckford Ian Boll	Biannual Sept - March	Targeted	791 (half year)	Bigger is better	Continue
Number of Homeless Households living in Temporary Accommodation (TA)	Directorate	Cllr N Cotter	Nicola Riley Kristian Aspinall	Quarterly	Monitoring	N/A	N/A	Continue
Number of affordable homes delivered	Corporate	Cllr N Cotter Cllr J Conway	Nicola Riley Kristian Aspinall	Quarterly	Monitoring	N/A	N/A	Continue
Average time taken for new applications to be responded to with 15 working days	Directorate	Cllr N Cotter	Nicola Riley Kristian Aspinall	Quarterly	Targeted	15 days	Smaller is better	Continue
% of building control full plans assessed within 5 weeks (or longer with applicant's agreement)	Directorate	Cllr J Conway	David Peckford Ian Boll	Quarterly	Targeted	95%	Bigger is better	Continue
Building Safety Regulatory - Quarterly data - return all data by statutory date	Directorate	Cllr J Conway	David Peckford Ian Boll	Quarterly	Monitoring	N/A	N/A	New
Building Safety Regulatory - Annual data - return all data by statutory date	Directorate	Cllr J Conway	David Peckford Ian Boll	Annual	Monitoring	N/A	N/A	New
Speed of determining Non-Major Planning Applications (excluding extensions of time)	Directorate	Cllr J Conway	David Peckford Ian Boll	Quarterly	Targeted	TBA	Smaller is better	New
Speed of determining of discharge of condition applications	Directorate	Cllr J Conway	David Peckford Ian Boll	Quarterly	Targeted	48 days	Smaller is better	New
Speed of providing responding to pre-application enquiries within timescale set by pre-application service delivery	Directorate	Cllr J Conway	David Peckford Ian Boll	Quarterly	Targeted	TBA	Smaller is better	New
Average time taken to deal with major applications	Directorate	Cllr J Conway	David Peckford Ian Boll	Quarterly	Targeted	200 days	Smaller is better	New
Average time taken to deal with minor applications	Directorate	Cllr J Conway	David Peckford Ian Boll	Quarterly	Targeted	56 days	Smaller is better	New
Average time taken to deal with householder applications	Directorate	Cllr J Conway	David Peckford Ian Boll	Quarterly	Targeted	49 days	Smaller is better	New

Environmental Stewardship								
Measure Name	Corporate or Directorate monitoring	Portfolio Holder	AD/Director	Frequency	Targeted or Monitoring only	Target 26/27	Bigger is better or Smaller is better (against target)	Continue/Stop/New (if no include reasons for stopping)
% Waste Recycled & Composted	Corporate	Cllr I Middleton	Kristian Aspinall Ed Potter	Quarterly	Targeted	54%	Bigger is better	Continue
% Annual reduction in fuel consumption	Corporate	Cllr I Middleton	Kristian Aspinall Ed Potter	Annual	Targeted	1%	Bigger is better	Continue
% of Climate Action Plan delivering to target	Corporate	Cllr D Hingley	Kristian Aspinall Ed Potter	Quarterly	Targeted	66%	Bigger is better	Continue
Reduction in total Greenhouse gas emissions for the year	Corporate	Cllr I Middleton	Kristian Aspinall Ed Potter	Annual	Targeted	3900 tonnes of CO2e	Smaller is better	Continue
% of missed waste containers	Directorate	Cllr I Middleton	Kristian Aspinall Ed Potter	Quarterly	Monitoring only	N/A	N/A	Continue
Tonnes residual household waste collected	Corporate	Cllr I Middleton	Kristian Aspinall Ed Potter	Quarterly	Monitoring only	N/A	N/A	Continue
% of Recycling Contamination rate	Directorate	Cllr I Middleton	Kristian Aspinall Ed Potter	Quarterly	Monitoring only	N/A	N/A	Continue
Economic prosperity								
Measure Name	Corporate or Directorate monitoring	Portfolio Holder	AD/Director	Frequency	Targeted or Monitoring only	Target 26/27	Bigger is better or Smaller is better (against target)	Continue/Stop/New (if no include reasons for stopping)
% of Council Tax collected, increase Council Tax Base	Directorate	Cllr L McLean	Michael Furness Stephen Hinds	Quarterly	Targeted	Q1 29% Q2 56.30% Q3 83% Q4 97.75%	Bigger is better	Continue
% of Business Rates collected, increasing NNDR Base.	Directorate	Cllr L McLean	Michael Furness Stephen Hinds	Quarterly	Targeted	Q1 31% Q2 57.10% Q3 83.5% Q4 98%	Bigger is better	Continue
Number of enterprises in the district	Corporate	Cllr L McLean	Ian Boll Tom Dobrashian	Annual	Monitoring only	N/A	N/A	Continue
Secure non-retail-based key tenants	Corporate	Cllr L McLean	Mona Walsh Stephen Hinds	Annual	Targeted	2	Bigger is better	Continue
Number of businesses engaged through UK Shared Prosperity Fund (UKSPF) and Rural England Prosperity Fund (REPF) funded programmes	Directorate	Cllr L McLean	Ian Boll Tom Dobrashian	Quarterly	Monitoring only	N/A	N/A	Continue
Number of residents engaged through UK Shared Prosperity Fund (UKSPF) and Rural England Prosperity Fund (REPF) funded programmes	Directorate	Cllr L McLean	Ian Boll Tom Dobrashian	Quarterly	Monitoring only	N/A	N/A	Continue

Community leadership								
Measure Name	Corporate or Directorate monitoring	Portfolio Holder	AD/Director	Frequency	Targeted or Monitoring only	Target 2026/27	Bigger is better or Smaller is better (against target)	Continue/Stop/New (if no include reasons for stopping)
Number of Visits/Usage of all Leisure Facilities within the District	Directorate	Cllr R Pattenden	Kristian Aspinall Nicola Riley	Quarterly	Monitoring	N/A	N/A	Continue
Residents who have taken part in programmes contributing to reducing health inequalities	Directorate	Cllr R Pattenden	Kristian Aspinall Nicola Riley	Quarterly	Monitoring	N/A	N/A	Continue
Residents who have taken part in programmes contributing to reducing health inequalities	Directorate	Cllr R Pattenden	Nicola Riley Kristian Aspinall	Quarterly	Monitoring	N/A	N/A	Continue
% of due food hygiene inspections of premises rated A-D completed	Directorate	Cllr R Pattenden	Kristian Aspinall Tim Hughes	Quarterly	Targeted	95%	Bigger is better	Continue
Number of -Fly Tips Reported	Directorate	Cllr R Pattenden	Kristian Aspinall Tim Hughes	Quarterly	Monitoring	N/A	N/A	Continue
Implement Marmot principles across the district - Deliver 5 Community Insight profile	Directorate	Cllr R Pattenden	Kristian Aspinall Nicola Riley	Quarterly	Monitoring	N/A	N/A	New
Implement Marmot principles across the district - deliver 10 community-led projects to address Health inequalities	Directorate	Cllr R Pattenden	Kristian Aspinall Nicola Riley	Quarterly	Monitoring	N/A	N/A	New
Organisational								
Measure Name	Corporate or Directorate monitoring	Portfolio Holder	AD/Director	Frequency	Targeted or Monitoring only	Target 2026/27	Bigger is better or Smaller is better (against target)	Continue/Stop/New (if no include reasons for stopping)
Number of upheld complaints	Directorate	Cllr D Hingley	Natasha Barnes Stephen Hinds	Quarterly	Monitoring	N/A	N/A	Continue
Overall employee satisfaction	Corporate	Cllr C Brant	Claire Cox Stephen Hinds	Annual	Targeted	10% Increase	Bigger is better	New

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Priority	Goals	Aims	2026/27 Actions	Quarterly Milestones	Executive Director / AD Lead
Long-term economic prosperity	Create vibrant economic centres and thriving rural villages	To foster diverse economic centres and villages that support local businesses, attract investment, and enhance community life.	Develop and agree the Economic Prosperity Strategy, including the Economic Action Plan, in order to establish a long-term programme of regeneration and strategic actions	Q1 - Start Stakeholder Engagement to support EP Strategy Q2 - Stakeholder Engagement to support EP Strategy Q3 - Complete the Economic Prosperity Strategy including Action Plan Q4 - N/A	Ian Boll / Tom Dobrashian
			Build a new community sports facility with outdoor provision at Graven Hill.	Q1 - Develop Plans/Planning Permission for the Community Centre, Sports Pitches and Pavilion Q2 - N/A Q3 - Commence Construction for the new Community Centre, Sports Pitches and Pavilion Q4 - Monitor Progress	Kristian Aspinall
		To promote sustainable economic prosperity through innovation, resilience, and strategic growth.	Develop and agree capital programme to deliver the partner culture strategy for the District	Q1 - Options appraisal report covering design, cost plan and procurement strategy Q2 - Consider funding strategy Q3 - Begin detailed planning if activity in Q1 and Q2 positive Q4 - TBC	Kristian Aspinall / Mona Walsh
			Work with Oxfordshire Growth Commission to deliver economic development, infrastructure and housing growth	Q1- Complete technical review of delivery of LPPR sites Q2 - Seek further funding support for development of place narratives Q3 - TBC Q4 - TBC	Ian Boll / Tom Dobrashian / David Peckford
			Make best use of council owned assets, including Bodicote House to promote innovation and strategic growth	Q1 - Conduct financial appraisal and site surveys for the repurposing of lower bridge street. Complete license of occupation for Banbury Library, alongside completion of feasibility and surveys (completed by OCC) Q2 - Exchange of Contracts for Bodicote House. Conduct design and stakeholder engagement for Lower Bridge Street repurposing. Finalising scheme design and procurement with OCC for Banbury Library Q3 - Agreeing all other legal documentation with OCC in relation to Banbury Library. Q4 - Scope planning application for repurposing of Lower Bridge Street. Work on site for Banbury Library commence.	Ian Boll / Mona Walsh
	Build an inclusive and green economy	To build an economy that is both inclusive and environmentally sustainable, ensuring equitable opportunities for all while minimising environmental impact.	Continue to support the work of the Marmot Place Partnership for Oxfordshire	Q1 - Consider rural inequalities work outcomes Q2 - Share Partnership updates with Members Q3 - N/A Q4 - Seek endorsement for 2027/2028 plan	Kristian Aspinall

Priority	Goals	Aims	2026/27 Actions	Quarterly Milestones	Executive Director / AD Lead
Community Leadership	Strengthen community collaboration and resilience	To work closely with communities and partners to foster shared solutions to building safe, resilient, and empowered communities.	The council will look to automate the application of the Council Tax Reduction Scheme for people that it is made aware of that are in receipt of Universal Credit. This will help to maximise the take up of this vital financial support to some of the most vulnerable members of our society	Q1 - Ensure the automation is applied to bills for 2026/27 Q2 - N/A Q3 - N/A Q4 - N/A	Stephen Hinds / Michael Furness
			To agree a strategic asset management policy that will promote innovation and best use of our resources	Q1 - Agree and approve the asset management approach, and establish a clear prioritisation order for all assets. Q2 - Commence delivery of the asset management approach, focusing first on the highest-priority assets. Q3 - Continue delivery of the asset management approach, guided by the established asset-priority information. Q4 - Continue delivery of the asset management approach, making ongoing use of priority asset information.	Ian Boll / Mona Walsh
			Identify barriers to accessing council services and agree an improvement plan	Q1 - Develop Audit for accessing services Q2 - Deliver Audit to assess accessibility of services Q3 - Review and develop improvement plan from audit Q4 - Deliver and review improvement plan	Kristian Aspinall
			Improve customer experience and reduce contact volumes by making information easily accessible and enabling effective self-service wherever possible	Q1 - Commence delivery of Single Front Door Programme of work Q2 - Continue delivery in line with programme timeline Q3 - Continue delivery in line with programme timeline Q4 - Continue delivery in line with programme timeline	Stephen Hinds / Ann Slavin
	Promote health and wellbeing with a focus on inequality	To enhance health, wellbeing, and social cohesion across the district and address inequalities through preventive initiatives and targeted interventions.	Expand youth programmes to promote better mental health	Q1 - Launch mental wellbeing report and deliver action plan Q2 - Develop DCMS funded Action Plan for delivery Q3 - Evaluate impact and review Mental Wellbeing programme Q4 - Evaluate and review DCMS youth programme and impact	Kristian Aspinall
			Work to reduce inequality in Banbury's most deprived wards (Grimsbury, Neithrop, Ruscote), with a specific focus on Health Prevention and Stronger Communities themes of Brighter Futures	Q1 - Deliver Community Insight Profile grant programme Q2 - Evaluate Community Insight Profile programme against IMD metrics Q3 - Evaluate Community Insight profiles 3 year review and impact to show change in inequalities Q4 - Develop Brighter Futures Annual Report	Kristian Aspinall

Priority	Goals	Aims	2026/27 Actions	Quarterly Milestones	Executive Director / AD Lead
Environmental stewardship and climate action	Safeguard the environment and promote biodiversity	To implement sustainable policies and practices, protect natural habitats, and support conservation initiatives that enhance ecosystem health and biodiversity while responding to the climate emergency.	Establish a new programme of asset decarbonisation projects, using Public Sector Decarbonisation Scheme funding.	Q1 – Identify and explore available funding opportunities, and develop a schedule of assets that are suitable candidates for decarbonisation. Q2 – Review and assess the shortlisted assets for decarbonisation potential, and agree which schemes should be pursued in future funding rounds. Q3 – When suitable funding schemes open—and assuming the assets meet the required grant criteria—submit priority assets for decarbonisation funding. Q4- N/A	Ian Boll / Mona Walsh / Hitesh Mahawar
			Continue with fleet decarbonisation, utilising electric vehicles where possible.	Q1 - Review the introduction of HVO Q2 - Review the vehicle replacement programme Q3 - N/A Q4 - N/A	Kristian Aspinall / Ed Potter
			Encourage the creation of biodiversity sites / habitat banks / carbon sequestration, in line with local and national planning policy, engaging with developers and partners where appropriate.	Q1 - Initiating the Biodiversity and Climate Resilience Strategy Q2 - TBC Q3 - TBC Q4 - TBC	Ian Boll / Hitesh Mahawar
	Promote the circular economy of reduce, reuse and recycle to minimise waste	To encourage sustainable consumption, optimise the use of resources, and implement efficient recycling systems that support waste reduction and re-use initiatives.	Continue the district-wide rollout of Simpler Recycling and integrate the requirements of the Deposit Return Scheme in preparation for its implementation in 2027/28	Q1 - Review the introduction of kerbside glass & the removal of bring bank sites Q2 - Review the TEEP assessment for separate paper & cardboard Q3 - Consider Capital impact Q4 - N/A	Kristian Aspinall/ Ed Potter

Priority	Goals	Aims	2026/27 Actions	Quarterly Milestones	Executive Director / AD Lead
Quality housing and place making	Deliver sustainable and strategic development that meets Cherwell's needs now and in the future	To ensure the right mix of facilities, services and infrastructure for new developments, to create successful, well-designed communities.	Adopt & commence implementation of the new Local Plan	Programme determined by the Planning Inspectorate. Q1 - Examination of the local plan. Q2 - Examination of local plan Q3 - Examination continues Q4 - Estimated Plan Adoption	Ian Boll / David Peckford
			Continue with the programme for the review of Conservation Area Appraisals for the following villages: Hampton Gay, Shipton on Cherwell & Thrupp, Hook Norton and Chesterton	Q1 - N/A Q2 - Commence 3 CAAs Q3 - N/A Q4 - Complete 3 CAAs	Ian Boll / David Peckford
			Continue with implementation of housing delivery in accordance with housing delivery action plan	Q1 - Continue working with the Atlas/Homes England Team in Bicester to support housing delivery Q2 - Half year return on housing delivery Q3 - N/A Q4 - Full Year Return on Housing Delivery & Annual Monitoring Report to Executive	Ian Boll / David Peckford / Paul Seckington
			Implement 'section 106' process improvements	Q1 - Finalise the S106 templates Q2 - Create Practice Notes Q3 - Implement Improvements Q4 - Review	Ian Boll / Paul Seckington / Denzil Turbevill
			Commence delivery of the Bicester Market Square	Q1 - Procure technical consultants for detailed design for Market Square Q2 - N/A Q3 - Complete detailed design phase Q4 - Market Square Planning granted and contract awarded	Ian Boll
			Implement the National Building Safety Levy.	Q1 - Preparation for implementation - detail TBC Q2 - Preparation & Trial Implementation Q3 - Implementation by October 2026 Q4 - Review and refine process	Ian Boll / David Peckford
	Achieve more high-quality, secure, and affordable housing that caters for the diverse needs of our residents	To help all residents access safe places they can make/call their home, including housing that is affordable through direct ownership, private rental and social rent housing.	Embed requirements from Renters Rights Bill into service delivery to improve the standards of households on low incomes	Q1 - Hold tenant and landlord liaison events and launch communications strategy for new legislation, specifically end of S.21 evictions Q2 - Review, update and draft new policies affected by new legislation Q3 - Confirm new resource requirements following receipt of grant funding Q4 - Complete a fine income benchmarking exercise, to understand potential budget implications in future years	Kristian Aspinall/Nicola Riley
			Oversight of Phase 2 of the Graven Hill development	Q1 - Commence 39 Dwellings HZ 4 ~ Phase 3a Q2 - Commence 27 Dwellings HZ 4 ~ Phase 3a and Target Planning permission Stage 2 Hybrid Q3 - Commence Infrastructure Stage 2 ~ Phase 1, Commence 34 Dwellings Stage 2 ~ Phase 1 and First Deliveries 39 Dwellings HZ 4 ~ Phase 3a Q4 - First Deliveries 27 Dwellings HZ 4 ~ Phase 3a	Stephen Hinds



Cherwell
DISTRICT COUNCIL
NORTH OXFORDSHIRE

Temporary Accommodation Policy

Overview and Scrutiny
March 2026

What we will cover

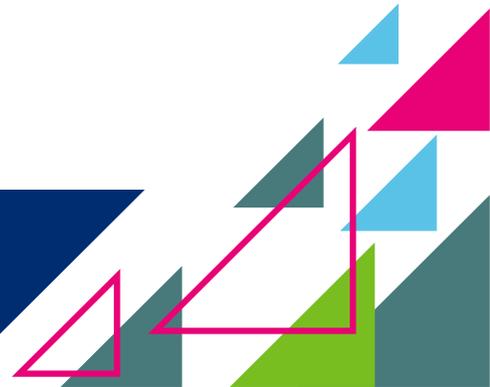
- What is Temporary Accommodation and when is it used?
- Purpose of the Policy
- Strategic links
- Usage, rates and trends
- Changes in delivery and management
- Homelessness prevention and vulnerable groups
- Improving access to long term housing options

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What is Temporary Accommodation (TA) and when is it used ?

- Temporary accommodation is used when households are homeless and are Priority Need
- The provision of temporary accommodation is part of our statutory duties
- Priority Need is a legislative test
- Temporary Accommodation is provided either within actual units of residential accommodation or within hotels
- When the Council either finds someone permanent accommodation or has no duties to continue housing them, the temporary accommodation duty ends.



Purpose of the TA Policy

- Outline how the Council will manage and deliver the service
- Ensure that Council is acting in accordance with legislation
- Set expectations and our approach
 - When hotel placements are used
 - What factors are considered when making a placement (size, area etc)
 - Differences between 188 and 193
 - What customers can expect
 - Approach to specific management issues (pets, storing belongings etc)
 - Ending placements



How TA links to the wider Housing Strategies

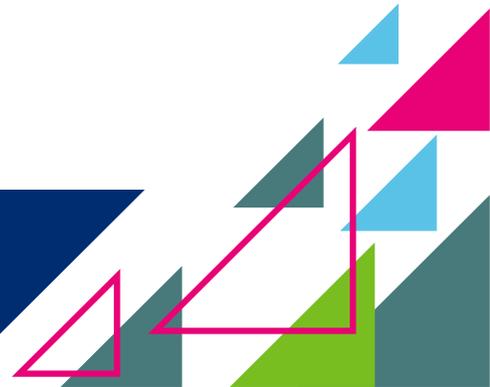
Housing Strategy 2025-30

“Deliver transformed temporary accommodation options, reducing prevalence on those living in nightly charged hotel accommodation”

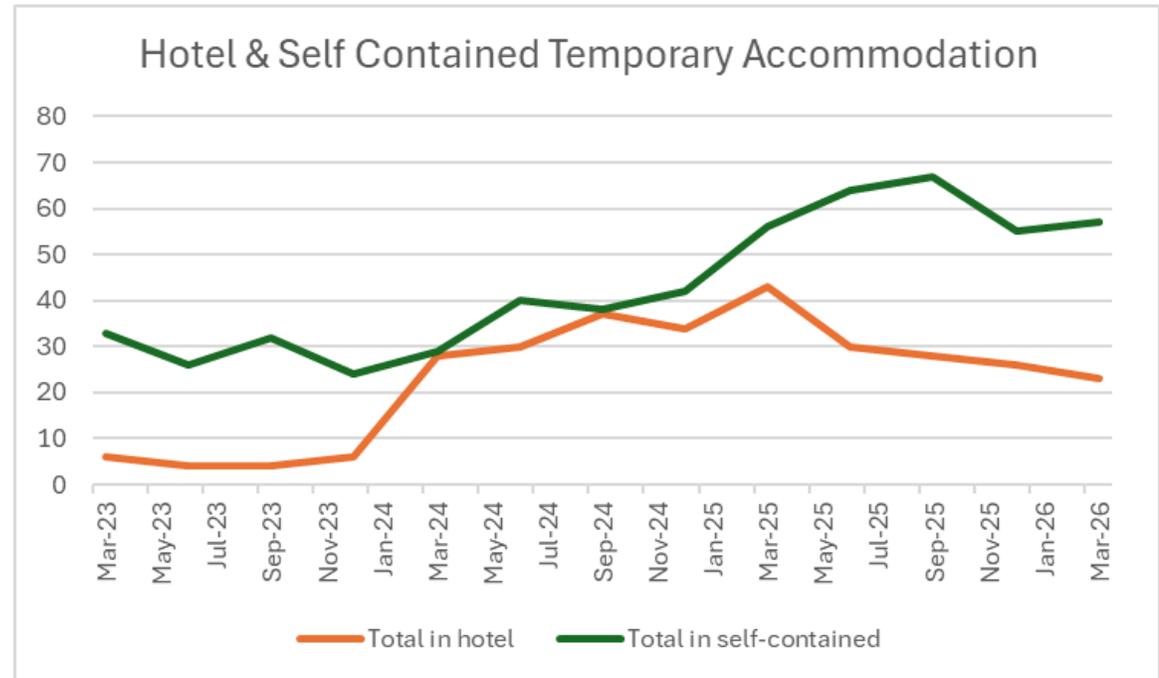
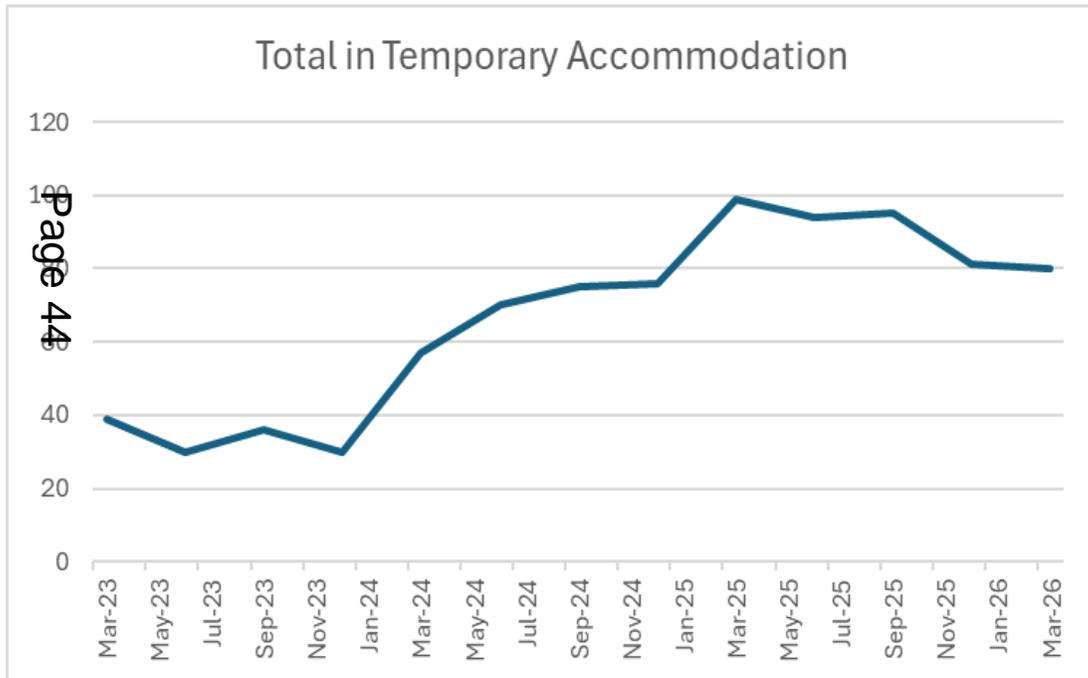
Page 43 National Plan to End Homelessness (Policy Paper) - Pillar 4

“Improving temporary accommodation and making people’s experiences better if they do become homeless”.

- Increasing the supply of good quality, affordable TA
- Improving physical quality of TA and the experiences of households living within it



Usage of Temporary Accommodation



What is driving the increase?

High volume of single applicants with complex needs

- Increasing numbers of single people presenting with multiple and overlapping support needs

Domestic abuse presentations

- A sustained rise in households fleeing domestic abuse has contributed to higher TA demand.
- Many cases require safety measures or placement locations which limits available options and extends time spent in TA.

Resettlement schemes

- Although numbers have now stabilised, previous peaks in arrivals from resettlement programmes (such as Afghan and Ukrainian schemes) created additional pressure.

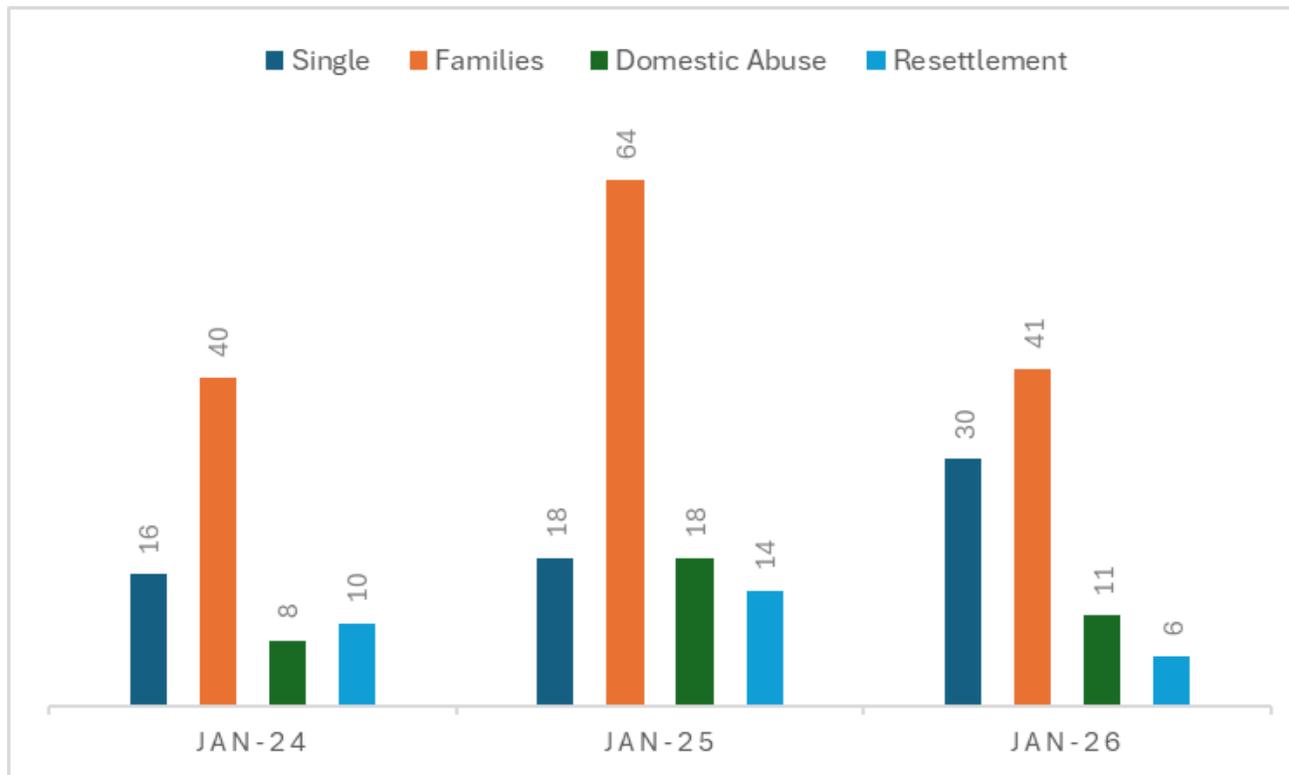
Affordable Rents

- Increase in private sector rents has also driven demand due to affordability issues and clients being unable to meet to qualifying criteria to rent a property

Demographics of TA

We currently have 30 single households and 41 families in temporary accommodation, including a total of 81 children.

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Changing our TA Portfolio

Since April 2024, we have secured 57 units of self contained accommodation.

- 6 Additionally through partnership with Sanctuary, totalling 30 units
- 4 LAHF supported new delivery with SOHA
- 19 Conversion of our own stock to TA
- 4 Using Commuted Sums from S.106
- 24 at Town Centre House, following redevelopment

Ended our lease arrangement with the Musketeer.



Rationale for Change

Cost

Around £25,000 year per household per year in a hotel.

Having own stock attracts rental income and negates hotel pressure.

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Service Delivery

Hotels unpopular with clients due to lack of facilities.

Government Guidance

Government guidance advises Council's that stays in hotels of 6 weeks or longer should be avoided.



Future of the TA portfolio

5 million of Capital investment in TA within 26-27 budget. This is with the aim of purchasing accommodation and potentially developing our own.

We will also receive another c.650k from the LAHF round 4, and this can fund at least 2 TA units.

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Due to the imbalance in provision, we are hoping to secure more accommodation outside Banbury.

Considering the number of singles, active consideration of whether TA with support is required



What the Council does to prevent homelessness

It is the role of the Housing Options Officer to prevent homelessness, and it is part of our statutory duties. A personalised action plan is made with each household with actions for both parties about what each will do.

The Council continues to deliver effective prevention services. In 2024/25, 318 prevention duties were closed with 87 households helped to secure accommodation into the private rented sector (PRS). So far in 2025/26, 261 prevention duties have ended with 85 PRS offers made.

Tenancy Sustainment Officers have successfully helped residents retain both Registered Provider and PRS tenancies through direct support, negotiation, and early intervention. Over the past 12 months, the TSOs have successfully sustained 26 tenancies through negotiation and by securing financial support. They have also completed settlement work on 19 cases.

In total, £65,097.30 in financial support has been secured to help maintain tenancies. This includes discretionary housing payments, benefit backdates, hardship fund awards, and charity or grant funding.

Referrals to services such as BYHP and Connections support provide services such as mediation and tenancy support to enable people to remain in their homes where safe and appropriate. In cases of domestic abuse, property safety improvements are facilitated.

Homelessness Prevention contd

Shift in the balance between prevention and relief, with more households now presenting at crisis point and requiring relief duties. This trend links directly to increased temporary accommodation usage, as fewer opportunities exist to resolve cases earlier in the prevention stage.

	2023-24	2024-25	To date (end of Q3)/current
Total households assessed as homeless	491	563	410 (Q1-3)
Prevention duty owed	310	311	202 (Q1-3)
Relief duty owed	173	249	192 (Q1-3)

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Overall, the Council continues to use a combination of sustainment work, mediation, financial assistance and PRS engagement to reduce homelessness, while responding to rising pressures that are driving demand toward relief and Temporary Accommodation.

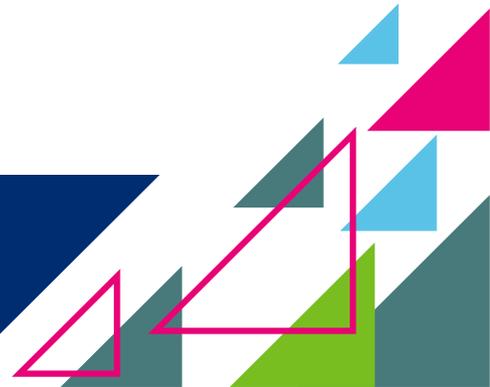


Support for clients

The Council commissions or provides a wide range of support for people who are homeless or at risk of homelessness.

- Adult Homeless Pathway (supported accommodation, outreach support and prevention services)
- Tenancy Sustainment Officers
- Resettlement Team
- YPSA (Young Persons Supported Accommodation)
- Beacon Centre
- Oxford House
- ODAS (Domestic Abuse Pathway)

We will also refer to appropriate third sector or wider commissioned pathways where appropriate.



Moving households on from TA

Most households to which the Council accepts homelessness duties move to an offer of social housing. In 24/25, the Council housed 128 households who were either owed the Relief Duty or Main Homeless Duty through the Housing Register. In 25/26 109 households have been rehoused through the same route.

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Offers through the private sector at this stage are less effective. The affordability of the PRS is the main barrier, as well as the vulnerability of clients.

There are around 2100 total households on the housing register, which includes homeless applicants. The Council, on average over the last 3 years, has let around 550 properties through the register



Housing Allocations Scheme

CDC Housing Allocation Scheme governs how we allocate social housing in Cherwell.

The scheme was updated in January 2025 to give households in Temporary Accommodation greater priority for allocations:

In 2023/24: 11% of all lettings were allocated to Homeless applicants

In 2024/25: 21%

In 2025/26: 31%

The prioritisation has also resulted in shorter waiting times for those in TA.



Affordable Housing Delivery

We have had several recent successes delivering additional affordable housing on new build sites in Cherwell, over and above the policy level required.

This includes 2x 100% affordable housing schemes in Banbury, where both shared ownership and rented affordable housing has been delivered.

As a result, affordable housing delivery in Cherwell is higher this financial year than any of the last 4 years.

Recent new build delivery has also helped boost the number of 4-bed social housing homes available for rent which are in very short supply.

More social rent homes - the most affordable rented tenure - has also been delivered in recent years.

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Any questions?

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Cherwell
DISTRICT COUNCIL
NORTH OXFORDSHIRE

This report is public	
Response to the Planning Advisory Service (PAS) Review of Planning Committee Decision Making	
Committee	Overview & Scrutiny Committee
Date of Committee	24 March 2026
Portfolio Holder presenting the report	Councillor Jean Conway - Portfolio Holder for Planning & Development Management
Date Portfolio Holder agreed report	16 March 2026
Report of	Assistant Director – Planning

Purpose of report

To advise the Committee on how the Council is responding to the Planning Advisory Service (PAS) Review of Planning Committee Decision Making.

1. Recommendations

The Committee is recommended:

- 1.1 To note the work in progress in responding to the PAS recommendations and advice.
- 1.2 To identify any comments for consideration by the Executive.

2. Executive Summary

- 2.1 A review of the Council's decision-making on planning applications for major developments was undertaken in 2025 by the Planning Advisory Service (PAS) which forms part of the Local Government Association (LGA). The context for the review was that for the period April 2022 to March 2024, the percentage of the Council's decisions overturned at appeal slightly exceeded the nationally prescribed threshold of 10%.
- 2.2 The review concluded that the Council had an effective planning committee with professional, knowledgeable officers and members who understand planning issues and the importance of following officer advice. However, a number of recommendations were made in the interest of improvement. This report explains the findings and how the Council has responded.

Implications & Impact Assessments

Implications	Commentary			
Finance	<p>There are no financial implications arising from this report providing that everything is within budget. The Council's response to the recommendations of the PAS review are being managed through service budgets.</p> <p>Kim Digweed, Finance Business Partner, 16 March 2026 kimberley.digweed@cherwell-dc.gov.uk</p>			
Legal	<p>The Legal and Democratic Services teams were engaged in the PAS review and were advised of the findings and recommendations.</p> <p>The solicitor support provided to Planning Committee has been resolved and a constitution review report being presented to Council on 16 March recommends that the composition of the Planning Committee be amended to 11 members (with 11 named substitutes) effective from the Municipal Year 2026/2027. PAS highlighted that there are no sections on equalities, human rights or financial considerations in the Council's reporting template Planning Committees.</p> <p>These sections will be incorporated and will improve transparency on how such considerations are addressed.</p> <p>Legal and Democratic Services will continue to provide advice and support to the ongoing work progressing the PAS recommendations as required.</p> <p>Denzil – John Turbervill, Head of Legal Services, 13 March 2026 denzil.turbervill@cherwell-dc.gov.uk</p>			
Risk Management	<p>The on-going response to the PAS recommendations is necessary in the interests of continuous improvement, to place the Council in as strong a position as possible in justifying and defending its planning decisions and to minimise the risk of its decisions being overturned at appeal. These risks are currently being managed and monitored through the service operational risk and the Leadership Risk register, the latter is reported to the Accounts, Audit and Risk and Executive Committees quarterly.</p> <p>Celia Prado-Teeling, Performance Team Leader, 13 March 2026 celia.prado-teeling@cherwell-dc.gov.uk</p>			
Impact Assessments	Positive	Neutral	Negative	Commentary

Equality Impact		x		There is no impact to equality as a direct consequence of this report. Celia Prado-Teeling, Performance & Insight Team Leader, 13 March 2026
A Are there any aspects of the proposed decision, including how it is delivered or accessed, that could impact on inequality?		x		
B Will the proposed decision have an impact upon the lives of people with protected characteristics, including employees and service users?		X		N/A
Climate & Environmental Impact	X			The more action the Council takes to ensure that its planning decisions are as robust and defensible as possible, the more likely that this will result t in sustainable development.
ICT & Digital Impact				N/A
Data Impact				N/A
Procurement & subsidy				N/A
Council Priorities	Business plan priorities for 2025-2026: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Housing that meets your needs • Supporting environmental sustainability • An enterprising economy with strong and vibrant local centres • Healthy, resilient and engaged communities 			
Human Resources	N/A			
Property	N/A			
Consultation & Engagement	Councillor Jean Conway, Portfolio Holder – Planning & Development Management			

Supporting Information

3. Background

- 3.1. On 26 November 2024, this Committee considered a quarterly performance report which indicated that the percentage of the Council's planning decisions overturned at appeal, for major developments, was higher than tolerated threshold percentage. The Committee resolved that a scrutiny working group be established with terms of reference that included consideration of the main reasons for planning application refusals overturned at appeal and any lessons learned.
- 3.2. On 25 February 2025, the Planning and Appeals Scrutiny Working Group held a Spotlight Review with the Assistant Director – Planning and Development and Head of Development Management.
- 3.3. In January 2025, the LGA's Planning Advisory Service (PAS) contacted the Council to advise that Ministry for Housing, Communities and Local Government (MHCLG) was finalising its review of local planning authority's performance for the same indicator i.e. for the period April 2022 to March 2024 (and taking account of appeal decisions up until 31 December 2024).
- 3.4. In the period April 2022 to March 2024 the Council determined 115 major applications. Nineteen decisions were appealed and 12 were upheld by the Planning Inspectorate (with two remaining pending). Three were non-determination appeals. As 12 of 115 decisions had been the subject of successful appeals, the Council's overturn percentage was 10.43% which exceeded the government-set threshold of 10%.
- 3.5. PAS, which provides support and training to all authorities, and which liaises with MHCLG on performance, was invited to undertake a review of the Council's decision-making process for major developments. The review included spending a day at the Council's offices on 29 May 2025 to interview officers, Members and external stakeholders. It also entailed a desktop review of decisions and procedures and viewing three Planning Committee meetings.
- 3.6. Prior to the receipt of the PAS report, officers had submitted an exceptional circumstances case to MHCLG as to why the Council should not be 'designated' for exceeding the threshold by one appeal decision (0.43%). On 6 June 2025, confirmation was provided by MHCLG that the Council would not be designated.
- 3.7. The final PAS report was received on 27 August 2025 (available at <https://www.cherwell.gov.uk/download/downloads/id/18229/cherwell-district-council-planning-committee-review.pdf>) and is attached to this report at Appendix 1.
- 3.8. Appendix 2 to this report provides a tabular summary of the recommendations and advice provided by PAS and an update of the work undertaken and on-going in response.

4. Details

The Findings of the PAS Review

4.1 PAS's overall conclusions included:

1. the Council had an effective planning committee with professional, knowledgeable officers and members who understand planning issues and the importance of following officer advice;
2. the Council had dealt with a high number of contentious housing proposals that had led to a number of appeals where the Planning Inspectorate had not always agreed with the council's position;
3. the planning service was generally well respected by both the development industry and the local community;
4. there were areas for improvement relating to procedure, behaviours, training and communication but that none of these are critical to the council operating a planning committee;
5. the council should reflect on changes consulted upon by the Government with respect to planning committees (a limit of 11 members on a planning committee, a mandatory programme of member training and changes to the performance threshold for quality (from 10% to 5%).

4.2 The key findings were:

1. **Appeals:** of the 17 appeal decisions 11 were from officer delegated decisions of which five of which were allowed (45%). The remaining six were planning committee member overturns, of which four were allowed (67%)
2. **Site visits:** often conducted on an ad hoc basis and not in line with the council's own protocols. Poor attendance and inconsistent application of criteria were noted.
3. **Lack of pre-application engagement with members:** no formal procedures for member involvement in pre-application or pre-committee discussions. A missed opportunity for early resolution of issues with developers and community groups.
4. **Late submission of information:** excessive late information submitted shortly before meetings, undermining transparency and decision-making quality.
5. **Committee size and efficiency:** the current 18-member committee is larger than best practice (9–12 members). This may hinder efficient debate and decision-making. There was an average of five committee items per meeting (with significant variance). Committee time varied from 6 hours 20 minutes to 13 minutes.
6. **Officer reports and presentations:** Impressed by the quality of officer presentations. Reports were generally well-structured and clear, but lacking consistency in areas like equalities, human rights, and financial considerations.
7. **Training gaps among members:** while training is provided, gaps remain in understanding appeals, conditions, and enforcement. Members sometimes lack clarity on how to support decisions at appeal.

8. **Legal support needs review:** re-consider the role of the legal officer either through an enhanced role of the existing representative presence from County Council, or the involvement of one of the Council's legal officers.
9. **Resource constraints:** PAS stress the importance of this planning committee review and the recommendations that need to be implemented to ensure the effective running of the planning committee. This may require a review of resources and should be tied together with any plans the council has to review resources more generally.
10. **Positive culture but room for improvement:** strong officer-member relationships and effective chairing observed. However, some members are overly influenced by local objections rather than evidence-based planning considerations.

4.3 The specific recommendations were:

1. **Enhance Member Engagement Pre-Committee:** Review member involvement in planning proposals at pre-application and committee stages using best practices and guidance.
2. **Improve Site Visit Awareness:** Increase awareness and consistent use of site visit procedures through member training integration.
3. **Implement Submission Cut-off:** Set a 24-hour cutoff for late information submissions to ensure transparency and adequate review before meetings.
4. **Boost Appeals Process Participation:** Encourage member engagement with appeals through training and participation in hearings.
5. **Strengthen Enforcement Awareness:** Enhance member knowledge of enforcement via agenda items and training for better oversight.
6. **Officer Reports Review:** reviewing officer reports to improve clarity, consistency, and include key considerations like equalities and financial impact.
7. **Member Training Enhancement:** Enhancing member training to cover site visits, appeals, and enforcement for improved committee effectiveness.
8. **Developers' Forum Reintroduction:** Re-establishing a developers' forum to encourage engagement and mutual understanding with the development community.
9. **Legal Representation Review:** Reviewing legal representation at committee meetings to ensure support in complex and contentious cases.

How has the Council responded?

- 4.4 Appendix 2 to this report provides a response to each of the PAS recommendations including the status of specific actions. The PAS review and the Council's nationally measured performance on the quality of decision-making have created discussion between senior officers, the Portfolio Holder, the Chair of Planning Committee and at the internal Members' Forum. There has been common understanding of the importance of monitoring performance and the potential implications of too many decisions being overturned at appeal. The importance of justifiable and defensible planning reasons for the refusal of planning permission is conveyed clearly in training and in discussion at committee meetings.
- 4.5 This has had a positive impact on the numbers of appeals allowed. At the time of writing there have been no appeals allowed against decisions on major developments taken since April 2025.

- 4.6 New practices and procedures are being implemented to provide clarity of process and to provide more opportunities for developers and councillors to engage in pre-application discussions; for developers to provide briefings to the Chair of Planning Committee and Portfolio Holder at application stage; and, following the publication of a Planning Committee agenda, for developers to present to Members of the Committee and to take questions. The existing area-based developer fora are to be utilised to provide for focused engagement on development management.
- 4.7 The size of the membership of the Planning Committee has been reviewed with a proposal to be presented to Council at its meeting on 16 March. The duration of Planning Committee meetings, the number of items presented and the time management of the meetings is receiving particular attention in light of the PAS review but also more recent committee experience in dealing with a number of strategic development proposals. The Council's Head of Legal Services now provides senior solicitor representation at committee meetings.
- 4.8 Two separate training sessions were provided to Members of the committee at the start of the municipal year and the internal Members Forum used to examine topics such as planning appeals and more, recently, planning enforcement. Training on development viability is to be provided at the next meeting. The start of the next municipal year will see a forward plan for monthly meetings of the internal Members Forum accompanied by an on-going training schedule for Councillors. Recorded committee training (enabling future use) is to be arranged for officers including a focus on report writing.
- 4.9 More broadly, the planning service is one of the priority areas for the corporate transformation programme with an earlier focus on digitisation and the customer 'front door'. A third major development team has been created within Development Management since the PAS review and service improvement, including the delivery of actions plans for strategic planning applications and the section 106 legal agreement process, continues.
- 4.10 Further detail is provided at Appendix 2 and there is more work to do. The start of the next municipal year will see new induction training and further implementation of improvements.

Continuing Risk

- 4.11 Unfortunately however, the Council's nationally measured performance continues to be a concern for two reasons.
- 4.12 First, the Government measures performance for the quality of decision-making on a rolling two-year basis. The 'current' monitoring period is therefore April 2023 to March 2025 (allowing for appeal decisions to December 2025) and performance is affected by one year of the previous two-year period i.e. there is a legacy impact from the previous under-performing period.
- 4.13 Secondly, Cherwell is an area that attracts significant interest in growth, and the Council deals with relatively high numbers of contentious applications. Although these are often very significant locally, they must also be considered in the context of national policy and its growth agenda. Ultimately, when it comes to planning appeals, decisions that may be very challenging to take locally because of their

long-lasting impact, may be ones that are less challenging to take when removed from the local context.

- 4.14 The Council remains in a difficult position in terms of meeting Government expectations. Appendix 3 provides the latest, albeit unconfirmed monitoring data. In summary, this shows:
1. the unconfirmed percentage for the number of decisions on major developments from April 2023- March 2025 (i.e. before the PAS review) and overturned at appeal by 31 December 2025 is 11.61% (13 out of 112 decisions).
 2. the current unconfirmed percentage for April 2024 to March 2026 is 5.32% which is in part reflective of the work undertaken over the course of the past year. However, the Council presently has three appeals pending following recently Planning Committee refusals which if lost would increase the percentage to 8.51%. There is some risk of further appeals being lodged.
 3. the current unconfirmed percentage for April 2025 onwards is 0% but this could be affected by the recent and possible appeals described above.
- 4.15 The figures for the 'current' monitoring period, April 2023 to March 2025, are the subject of review and confirmation. However, the implication of a potential return of 11.61% is that the Council is at risk of 'designation'.
- 4.16 Where an authority does not meet the required performance thresholds, the Secretary of State can 'designate' an authority as underperforming. If a local authority is designated, applicants to that authority may apply directly to the Planning Inspectorate (on behalf of the Secretary of State) for the category of applications (major, non-major or both) for which the authority has been designated. Designated authorities are also required to prepare an Action Plan demonstrating how the weaknesses that led to poor performance will be addressed. An authority remains designated until such time as the Secretary of State decides to de-designate the authority.
- 4.17 The Council can expect to be provided with an opportunity to set out its exceptional circumstances before a decision is taken by the Secretary of State.
- 4.18 Regardless of the outcome, it is vitally important that the Council does all that it reasonably can to reduce the risk of planning appeals and to ensure that when planning appeals are lodged, the Council is in a strong position to successfully defend its decisions.

5. Alternative Options and Reasons for Rejection

- 5.1 There are no alternatives to the recommendations presented.

6. Conclusion and Reasons for Recommendations

- 6.1 The PAS review of decision-making has put a constructive spotlight on the important work of the Planning Committee and the Development Management

service. Significant changes have been made in response to the recommendations of PAS and work is continuing alongside corporate transformation and service improvement. The Council remains at risk of designation in significant part because of the legacy impact of the previous monitoring period. Close monitoring and management of decision making must continue in the interest of emerging from a position of risk and to avoid a similar position in the future. Very close working between officers and Members will be critical in supporting this.

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	PAS Review of Decision Making, August 2025
Appendix 2	PAS Review of Planning Committee Decision Making: Key Recommendations/Advice and Response
Appendix 3	Indicative Performance – Quality of Decision Making
Background Papers	None
Reference Papers	Report to Overview & Scrutiny Committee, 26 November 2024 , Items 39 & 40 Report to Overview & Scrutiny Committee, 11 March 2025 , Item 62 Report to Overview & Scrutiny Committee, 27 January 2026 , Item 7 MHCLG Explanatory Memorandum to improving planning performance: criteria for designation (updated 2024)
Report Author	David Peckfiord, Assistant Director - Planning Paul Seckington, Head of Development Management
Report Author contact details	David.Peckfiord@Cherwell-dc.gov.uk Paul.Seckington@cherwell-dc.gov.uk
Corporate Director Approval (unless Corporate Director or Statutory Officer report)	Ian Boll, Executive Director – Place & Regeneration, 16 March 2026



Cherwell District Council

Planning Committee Review

27th August 2025



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1. Introduction

- 1.1 The Planning Advisory Service (PAS) has been supporting Cherwell District Council (CDC) over a number of months due to issues with the quality of decision-making for Major applications. In January 2025 CDC received a letter from the Ministry for Housing, Communities and Local Government (MHCLG) providing the opportunity for CDC to outline any exceptional circumstances before the Minister considers whether CDC should be designated under section 62A of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 as a result of performance measured against the quality of Major applications decision-making indicator. On 6th June 2025, confirmation was given to CDC that it would not be designated.
- 1.2 This Planning Committee review was carried out against a backdrop of major Planning reform announcements by MHCLG. During the time of the review the Government was undertaking a [technical consultation on reforms to Planning Committees](#) that included the following key proposals that are relevant to the outcomes from this Planning Committee review:
 - The introduction of a national scheme of delegation
 - A limit of 11 members to sit on a planning committee
 - A mandatory programme of member training
 - Changes to the performance threshold for quality of Majors
- 1.3 As the outcome of the technical consultation was unknown at the time of writing this report, the review team has not included any specific recommendations on the size of the committee or CDC's scheme of delegation, but has made reference to these matters in the text and the relevance to the likely nationally introduced changes.
- 1.4 During the review the PAS team was made to feel very welcome and was well supported. The team would like to thank all participants involved for their input.

2. The approach and scope of the review

- 2.1 The review was undertaken by Cllr Stuart Bray, Hinckley and Bosworth Borough Council and Martin Hutchings and Peter Ford, both Principal Consultants for the Planning Advisory Service (PAS). PAS is part of the Local Government Association (LGA) and provides high quality help, advice, support and training on planning and service delivery to councils in England.
- 2.2 The PAS team gained its evidence for the Planning Committee review from a number of different sources:
 - carrying out a desktop study of committee minutes, officer reports, and the council's scheme of delegation and codes of conduct.
 - Viewing the following planning committee meetings 1st August 2024, 10th April 2025 and 15th May 2025
 - Interviewing planning managers who are involved in the operation and overseeing planning committee
 - Interviewing other officers who support the committee or provide specialist input

- Interviewing the chair and vice-chair of planning committee as well as the portfolio holder responsible for Planning
 - Interviewing town and parish councillors alongside other lobbying groups
 - Interviewing representatives from the development community
- 2.3 The majority of the interviews took place at the CDC offices on 29th May 2025 with supplementary online meeting for participants who were unavailable on the 29th May.
- 2.4 The review team compared the operation and decision-making at CDC's planning committee with best practice from throughout the country, as well as using the team's own experiences in running and managing Planning Committees.
- 2.5 The review follows a tried and tested approach to review planning committees that PAS has adopted for a number of councils throughout England. It is focused on the management and operation of CDC's planning committee rather than a wider review of its Planning function. However, the review team inevitably heard about other related matters that impact the performance of the Planning service and, where relevant, the review has identified such matters and explained to what extent these can be addressed through the review.

3. The context to the planning committee review

- 3.1 There is no political party with overall control and, at the time of writing this report, the political make-up was as follows:
- Liberal Democrats – 17
 - Labour – 12
 - Conservatives – 11
 - Green – 4
 - Independents – 4
- 3.2 In the period April 2022 to March 2024 CDC determined 115 Major applications. 19 of these decisions were appealed and 12 were upheld by the Planning Inspectorate (with 2 remaining pending), including 3 that were non-determination appeals. This means that 10.43% of Major decisions were upheld at appeal against a Government-set maximum threshold of 10%.
- 3.3. From the 17 appealed decisions 11 were from officer delegated decisions, 5 of which were allowed (45%). The remaining 6 were planning committee member overturns, of which 4 were allowed (67%). Appendix 1 provides a more detailed analysis of the appeals that were upheld at appeal and some lessons that can be learnt from those appeal decisions.
- 3.4 CDC has a single planning committee with 18 members on the committee alongside other named substitutes. Over the period 6th June 2024 and 10th April 2025 there were 11 meetings considering a total of 57 items.
- 3.5 There was on average of 5 items per meeting, but the number varied considerably with 15 items on one agenda and 2 on another agenda. The total length of each committee averaged at approximately 3 hours, but this also varied considerably with one committee meeting taking 6 hours 20 minutes, whilst another was completed in 13 minutes.

- 3.6 Over the time period that the review looked at there were a total of 8 decisions that overturned an officer recommendation and another 4 items that were deferred to a future planning committee.
- 3.7 CDC's Local Plan was adopted in July 2015 with a partial review of the Local Plan adopted in September 2020. The Local Plan is currently under review. The Regulation 19 consultation has been completed and the council will be considering submission on 21st July 2025. CDC does not have a 5-year housing land supply which currently stands at 2.3years (including for Oxford's unmet needs).

4. Key Recommendations

Recommendation 1 – Member and officer engagement prior to planning committee

Review the way that members are involved in planning proposals both at pre-application stage and in the build-up to planning committee. This should involve a review of best practice followed by councils who engage members in pre-application discussions, using the [PAS pre-application advice and Planning Performance Agreements \(PAS\)](#) guidance. Also, a review of the way councils allow pre-planning committee developer presentations, using the [PAS Modernising Planning Committees National Survey 2025](#) to identify councils who operate this practice.

Recommendation 2 – Site visits procedures

Improve awareness of the existing site visits procedure both for members and officers so that it is used consistently and effectively. The existing procedure should form part of a member training programme, along with a discussion on any further changes officers and members feel may be appropriate to ensure the efficient running of the planning committee.

Recommendation 3 – Managing late information received for planning committee

Introduce a cutoff time and date for allowing late information for the planning committee. This would normally be, at the latest, 24 hours before the meeting is due to be held. This cutoff time should be specified in the planning committee protocol at the earliest opportunity to avoid any ambiguities and clearly specified on the planning committee web pages.

Recommendation 4 – Member engagement with appeals

Increase member engagement with the appeals process, building upon the Informal Planning Forum meetings. This should take the form of discussing appeals during an early stage of a planning committee meeting (when appropriate), improving the training provided to members on appeals and actively encouraging members to be

involved in supporting the council position at planning appeal hearings and public inquiries.

Recommendation 5 – Member engagement with planning enforcement

Improve member awareness of planning enforcement by introducing a regular item on the planning committee agenda to report planning enforcement cases opened and closed, alongside reviews of the local enforcement plan. This greater awareness should be complemented by member training on planning enforcement matters.

Recommendation 6 - Review of planning committee officer reports

Review the content and structure of the officer reports that are used at planning committee. This review should reflect on the good practice currently taking place (see para. 6.7) and areas for improvement (see para. 6.8). CDC is also encouraged to use the [PAS best practice in report writing](#) guidance to assist with this review.

Recommendation 7 – Review the existing member training programme

Review the training opportunities available to members to address areas for improvement identified by both officers and members. This should include training on site visits (see recommendation 2), appeals (see recommendation 4) and planning enforcement (see recommendation 5) alongside other practical training on lessons that can be learnt from decisions, both in terms of good practice and reflecting on improvements that can be made in future.

Recommendation 8 - Re-introduce the developers' forum

Better engage the local development community by re-introducing the developers' forum. The council can learn from best practice from across the country on how a developer forum might work. This should also consider how members can be involved in the developer forums so that they can better understand what works and what does not from a developers' point of view when engaging with the planning service.

Recommendation 9 - Review the Legal representation at the planning committee meetings

Review the current arrangements whereby a representative of Oxfordshire County Council attends the planning committee meetings (as a representative of CDC). The review should consider the areas of support that officers and members best need to make sound decisions at planning committee, particularly prior to the formal meeting, alongside the capacity and expertise within the CDC and county legal teams.

5. Procedural matters

Pre committee arrangements

- 5.1 There is a comprehensive set of procedures in place for arrangements prior to committee to manage and plan for the agendas. Senior officers have an agenda setting meeting, followed by discussion on future items with relevant members and finally a meeting with the chair on the day before the meetings. All concerned seem happy with these arrangements and feel able to plan appropriately for the planning committee meetings.
- 5.2 One issue of concern identified by the review team was the amount of late information that was submitted for one of the planning committees. It was apparent that members had been given a very large amount of additional material only a few hours before the actual committee meeting and 5 minutes at the actual meeting to read the material. This would not give the viewing public confidence that the information had been fully considered. The review team identified that there is no deadline for the submission of late information, although it was also acknowledged that it was very unusual circumstances that resulted in so much late information being submitted.
- 5.3 It is normal for councils to include in their protocols a deadline for late submission of information, which is routinely 24 hours before the meeting at the latest. The review team recommends that CDC adopts a similar approach so that all participants are clear about the council's approach to receiving late information.

Member and public involvement in pre-application and pre-committee discussions

- 5.4 The review team was unable to find any procedures in place for either member involvement in pre-application or pre committee discussions. It is common for councils to have a clear procedure in place specifying how members can become engaged in discussions with developers before an item is brought to committee through a consultation protocol and / or arrangements for developers to hold information briefings with members prior to committee. The review team discussed this matter with members, officers, developers and community interest groups and all agreed that having better engagement prior to the formal planning committee meeting would be helpful. At one interview an interest group expressed frustration that it was forced to take an adversarial approach with applicants due to not being able to engage at an early stage with developers in finding mutually agreeable design solutions to issues of concern. Developers also expressed frustration at not being able to engage with members at an early stage to identify issues of local concern; issues that might be relatively easy to address at the early design stage, but much more difficult, time consuming and expensive if only identified close to decision-making stage.

- 5.5 Councils are often nervous about member involvement at pre-application stage or for developers to present schemes to members prior to the formal planning committee due to concerns about pre-determination. However, in reality, the danger of pre-determination does not need to be a major threat provided that there are clear protocols in place and members follow these protocols. For example, it is really important that members are guided by officers and always have an officer present when meeting developers. This ensures that the meetings are centred around information gathering and questioning rather than giving a pre-determined opinion. Also, developer briefings should be run under strict rules to ensure that members do not engage in debate on the merits of an application.
- 5.6 There is some excellent best practice from councils across the country who run pre-application engagement with members and also pre-committee briefings. PAS would be happy to put CDC officers and councillors in touch with councils who operate these arrangements.

Size of the planning committee

- 5.7 CDC currently has 18 members who sit on the planning committee. At the time of writing this planning committee review the Government is considering responses to its technical consultation exercise where it proposed to limit the size of planning committees to 11 members. If these proposals are adopted by Government through legislation then CDC will need to reduce the size of its planning committee. The review team is not including this in the recommendations as the Government proposal is subject to formal consultation. However, whilst the technical consultation response is awaited, it is important that members chosen to sit on the committee have the time and capacity to undertake the responsibilities of a planning committee member. This includes the training that the service prioritises to assist with efficient and effective debate. PAS, considers that a planning committee between 9 and 12 members is best practice for the following reasons:
- **An efficient use of time** – all members of the committee have a chance to speak without the meeting having to go on for an excessive amount of time;
 - **Better use of resources** – running, servicing and training committees takes up resources and the more members on committee, the more resources are required; and
 - **Greater flexibility and representation** – allows for a sufficient pool of councillors to focus on ward representation when needed (for example by ensuring that no more than one councillor from an individual ward is on the committee) and to provide cover as committee substitutes to reduce the chance of meeting cancellations, ensuring meetings remain quorate and decisions are made efficiently.

Scheme of delegation

- 5.8 CDC's current scheme of delegation relies largely on ward members referring items to planning committee with the Chair and Assistant Director making the final decision on whether a matter is called-in based on set criteria. There is also the option for items to be referred to Full Council, although the review team understands that this is very rarely enacted. At the time of writing this review the Government was consulting over proposals to limit the types of applications that can be referred to planning committee and also to introduce a triage system for the chair and head of Planning to make the final decision on referrals to planning committee. As CDC currently, in effect, operates a triage system, it will be the category of applications that are referred that will be most impacted by any changes in Government legislation.
- 5.9 As the rules regarding items to be considered at planning committee are likely to be mandated through legislation, no recommendation is included in this report regarding CDC's scheme of delegation.

Planning protocols

- 5.10 CDC has a very clear set of protocols that are set out for officers and members in the form of "golden rules" and a set of "dos" and "don'ts". There is also very clear guidance on public speaking and site visits that show clear best practice in their clarity and comprehensiveness.
- 5.11 However, it was clear from speaking to both officers and members that the written guidance on site visits is both poorly understood and rarely implemented in practice in the way that the protocol states. Officers told the review team that site visits were carried out in an ad hoc manner with items being deferred for a site visit at planning committee, even though the protocol states very clearly the very specific criteria that need to be met to warrant a site visit. Furthermore, the review team was advised that site visits are often poorly attended, even by members who have voted for a site visit. The review team considers that this is an area for improvement that could be undertaken through better training for both officers and members of the requirements for site visits as already stated in the council's constitution.
- 5.12 The protocols are also silent on member involvement in pre-application discussions and involvement in appeals. Some of the best performing councils provide clarity to members on how they should engage with officers on pre-application matters and also their responsibilities with regard to supporting officers in the defence of the council's position at appeals.

Layout of the room and accessibility for those viewing online

- 5.13 The layout for the planning committee is quite common to many committees with members clearly identified and the lead officer sitting close to the case

officer and committee chair. This arrangement appears to work well and the review team saw clear evidence of the chair being able to communicate with the officers and lead officer being able to communicate with the case officer and other specialist officers.

- 5.14 The review team found it straightforward to access the planning committee agendas on the council's website and the webpage that shows the meetings online. The camera positioning is good with the person speaking being clearly identified on screen. There is also clear signing on screen to identify to the viewer which item is being considered.

Speaking arrangements

- 5.15 There is a clear protocol in place for speaking at committee and this seems to be understood by all participants attending the planning committee meetings. It also largely follows best practice that the review team has found throughout the country. Speakers are allowed 5 minutes with one speaker for the objectors and supporters. Speakers need to have lodged a letter of representation or be the applicant to speak. Ward members are allowed 10 minutes to speak; it is not uncommon for ward members to be allowed longer to speak than other speakers (the [PAS modernising planning committees national survey 2025](#) found that 32% of councils allowed 5 minutes for speakers and approximately half allowed ward members additional time to speak). Speakers are not permitted to speak following a deferred item unless the chair considers that there are significant material changes. This approach appears to work well and avoids unnecessary repetition of previous issues when a matter is deferred.
- 5.16 Members are not permitted to ask questions directly to speakers, but can only ask questions to officers. This causes some frustration to speakers and members, but is quite a common approach taken by planning committees.

Length of meetings and number of items

- 5.17 The review team looked at agendas between June 2024 and April 2025 and during this time the average number of items on the agenda was 5, but it varied enormously with one committee having 15 items and another only 2. As the types of applications brought to committee also varied greatly it is probably more useful to consider the length of time each committee took. Again, this varied greatly (from 6 hours 20 minutes to 13 minutes), but averaged at approximately 3 hours. The [PAS modernising planning committees national survey 2025](#) found that 78% of planning committees considered 2-4 items per meeting and the majority averaged between 1 and 3 hours in length.

6. Officer and Member behaviours

Chairing skills

- 6.1 The Chair of the planning committee is very experienced in his role and carries out the chairing of the meetings very well, allowing members to voice their opinions, but also confident enough to avoid points being laboured and repeated. Similar to many other planning committees, the questioning of officers sometimes merge into debate and the chair is quick to remind members that questions should precede debate. Many councils have dispensed with the questions stage before a debate and CDC will need to consider whether it should do the same or continue with the current arrangements.
- 6.2 The chair is also very competent in ensuring that members clearly articulate any reasons to propose motions contrary to an officer recommendation and will ensure that a vote is not taken before the reasons are clear to all participants and officers have had an opportunity to comment on an alternative proposal.

Officer / member relations

- 6.3 The officer / member relationships appear very positive. No issues of note were raised by either members or officers in this regard and the review team found during the viewing of committees that members generally listened to officer advice and took it on board. Representatives from the development community were also, generally, very positive about their relations with officers and members with one developer saying that CDC was “a good council to do business with”.
- 6.4 The review team did note a few exceptions to this good relationship and this generally occurred during the discussion on very contentious applications. However, in these cases the review team felt that members were challenging the balance of the material considerations rather than the professionalism of the officers.
- 6.5 From the observations made by the review team, officers gave good, solid advice on planning matters with the lead officer playing an important role in backing up the advice given by case officers. Comments were made to the review team that officers could be more assertive in bringing members back to the key planning issues and the recommendation made by officers. Whilst the review team did not consider this a major issue, it could be an area of discussion between the chair and lead officer to help to reduce the length of the meetings and the tendency for some members to stray off the key issues of the application.

Officer reports and presentations

- 6.6 The review team was impressed by the quality of the presentations given by officers. They were, in general, very clear, not too long and well received by members. It was apparent to the review team that officers had thoroughly prepared for the meetings and focused on the key issues that they felt that were most relevant for members.
- 6.7 The officer reports are also very competently written with the following being their key strengths:
- There is a location plan, context plan and aerial photo at start of report that really helps members focus in on the site and its location;
 - The report gives clear reasons for referral and officer recommendation;
 - The reports are generally well laid out with paragraph numbers;
 - There is clear reference to policies and other material considerations;
 - The analysis follows a logical sequence and starts with the principle of development;
 - There is a good structure for each section – starting policy / legal context, then assessment and then a conclusion; and
 - The reports end with a section on the planning balance and conclusions so members are clear as to how the officer reached their recommendation.
- 6.8 The review team did identify some areas for improvement, none of which require urgent action. These are outlined below:
- There are no sections on equalities, human rights or financial considerations even though these matters must be considered as part of any planning decision. Councils have been legally challenged on these matters and so it is important that CDC is clear that these matters have been considered;
 - Pre-application discussions are sometimes referred to in reports, but not consistently. Pre-application discussions are relevant to the debate at planning committee and if there have been no discussions then it is important that members are aware of this;
 - Sometimes conditions are separated under pre-commencement, pre-occupation etc, but this discipline is not consistently used; and
 - A summary might be helpful for longer reports to help members digest very long reports.

Member questions and debate

- 6.9 At the meetings viewed by the review team Members, in the main, were disciplined to separate the questioning of officers from the debate on the merits of the case and, if they strayed into debate during questions, then the Chair was quick to correct this.

- 6.10 Members also appeared to have prepared well for the meetings and were ready to ask questions about issues they did not understand in the report or issues where they did not initially agree with the officer view.
- 6.11 Members appeared to the review team to understand the importance of material planning considerations and the weight to be given to the Local Plan and the absence of a 5-year housing land supply. Members are clearly frustrated by the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) requirement for a presumption in favour of sustainable development and, at times would “play to the gallery” in making their frustrations known. However, members appeared very aware of the importance of policy and 5-year housing supply.
- 6.12 The review team did observe that members were being swayed more strongly to local objections rather than evidence presented to them. For example, members were sceptical of advice given by transport officers without having evidence to the contrary given by objectors. Therefore, the review team would recommend that any further training considered the importance of looking for evidence to support issues raised by objectors.
- 6.13 The chair allowed officers to comment on members’ reasons to overturn an officer recommendation which demonstrates good practice. Officers were, in these cases, given the opportunity to suggest appropriate wording and references to policy.

Legal involvement in meetings

- 6.14 The review team understands that the legal support at planning committee comes from Oxfordshire County Council (OCC). The OCC legal representative attends committee meetings as a representative of CDC to ensure that the committee process and protocols are followed rather than provide a legal view on specific applications. This is welcomed by the council and provides an important legal backup to officers during the committee meetings. The review team is not clear on the process for ensuring that planning and CDC legal team liaise on upcoming applications. OCC mentioned that the CDC legal team does alert them to any issues with applications, however others involved in the process indicated that this did not always happen and that a more formal process might need establishing to ensure that reports get to the CDC legal team prior to the pre-agenda planning meeting so that issues can be resolved as soon as possible. It is also unclear how any potential legal issues are properly addressed or resolved, during and after the meetings. CDC may want to more formally set out a clear process for the legal involvement in the whole committee process and also reconsider the role of the legal officer either through an enhanced role of the existing representative presence from County Council, or the involvement of one of CDC’s legal officers directly.

7. Training and performance monitoring

Member training

- 7.1 The review team heard that CDC has a positive approach to member training and there is regular training being undertaken by officers, particularly for new members of the planning committee. In addition, CDC has asked PAS to undertake defensible decision-making training with members to allow an independent perspective to be given to members on the key skills they need to sit on the planning committee. However, the review team did still find evidence of members not fully understanding the options open to them in making decisions. For example, at one committee meeting the review team saw evidence that members were not fully aware of the options available to them to address harm through conditions.
- 7.2 The council has recently introduced the Informal Planning Forum. Only two meetings have so far been held, but the forum has proved very popular with officers and members and shows a proactive approach by the council to improve ongoing member training and member oversight on planning performance. The forum is an opportunity for members and officers to learn from appeal decisions as well as reflect upon planning performance, both to celebrate good performance and address performance issues. This forum shows great promise and is good practice and, therefore, PAS strongly encourages CDC to continue with the Informal Planning Forum and to encourage as many members and officers as possible to participate in these meetings.
- 7.3 The review team also notes that an Overview and Scrutiny Working Group has been established for planning appeals which demonstrates the seriousness that the council is taking with addressing poor performance in planning appeals. Again, this is good practice and is strongly supported by PAS.
- 7.4 Notwithstanding the good work CDC is undertaking in making members aware of decision-making issues through the Informal Planning Forum and Overview and Scrutiny Working Group, the review team was advised that members have little knowledge of the appeals process and in how they can become actively involved in an appeal hearing or public inquiry. It would be helpful that, as part of the member training programme, members are provided training on the appeals process and ways that they can engage to support the council's position. This is particularly relevant to CDC due to Government's concerns on its record on successfully defending appeals.

Performance monitoring

- 7.5 To assist with performance monitoring the review team heard about improvements that are being made to improvement performance management monitoring and the use of shared data.
- 7.6 The portfolio holder is keen that enough time and focus is given to performance management of the planning team and that all tasks are recorded with specific timings agreed and acted upon before each performance review. The portfolio holder is also keen to see planning performance agreements more closely monitored in terms of time and outcomes and the performance of partners in contributing to the process.
- 7.7 The review team heard from officers that they felt well supported by managers throughout the planning committee process. There are weekly catchups where staff can discuss a range of issues affecting the planning teams and this includes a chance to reflect on the planning committee meetings, celebrating good performance and addressing any issues that might have arisen.
- 7.8 There is a regular item at planning committee meetings to report appeal decisions and this is good practice. However, the appeals item is at the end of the agenda and the review team noted that there is rarely a discussion on appeals, particularly after a long meeting. As appeals performance has brought the council to the attention of Government over potential designation, PAS would advise that CDC brings this appeals item to the front of the agenda, particularly if there are lessons to be learnt from an appeal that is upheld or costs have been awarded against the council. In this way, members will have a greater awareness of appeal decisions and can reflect on actions that might need to take place. Admittedly, the Informal Planning Forum and Overview and Scrutiny Working Group will be the places for detailed discussion, but the planning committee is the public forum for members and officers to acknowledge appeal performance.

8. Other matters

Officer resources

- 8.1 An issue raised from different sources during the review was the limited officer resources available that is causing a strain on the speed of decision-making, the robustness of monitoring and the ability for officers to resource the appeals process. The review team saw no direct evidence that lack of resources was impacting on the robustness of decision-making at planning committee and the

review is limited to the planning committee only rather than a wider planning service review. However, the review team was made aware of a wider corporate transformation programme that is being undertaken at CDC that would be looking at resourcing and processes across the council.

- 8.2 One of the indicators that PAS uses to indicate a potential crisis in resourcing is the number of non-determination appeals that are lodged. In CDC's case it is clear that the non-determination appeals were not a direct result of lack of resources within the planning team, but from actions that the developer chose to take as a result of negotiations with the planning team. However, the review team was told about issues with lack of business support to processes followed in the planning service and therefore there is concern amongst staff at the inefficient processes currently being used to administer the planning functions and to monitor performance. The review team has no evidence of this as it only looked at the planning committee processes and did not look at the processes used in the day-to-day operations within the planning service
- 8.3 There was not time to carry out a review into how well the service is resourced. It was suggested, anecdotally, that there are resource issues within the service and at a managerial level. PAS would stress the importance of this planning committee review and the recommendations that need to be implemented to ensure the effective running of the planning committee. To do this may require a review of resources and should be tied together with any plans the council has to review resources more generally.

Planning enforcement

- 8.4 The limitations of the planning committee review meant that the review team was not able to look in any detail into the way that CDC operates its planning enforcement service or how members engage with enforcement. Although planning enforcement is not normally a matter for planning committee to make decisions, it is an area of particular member interest and is likely to take up a considerable amount of members' time following up on enquiries.
- 8.5 Many councils will provide a regular report to their planning committee on planning enforcement cases that have been opened, closed and followed up with formal action. This gives members the opportunity to ask questions of officers when appropriate and to have a better understanding of workloads and the reasons for action taken. It is also common for the planning committee to scrutinise a local enforcement plan to help officers decide on what types of enforcement casework should be prioritised. The review team therefore recommends that CDC follows this practice so that members have a greater awareness of planning enforcement and can raise questions if appropriate. Planning committee, along with other councillors will also benefit from training as part of the annual member training programme.

9. Conclusions

- 9.1 CDC runs an effective planning committee with professional, knowledgeable officers and members who understand planning issues and the importance of following officer advice. However, the council does not have an up-to-date Local Plan or a 5-year housing land supply. It has also seen a recent change in political control with no political party having overall control. As Cherwell is in an area of high housing demand it has faced, in recent years, a high number of contentious housing proposals that have led to a number of appeals where the Planning Inspectorate has not always agreed with the council's position. As a consequence, the council is not performing to the minimum quality of decision-making standards set by Government.
- 9.2 There are many things that the council is doing well with regard to Planning Committee and it is generally well respected by both the development industry and the local community. However, there are areas of improvement that the review team has identified and these relate to issues of procedure, behaviours, training and communication. None of these are critical to the council operating a planning committee, but they are all important if CDC's planning committee is going to ensure that it makes robust and defensible decisions in the future.
- 9.3 Finally, the council should reflect on the current changes being consulted on by Government with respect to Planning Committees. These changes are likely to impose mandatory requirements on all councils on the scheme of delegation, size of planning committees and member training. Therefore, the council will need to make changes in its current operation of planning committee as a consequence of legislation that will be shortly passed through Parliament.

10. Next steps

- 10.1 PAS currently receives a grant from the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government (MHCLG) to support councils under threat of designation. Whilst CDC is now not under immediate threat of designation PAS will be able to continue supporting CDC by monitoring performance and providing advice on how it implements the recommendations set out in this report.
- 10.2 PAS would also be happy to undertake a progress review in due course to assist the council in evaluating the progress being made on its planning committee performance. The main contact at PAS is Peter Ford, Principal Consultant, peter.ford@local.gov.uk.

Appendix 1 – appeals analysis

Address	Proposal	Member overturn?	Synopsis	PAS comment
Former Buzz Bingo, Bolton Road, Banbury	Redevelopment for 80 retirement apartments	Non determination	Inspector considered that the development impacted on the setting of a listed building and conservation area, but, on balance, the design acceptable.	Not tested at planning committee, but an avoidable overturn as a non-determination appeal.
Land NW of Station Road, Launton	Outline 65 dwellings	Yes	Inspector considered there was some limited harm to the character and appearance of the village and rural setting. The site was an inappropriate location due to limited access to facilities. There was also harm to the listed farmhouse. However, on balance the Inspector considered that the benefits of market and affordable housing and live-work units outweighed the harm.	The weight given by members on lack of 5 year housing land supply (5YHLS) was insufficient and officer judgement was correct.
Land at NW Bicester, Charlotte Ave	Outline for 530 dwellings as part of planned eco town	Non determination	Conditions and a legal agreement was secured between the council and the	Not tested at planning committee, but an avoidable overturn as

Address	Proposal	Member overturn?	Synopsis	PAS comment
			applicant to achieve zero carbon and affordable reduced to 10%. The Inspector considered that these benefits outweighed the harm on the heritage assets.	a non-determination appeal
West of Chilgrove Drive and North of Camp Road, Heyford Park	Outline for 230 dwellings	Yes	The proposal is outside the settlement boundary, but abutting the planned 1600 dwellings at a former RAF base. Changes to the NPPF (Dec 23) meant the council's housing calculations were incorrect due to unmet need in Oxford. The Inspector agreed with officers that the benefits of housing delivery outweighed the harm.	Officers found the development acceptable even with the council having a 5YHLS, which was found incorrect by Inspector. Therefore, the 5YHLS was not the issue for members but the issue of harm being outside the settlement boundary.
Land off Ploughley Road, Ambrosden	Outline for 120 dwellings	No	The Inspector considered that the development would not lead to significant impacts on the character and appearance of the area	Judgement on whether Inspector felt harm on character and appearance was sufficient to refuse.
Land East of Warwick	Outline for 170 dwellings	No	The Inspector considered that the need for housing,	Judgement on whether Inspector felt harm on character and

Address	Proposal	Member overturn?	Synopsis	PAS comment
Road, Banbury			particularly affordable housing outweighed impact on landscape, listed buildings / conservation area and loss of agricultural land. Changes to NPPF (Dec 23) meant council's housing calculations were incorrect due to unmet need in Oxford.	appearance was sufficient to refuse against a lack of 5YHLS.
Land West of Bloxham Road	Outline for 60 dwellings	No	The council could demonstrate a 5YHLS, but the Inspector felt the weight of housing need, particularly affordable, was greater than the visual intrusion into the countryside. The council removed its objection before the hearing, but the hearing still went ahead with 3rd party objections.	Even though the council withdrew the objections, the hearing still went ahead due to 3 rd party objections and the appeal went against council.
Land South of Green Lane, Cheserton	Outline for 147 dwellings	No	The Inspector considered that the edge of village development had good public transport and local facilities and didn't unduly harm the character and appearance of the area. The 5YHLS issue was	Inspector felt the development was in a sustainable location and not unduly impact on the village character regardless of the issues over the 5YHLS.

Address	Proposal	Member overturn?	Synopsis	PAS comment
			not relevant in this case.	
Land adjoining and West of 161 Rutten Lane, Yarnton	540 homes and up to 9,000 square metres of elderly extra care residential floorspace	Non-determination	<p>If the council had determined the application it would have been refused on 5 reasons: concerning the delivery of informal parkland; ecological mitigation and biodiversity gain; the provision of access to new playing fields for a primary school; affordable housing; and on-site infrastructure and infrastructure contributions.</p> <p>However, it withdrew reasons at the inquiry. The Inspector felt the development largely met the allocation requirements. Costs were awarded against the council and county council.</p>	There was significant damage to the council both in terms of decision-making and costs award (£400k)
Ells Lane, Bloxham	Outline for 30 dwellings	No	The Inspector considered the development was sustainable organic growth despite the high number of objections. It would not harm the	The judgement considered the impact on the rural / village setting. The Inspector awarded costs against the council (not have

Address	Proposal	Member overturn?	Synopsis	PAS comment
			housing strategy or rural character or village setting. There are accessible local facilities and it would not harm agricultural land.	information on reason for costs)
Land West of Howes Lane, Bicester	Employment land B2 and / or B8	Yes	The site is allocated for housing and green infrastructure in the SPD masterplan, but mixed use in Local Plan. The Inspector gave more weight to the Local Plan and housing was considered undeliverable.	Member misinterpretation of the weight given to the Local Plan against the SPD.

Lessons to learn from appeal decisions

1. Non-determination appeals are very damaging to the council in terms of performance and loss of decision-making powers. Greater attention is needed to avoid non-determination appeals.
2. Member overturns are partly to blame for poor performance, but a greater number of appeals have been allowed following officer decisions and therefore it is important that officers reflect particularly on their interpretation of the NPPF.
3. Changes in the 5YHLS calculations are partly responsible for overturns, but in some cases the council has misjudged the harm caused on the character and appearance of the development on existing settlements and rural setting. The council should reflect on whether sufficient weight is being given to the overriding need for housing, particularly affordable housing,
4. The council has been penalised both in terms of decision-making and costs as a result of withdrawing refusing reasons. Further work is needed in understanding why it has been necessary to withdraw refusal reasons and the timing of the withdrawal of refusal reasons.

5. The council is taking insufficient account of the sustainability of developments, particularly in respect to sustainable transport. It is important that proper consideration is being given to transport solutions, particularly in discussions with Oxfordshire CC.

6. The appeal at Land adjoining and West of 161 Rutten Lane, Yarnton was particularly damaging to the council and needs to be reviewed in detail. In particular the need to look at: could it have avoided a non-determination appeal?; relationships with Oxfordshire County Council; and the late withdrawal of refusal reasons.

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PAS Review of Planning Committee Decision Making

Key Recommendations/Advice and Response

PAS Recommendations or Action Needed	Problem / Issue	Response	Status / Actions
<p>Recommendation 1(a): Review the way that members are involved in planning proposals at pre-application stage.</p> <p>This should involve a review of best practice followed by councils who engage members in pre-application discussions, using the PAS pre-application advice and Planning Performance Agreements (PAS) guidance.</p>	<p>Unable to find any procedures in place for member involvement in pre-application discussions</p> <p>Interest group frustration in being forced to take an adversarial approach with applicants due to not being able to engage at an early stage with developers</p> <p>Developer frustration at not being able to engage with members at an early stage to identify issues of local concern</p> <p>Issues might be relatively easy to address at the early design stage (otherwise more difficult, time-consuming and expensive)</p>	<p>Ensure a protocol is established and made clear in the Council’s guidance on seeking pre-application advice</p> <p>The Council’s Statement of Community Involvement (2021) makes clear that the Council will encourage developers and promoters for large scale development to undertake their own consultation and engagement process with local people. Providing for member involvement in the pre-application process would assist local representation</p> <p>We will therefore encourage developers and promoters for large scale development to undertake their own consultation and engagement process with local people.</p>	<p>A protocol has been prepared to provide the opportunity for prospective applicants and applicants to seek engagement with relevant ward members and the Portfolio Holder in taking pre-application advice.</p> <p>The new approach to member / developer engagement will be reflected in the Council’s charging schedule (existing hourly rates apply)</p> <p>The Council’s pre-application guidance will be updated.</p> <p>DM staff have been reminded of the provisions of the SCI.</p>
<p>Recommendation 1(b) Review the way that members are</p>	<p>Lack of procedure for pre-committee discussion</p>	<p>Ensure a protocol is established for applicants and made clear in the Council’s guidance and in</p>	<p>A protocol (part of the pre-application protocol above) has been prepared which provides</p>

PAS Recommendations or Action Needed	Problem / Issue	Response	Status / Actions
<p>involved in the build-up to planning committee.</p> <p>Also, a review of the way councils allow pre-planning committee developer presentations, using the PAS Modernising Planning Committees National Survey 2025 to identify councils who operate this practice.</p>	<p>Unable to find any procedures in place for either member involvement in pre-application or pre committee discussions</p> <p>Common for arrangements for developers to hold information briefings with members prior to committee.</p> <p>Danger of pre-determination does not need to be a major threat provided that there are clear protocols that are followed</p>	<p>PPA charging.</p>	<p>opportunities for developer briefings to Members before applications are presented to Planning Committee. The Council's advice for applicants and the charging schedule will be updated.</p> <p>Additionally, following the establishment of the new Planning Committee in May/June, regular pre-committee briefings are to be held with committee members to assist the smooth running of the committee and the readiness of both Councillors and Officers.</p>
<p>Recommendation 2a – Site visits procedures</p> <p>Improve awareness of the existing site visits procedure both for members and officers so that it is used consistently and effectively. The existing procedure should form part of</p>	<p>The written guidance on site visits is poorly understood and rarely implemented in practice</p> <p>Site visits carried out in an ad hoc manner</p> <p>Items being deferred even though the protocol states very clearly the very specific criteria that need to be met to warrant a site visit.</p> <p>Site visits are often poorly attended even by members who have voted for a site visit.</p> <p>Better training needed for both officers and members</p>	<p>Review site visit procedure in the constitution to ensure it remains fit for purpose</p> <p>https://modgov.cherwell.gov.uk/documents/s54142/Part%209%20-%20Planning%20Committee%20Procedure%20Rules%20-%20December%202020.pdf</p> <p>Ensure site visit training in a rolling officer training programme to be established (in addition to personal CPD)</p>	<p>A protocol (part of the pre-application protocol above) has been prepared</p>

PAS Recommendations or Action Needed	Problem / Issue	Response	Status / Actions
		<p>Ensure site visit training in rolling members training programme</p> <p>Prepare guidance for members in addition to constitutional procedure.</p> <p>Formal arrangement at committee for visit before meeting</p> <p>Ensure there is a regular day for site visits (ideally 2 days before meeting after agenda is published) and guidance on substitution</p> <p>Ensure guidance for being a member of committee emphasizes availability for site visits</p>	
<p>Recommendation 2b - Member training programme</p> <p>To help efficient running of the planning committee.</p>		<p>Need to be a rolling member training programme renewed each year for induction</p> <p>Also need a guide for being a member of planning committee of planning committee (beyond code of conduct)</p>	<p>Enhanced induction training is to be provided for Planning Committee Members following the 2026 local elections. A twelve-month on-going training programme will be presented to Members at that training session. Meetings of the internal members' forum are to be forward planned for twelve months. The next meeting is in April.</p> <p>A best practice committee training</p>

PAS Recommendations or Action Needed	Problem / Issue	Response	Status / Actions
			session is also to be arranged and recorded for officers.
Recommendation 3 – Managing late information received for planning committee	<p>All participants are clear about the approach</p> <p>Members can be given a very large amount of additional material only a few hours before the actual committee meeting and 5 minutes at the actual meeting to read the material</p> <p>Not giving the viewing public confidence that the information had been fully considered</p> <p>Should be 24 hours before the meeting at the latest</p>	<p>Ensure there is a written, published protocol for the submission of late material and a clear deadline of 4pm the day before committee for the publication of written updates.</p>	<p>Completed.</p>
Recommendation 4 – Member engagement with appeals <p>Increase member engagement with the appeals process, building upon the Informal Planning Forum meetings.</p> <p>Discussing appeals during an early stage of a planning committee meeting (when appropriate)</p>	<p>More member engagement needed on planning appeals</p> <p>More emphasis on planning appeal performance at committee.</p>	<p>Ensure there are regular meetings booked for the year for informal members forum</p> <p>At informal members forum have a standing item on appeals</p> <p>Bring forward appeals report earlier in the committee agenda</p> <p>Include appeals in training programme (above)</p> <p>Standing item for informal meeting</p> <p>Ensure that members of the planning committee are trained</p>	<p>As above. A forward plan of items for the internal Members' Forum is to be presented to Members which will include the standing item on appeals. Appeals are also to be included in the Members training programme for the new municipal year.</p> <p>Appeals are being brought forward on the agenda for planning committee (the next meeting is 19 March)</p>

PAS Recommendations or Action Needed	Problem / Issue	Response	Status / Actions
<p>Improving training for members on appeal</p> <p>Actively encouraging members to be involved in supporting the council position at planning appeal hearings and public inquiries</p>		<p>and ready to support planning appeals when appropriate</p>	
<p>Recommendation 5 – Member engagement with planning enforcement</p> <p>Improve member awareness of planning enforcement</p> <p>Have regular item on the planning committee agenda to report planning enforcement cases opened and closed, alongside reviews of the local enforcement plan.</p> <p>Member training on planning enforcement</p>	<p>More member engagement needed on planning enforcement</p>	<p>Include planning enforcement as standing item at the informal members forum</p> <p>Include enforcement in the members training programme</p> <p>Have a standing item on planning enforcement at planning committee. Liaise with legal services whether a part 1 or part 2 (confidential) item.</p> <p>Restart regular performance reports to planning committee. Include enforcement performance.</p>	<p>Implemented. A report on Planning Enforcement is to be presented to the March Planning Committee and thereafter on a quarterly basis.</p> <p>An overall item on Planning Enforcement was taken to the internal Members Forum on 12 February (practice and cases).</p>

PAS Recommendations or Action Needed	Problem / Issue	Response	Status / Actions
matters.			
<p>Recommendation 6 - Review of planning committee officer reports</p> <p>Review the content and structure of the officer reports that are used at planning committee.</p> <p>Reflect on the good practice currently taking place and areas for improvement. Use the PAS best practice in report writing guidance to assist with this review.</p>	<p>On the whole they are competently written reports.</p> <p>Potential areas of improvement:</p> <p>no sections on equalities, human rights or financial considerations (must be considered as part of any planning decision).</p> <p>Pre-application discussions are sometimes referred to in reports, but not consistently.</p> <p>Sometimes conditions are separated under pre-commencement, pre-occupation etc, but this discipline is not consistently used; and</p> <p>A summary might be helpful for longer reports to help members digest very long reports.</p>	<p>Review reporting consistency</p> <p>Ensure officer training</p> <p>Review reporting template</p> <p>Provide report exemplar</p> <p>Review sign-off process to improve standards and accuracy</p>	<p>Committee training is to be arranged and recorded for officers (as above). This will include an item on report writing.</p> <p>Head of DM and DM Team Leaders are reviewing best practice with a view to achieving consistency to set expectation standards for sign-off. The potential for technology to assist report writing and checking to be discussed with the Transformation and ICT services.</p>
<p>Recommendation 7 – Review the existing member training programme</p> <p>Review the training available to members to address areas for improvement</p> <p>Include training on site</p>	<p>Need to improve Councillor knowledge and skills</p>	<p>As above – establish regular and rolling training programme</p> <p>Include standing item at informal members forum</p> <p>Establish training contacts for Members, process for disseminating opportunities and recording of member training</p>	<p>As above. A rolling training programme is to be presented to Members in the new municipal year. Sessions on decision making and planning enforcement have been taken to the Members Forum. Development viability is scheduled next using an external viability consultant. Post induction barrister training is to include a Barrister led session.</p>

PAS Recommendations or Action Needed	Problem / Issue	Response	Status / Actions
visits Provide practical training on lessons learnt from decisions			
<p>Recommendation 8 - Re-introduce the developers' forum</p> <p>Better engage the local development community by re-introducing the developers' forum.</p> <p>Learn from best practice from across the country on how a developer forum might work.</p> <p>Consider how members can be involved in the developer forum</p>	Need a planning focused developer forum	<p>Establish forum and with dates in advance at least every 6 months and agenda circulated in advance</p> <p>Provide opportunities for developers to submit agenda items</p> <p>Portfolio Holder, Planning Committee Chair, Deputy Chair to attend. Other committee members invited</p>	Area based developer fora support the Council's Area Oversight structure (Kidlington, Bicester and Banbury). This is to be supplemented by development management focused sessions. Officers are also invited to a countywide developers forum and participate in a countywide s106 working group.
Recommendation 9 - Review the Legal representation at the planning committee	More support for members and officers	CDC Head of Legal Services now attends committee and agenda setting meeting. Confirm that Head of Legal Services attends	Completed. This Council's Head of Legal Services now provides legal representation.

PAS Recommendations or Action Needed	Problem / Issue	Response	Status / Actions
<p>meetings</p> <p>Review the current arrangements whereby a representative of Oxfordshire County Council attends the planning committee meetings (as a representative of CDC).</p> <p>Consider the areas of support that officers and members best need to make sound decisions at planning committee, particularly prior to the formal meeting.</p>		Chair's briefing	
<p>Advice: Consider size of the Planning Committee</p> <p>CDC currently has 18 members who sit on the planning committee. Government direction of travel is to limit planning committees</p>	<p>To help make more efficient use of time and resources</p> <p>All members of the committee need a chance to speak without the meeting being protracted</p> <p>Greater flexibility and representation – allows for a sufficient pool of councillors to focus on ward representation when needed</p> <p>Ensure no more than one councillor from an</p>	<p>Agreed in principle to have a committee of 11 members. To be pursued through governance procedures</p> <p>Review substitutes</p>	<p>Officer and member engagement has taken place. The decision is subject to an on-going governance process culminating in a report to Council (16 March).</p>

PAS Recommendations or Action Needed	Problem / Issue	Response	Status / Actions
<p>to 11 members.</p> <p>PAS considers that a planning committee between 9 and 12 members is best practice.</p>	<p>individual ward is on the committee</p> <p>Need to provide cover as committee substitutes from a greater pool of members reducing the chance of cancellations etc</p>		
Advice: Officer advice to members	<p>Officers give good, solid advice on planning matters with the lead officer playing an important role in backing up the advice given by case officers.</p> <p>Whether officers could be more assertive could be an area of discussion between the chair and lead officer to help to reduce the length of the meetings and the tendency for some members to stray off the key issues of the application.</p>	Discuss with Chair and at informal members forum	<p>Discussions have taken place with the Chair of Planning Committee and it has also been discussed at the internal Members' Forum.</p> <p>The provision of officer advice is also being discussed with Executive Members to help identify areas for continuous improvements and the smooth running of the committee.</p> <p>Officer training is also being arranged (see above)</p>
Advice: Member Questions and Debate	<p>Members were being swayed more strongly to local objections rather than evidence presented to them.</p> <p>For example, members were sceptical of advice given by transport officers without having evidence to the contrary given by objectors.</p> <p>Recommend that any further training considers</p>	Include evidential decision making and handing objections in member training programme.	To be included in the rolling 12 month training programme with attendance from OCC highway as appropriate to help build confidence in professionally guided and evidence-based decision making.

PAS Recommendations or Action Needed	Problem / Issue	Response	Status / Actions
	the importance of looking for evidence to support issues raised by objectors.		
Advice: Performance	<p>The portfolio holder is keen that enough time and focus is given to performance management of the planning team and that all tasks are recorded with specific timings agreed and acted upon before each performance review.</p> <p>The portfolio holder is also keen to see planning performance agreements more closely monitored in terms of time and outcomes and the performance of partners in contributing to the process.</p> <p>There is a regular item at planning committee meetings to report appeal decisions and this is good practice. Have this at the front of the agenda (see above), particularly if there are lessons to be learnt from an appeal that is upheld or costs have been awarded against the council.</p> <p>The Informal Planning Forum and Overview and Scrutiny Working Group will be the places for detailed discussion.</p>	<p>Review content of regular report on performance to meet Portfolio Holder expectations.</p> <p>See above on planning appeals.</p>	<p>A performance dashboard has been created and subject to on-going review. Planning is one of the priority areas in the Council's Transformation Programme, including a focus on digitalisation. Options for future planning 'back office' systems are being reviewed to support cross service improvement and workflow, 'the customer front door', process efficiency and performance.</p> <p>The national indicator for the quality of decision making (the % of decisions on major developments overturned at appeal) remains an area of focus, particularly considering the relatively high number of applications for major development the Council receives.</p> <p>A report on performance is to be presented more regularly to the Planning Committee.</p> <p>Service improvement is a standing item at Portfolio Holder</p>

PAS Recommendations or Action Needed	Problem / Issue	Response	Status / Actions
			Briefings. Updates are provided to the internal Members Forum but this needs to be more structured as the forum meets more regularly (see above)
Advice: Length of meetings and number of items	<p>Between June 2024 and April 2025 the average number of items on the agenda was 5, but it varied enormously with one committee having 15 items and another only 2.</p> <p>The length of the meeting varied greatly (from 6 hours 20 minutes to 13 minutes), but averaged at approximately 3 hours.</p> <p>The PAS modernising planning committees national survey 2025 found that 78% of planning committees considered 2-4 items per meeting and the majority averaged between 1 and 3 hours in length.</p>	Shorten length of busy meetings, review number of items presented and time management	Concerns have also been expressed by individual committee members. The issue has been discussed with senior management and legal and democratic services. Changes are ongoing, including a 9pm cut off time, mandatory breaks for long meetings and the holding of additional meetings when required.

Other Matters Arising from Officer Consideration	Problem / Issue	Response	Status / Actions
Consideration of the PAS report	Ensuring the report is socialised	The PAS report has been discussed with within the service, with the Corporate Leadership Team, with the Members of the Council's Executive, with the Portfolio	The Council's response to the report is being discussed at the Overview and Scrutiny Meeting on

		Holder, with Committee Members (internal Members Forum), and with the Legal and Democratic Services team. The report is publicly available at https://www.cherwell.gov.uk/download/downloads/id/18229/cherwell-district-council-planning-committee-review.pdf	24 March 2026 and at a meeting of the Executive on 7 April 2026.
Culture	Ensuring evidence-based decision making	The importance of evidence-based decision making and the committee not being overly influenced by local objections has been discussed at briefings with Portfolio Holder and Committee Chair and through dialogue at the internal Members Forum. Message reinforcement, in the interest of ensuring decision making is as robust as possible, takes place through the Head of Development Management at committee meetings. Following the May 2025 local elections, two training sessions were arranged to support Members of the new Planning Committee .	Enhanced use of the internal Members Forum and structured training programme (above) to provide Member support and opportunity for officer and members to constructively review decision-making experience and performance on an on-going basis.
Running of Committee	Ensuring a quality of response to Members' questions at committee and supporting the efficiency of the meeting	The pre-committee briefings for Members are to be used to invite questions. This will assist officer preparation. It is entirely without prejudice to Members' lines of enquiry at the committee meeting. Officers had invited questions previously on an item by item basis for complex cases.	Being implemented so that any questions are received at least 2 working days before the meeting.
Time of day for the meeting	Ensuring an optimal time for Members.	The current start time of 4pm is still considered to be optimal.	No change
Drafting reasons for	Ensuring more efficiency in capturing	Without prejudice to their	Being Implemented

refusal	Members' reasons for refusal	recommendations, officers are being asked to consider the potential reasons that might arise from the issues and considerations presented in the officer reports	
Local Plan	Having an up to date local plan to inform decision making	A proposed local plan was submitted in July 2025. Initial hearings were held in February 2026.	The Inspectors' initial letter is awaited
Five Year Housing Land Supply	The absence of a five year housing land supply and the application of the 'tilted balance' in decision making.	An Annual Monitoring Report was approved by the Council's Executive in December 2025 which contains a comprehensive review of housing land supply.	At 31 March 2025, the district had 10,271 homes with outline or full planning permission. The AMR also shows that it has a total forward supply of 21,650 homes from 1 April 2025 (excluding additional supply from the new Local Plan). However, 6,123 homes presently meeting the Government's definition of 'deliverable' which produces a 3.1 year housing land supply when the requirements for Cherwell and Oxford's needs are combined.
Government Reforms	Readiness and Engagement	The Council is engaging on a countywide and Thames Valley basis in anticipation of SDS regulations and guidance in Summer 2026. Should the Council's new Plan be found sound at Examination, the Council will be well-placed for any new Local Plan process that tracks the SDS. A response to the NPPF consultation has	Continuance of preparation

		been prepared and officers are engaged with PAS, RTP1 and other events to support readiness.	
MHCLG/ Homes England / Atlas Engagement / OGC	Responding to the national planning agenda	The Council is engaged with the New Towns Programme, in responding to the OGC report and on delivery and infrastructure matters at Bicester. It is therefore liaising with MHCLG, Homes England and OGC. ATLAS is working on four projects with the Council including the provision of resource and expertise to support work on strategic applications and housing delivery.	Continuance of engagement and delivery of projects
Resource & Capability	Being well placed to support decision making and delivery	<p>A new Place and Regeneration Directorate has been created with additional Executive Director resource made available to support the oversight of Development Management.</p> <p>More support has been provided for the implementation and delivery functions of the Growth and Regeneration service. A new permanent Head of Service has been appointed. A new majors Development Management Team (a 3rd) has been created and a new team leader appointed. A new Biodiversity and Climate Resilience service has also been created with a new Head of Service. Additional planning resource has been approved through the budget process for 26/27 including resource for improvement. The planning service has a designated officer within the Transformation Team – an experienced</p>	Retain focus on performance and improvement.

		planner with digitilisation expertise.	
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This report is public	
Performance of S106 Delivery	
Committee	Overview and Scrutiny Committee
Date of Committee	24 March 2026
Portfolio Holder presenting the report	Councillor Jean Conway, Portfolio Holder for Planning and Development Management
Date Portfolio Holder agreed report	
Report of	Assistant Director - Planning and Development

Purpose of report

To provide an overview of the Section 106 agreement and infrastructure delivery process, and a review of infrastructure delivery in Cherwell from a health perspective.

1. Recommendations

The Overview & Scrutiny is recommended to:

1.1 Note a presentation covering:

- An overview of how section 106 obligations are agreed
- An overview of how section 106 obligations monitored and delivered
- Factors and constraints behind infrastructure delivery
- A spotlight on s106 health contributions

1.2 Note key findings for health contributions currently held by the Council and trends in health contributions secured between 2019/20 and 2024/25.

2. Executive Summary

2.1 Section 106 agreements secure infrastructure contributions to mitigate the impacts of development. In some cases, infrastructure is not secured at the planning stage, either because evidence-based requests are not available, or because viability considerations limit what can be achieved. The Council is required to publish an annual Infrastructure Funding Statement (IFS) setting out contributions secured, received, held and spent. This report provides an overview of the Section 106 process and highlights the factors that influence both the securing and delivery of obligations, with a focus on health contributions in Cherwell.

Implications & Impact Assessments

Implications	Commentary			
Finance	<p>There are no financial implications arising directly from this report. The figures quoted have not been verified by Finance.</p> <p>Joanne Kaye, Head of Finance, 13 March 2026</p>			
Legal	<p>There are no legal implications arising directly as a result of this report.</p> <p>This report and the supporting appendices provide an overview of how the S106 obligations are agreed, monitored and delivered.</p> <p>Legal services provide advice and support formalising and enforcing these obligations through drafting and advising on the S106 agreements.</p> <p>Denzil – John Turbervill, Head of Legal Services, 13 March 2026</p>			
Risk Management	<p>There are no immediate risks arising directly from this report; however, delays in securing or delivering Section 106 obligations may affect the timely provision of supporting infrastructure. Dependencies on external partners, viability constraints, and variable development trajectories can introduce uncertainty, requiring ongoing monitoring and liaison to ensure obligations are met and potential clawback risks are avoided.</p> <p>Celia Prado-Teeling, Performance & Insight Team Leader, 13 March 2026</p>			
Impact Assessments	Positive	Neutral	Negative	Commentary
Equality Impact		<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>		<p>There are no implications arising from the gathering and publication of this data.</p> <p>Celia Prado-Teeling, Performance & Insight Team Leader, 13 March 2023</p>
A Are there any aspects of the proposed decision, including how it is delivered or accessed, that could impact on inequality?		<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>		Not applicable
B Will the proposed decision		<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>		Not applicable

have an impact upon the lives of people with protected characteristics, including employees and service users?				
Climate & Environmental Impact		<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>		Not applicable
ICT & Digital Impact		<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>		Not applicable
Data Impact		<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>		Not applicable
Procurement & subsidy		<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>		Not applicable
Council Priorities	Corporate plan priorities for 2025-2026: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Economic prosperity • Community leadership • Environmental stewardship • Quality housing and place making 			
Human Resources	N/A			
Property	N/A			
Consultation & Engagement	Councillor Jean Conway, Portfolio Holder – Planning & Development Management			

Supporting Information

3. Background

- 3.1 Planning obligations mitigate the impacts of development and must be necessary, directly related to the development, and reasonable in scale and kind. In Cherwell, obligations are secured through Section 106 legal agreements.
- 3.2 The Council must publish an annual Infrastructure Funding Statement (IFS), setting out the infrastructure contributions secured, received, spent and/or held each financial year. The last IFS was published in December 2025, covering the 2024/25 financial year.
- 3.3 Concerns may arise where development appears to progress ahead of supporting infrastructure, or where infrastructure is not secured at all.

4. Details

- 4.1 The presentation will outline the Section 106 process in two parts. The first part covers how contributions are negotiated and secured, including assessing whether the package of obligations sufficiently mitigates the impacts of development in line with planning policy.
- 4.2 Viability is an important consideration during negotiation. Some agreements include viability review mechanisms, used where full policy-compliant contributions are not considered deliverable at the decision stage. These reviews allow the authority to capture additional contributions if viability improves as the development progresses.
- 4.3 All planning obligations must meet the statutory tests of being necessary, directly related to the development, and fairly and reasonably related in scale and kind. In Cherwell, obligations should be consistent with the Developer Contributions Supplementary Planning Document (2018), which sets out the expected types and levels of contribution and provides clarity and consistency for applicants.
- 4.4 In some cases, infrastructure is not secured at the planning stage because the relevant service provider is unable to provide an evidence-based request within the required timescales. Where no evidence-based request is made, the Council cannot include an obligation in a Section 106 agreement, even where the community may perceive a need.
- 4.5 The second part of the process relates to monitoring, implementation, and enforcement once an agreement is in place. This includes checking that trigger points are met, ensuring that financial payments are made on time, and confirming delivery of non-financial obligations such as affordable housing, open space, highways works, or travel plans.
- 4.6 Effective monitoring is essential because Section 106 agreements often operate over long periods and may involve multiple phases or land parcels. Officers must maintain up-to-date records, liaise with developers and internal service areas, and take action where obligations fall behind programme. Where appropriate, formal enforcement powers may be used to secure compliance.
- 4.7 These processes collectively help ensure that development is supported by appropriate infrastructure and that the impacts of growth are mitigated in a fair, proportionate and policy-led manner.
- 4.8 Section 106-funded projects often involve a typical lead-in period before delivery can begin. Financial contributions are received only when specific development triggers are reached, meaning that infrastructure providers can proceed once the required funding is in place. This timing reflects the phasing and pace of housebuilding rather than administrative delay.
- 4.9 In some cases, viability assessments determine that only a reduced package of contributions can be secured. When this occurs, certain types of infrastructure may not be included within an agreement. These outcomes reflect the viability considerations associated with the development at the time decisions are made.

- 4.10 Many infrastructure projects, particularly larger schemes such as health facilities, education provision, or transport improvements, require pooled contributions from multiple developments. As different sites progress at varying speeds, funding typically accumulates over time. Delivery can commence once sufficient pooled funding has been secured to progress the project.
- 4.11 Delivery timescales can also be influenced by construction cost inflation and market conditions. Although contributions are index-linked, increases in construction costs may exceed indexation, creating funding gaps that need to be resolved through additional financing, revised project scopes, or phased implementation. These factors can extend the lead-in period between receipt of contributions and delivery on the ground.
- 4.12 A range of technical, procedural and regulatory requirements also shape delivery timescales. These may include detailed design work, statutory approvals, procurement processes, land and property considerations, environmental factors, and contractor availability. Larger or multi-agency projects often involve several stages of preparation and coordination, which can result in multi-year delivery periods.
- 4.13 Taken together, these factors explain why Section 106-funded infrastructure is not immediately delivered once obligations are secured, and why delivery timescales vary between projects. Strong programme management and cross-team working help manage these constraints and support timely and effective delivery.
- 4.14 A further factor is the dependence on external delivery partners. For health contributions, funds are released once the BOB ICB identifies a deliverable project. Where requests have not yet been made, contributions remain held until required.
- 4.15 The IFS provides transparent information to the public about the infrastructure secured and delivered in Cherwell. Focusing on healthcare infrastructure specifically, the key messages from the IFS reports are as follows:
1. £580,000 is currently held by the Council for healthcare infrastructure. The money is held by the Council until requested for a project by the BOB ICB.
 2. The Council has not received any formal health project requests since IFS reporting began (2019/20).
 3. All but one financial health contribution were received since 2021; the oldest funds were received in 2017.
 4. No funds have been identified at risk of 'clawback' until 2035.
 5. 48% of residential section 106 agreements since 2021 included a health scheme. All but one health schemes were financial contributions; one physical health scheme was secured.
 6. Across all developments, an average of £600 has been secured per dwelling since 2021.
- 4.16 The Committee is invited to note the above findings.

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: Seek review of the statistics. Officers consider that this is not required as the information aligns with published Infrastructure Funding Statements.

6 Conclusion and Reasons for Recommendations

- 6.1 Developer contributions help mitigate the impacts of new development, but some, such as health contributions, cannot be secured without clear evidence of need, local policy support, or where viability limits what can be achieved.
- 6.2 On delivery, the Council holds around £580,000 in health contributions awaiting requests from the BOB ICB. More broadly, project delivery can depend on pooled funding, market conditions, and the natural lag between housebuilding and infrastructure provision.

Decision Information

Key Decision	No
Subject to Call in	No
If not, why not subject to call in	N/A
Ward(s) Affected	All

Document Information

Appendices	
Appendix 1	Performance of S106 Delivery Presentation Slides
Appendix 2	S106 Health Contribution Data - Funds Held
Appendix 3	S106 Health Contribution Data – Funds Secured
Background Papers	None
Reference Papers	Developer Contributions Supplementary Planning Document (SPD) (February 2018)
Report Author	Sean Tilbury
Report Author contact details	Sean.tilbury@cherwell-dc.gov.uk, 01295 221503

Corporate Director Approval (unless Corporate Director or Statutory Officer report)	Ian Boll, Corporate Director for Place & Regeneration, 13 March 2026
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Performance of S106 Delivery

With focus on Primary Care

Overview and Scrutiny Committee, 24 March 2026

Agenda

- Overview of how section 106 obligations are agreed
- Overview of how section 106 obligations monitored and delivered
- Factors and constraints behind infrastructure delivery
- Primary care spotlight: funds held and funds secured

S106 Process

Pre-agreement

- Pre-Application & Early Negotiation
- Heads of Terms
- Drafting

Decision

- Committee Resolution
- Completion & Planning Permission Issued

Post-agreement

- Implementation & Monitoring
- Delivery & Expenditure



How are contributions justified?

Planning obligations assist in **mitigating the impact of unacceptable development** to make it acceptable in planning terms

They must be:

- **necessary** to make the development acceptable in planning terms;
- **directly related** to the development; and
- **fairly and reasonably related in scale and kind** to the development.

Other considerations:

- **Local policy support** (Developer Contributions SPD 2016)
- **Viability**

Why might infrastructure not be secured?

Lack of policy support

Lack of evidence of need

Viability constraints

Negotiated process

Cross boundary impacts



Facilitating Infrastructure Delivery

Inherent obstacles:

- Time lag between legal agreement and delivery; changes to need
- Market conditions and commercial viability
- Piecemeal approach and requirements to pool funding
- Funding gaps, inflation, etc.
- Insolvency risks

What can improve infrastructure delivery?

- Strong monitoring and enforcement regime
- Good project planning; co-sourced funding
- Third-party recipient engagement
- Flexible application of s106 contributions

Health Contributions Currently Held

(any year)

Key takeaways:

- £580,800 currently held
- Oldest funds received in 2017
- Funds are predominantly for Banbury area
- Funds not at risk of clawback until 2037

Area	Scheme Narrative	Planning Ref	Contribution	Clawback	Received date	Balance 24/25
Banbury	2 West Bar and 10/11 Horsefair Land at County Chambers	13/00211/F	Health contribution	No (UU)	13/04/2017	£5,349.79
Banbury	Banbury Rise	17/00189/F (13/00444/OUT)	Health Contribution	No	2018 - 2021	£300,618.01
Bicester	Land at Charlotte Avenue (Bicester Eco Village)	19/01036/HYBRID	Health Facility contribution	15 years; 30/05/2037	30/05/2022	£4,910.10
Bicester	Eco Town Exemplar Site Phase 4	21/01227/F	Health Facility Contribution	15 years; 03/08/2037	03/08/2022	£19,955.91
Kidlington	Land on the South East side of Green Road	19/02341/F	Health Care	No	03/08/2022	£1,009.26
Steeple Aston	Land at Sandy Lane	20/01561/F	Primary Care Contribution	No	30/06/2023	£46,272.73
Adderbury	Land on the North side of Berry Hill Road, Adderbury	19/00963/OUT & 22/00969/REM	Healthcare Contribution	No	13/06/2024	£27,692.04
Banbury	Phase 1 Land North & West of Bretch Hill Reservoir Adj to Balmoral Avenue, Banbury	20/01643/OUT & 22/00996/REM	Healthcare Contribution	No	11/09/2024	£56,342.28
Banbury	Brooklands Development Southam Road Banbury"	18/00273/OUT	Healthcare Contribution	No	18/03/2025	£94,961.45
Bicester	Graven Hill	24/02058/F	Primary Health Care Contribution	No (UU)	10/06/2025	£23,760.00
Bodicote	Tappers Farm, Bodicote	18/00792/OUT	Healthcare Contribution	10 years; 17/10/2035	17/10/2025	£20,617.20
						£601,488.77

Health Contributions secured since 2019/20

Key takeaways:

- £600 avg. secured per dwelling since 2021
- 48% of developments since 2021 include health scheme
- Excludes on-site health facility provision (1 qty.)

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FS Year	Total Schemes	Health Schemes	% with Health Scheme	£ total	Dwellings total
2020	13	3	23	£758,792	3394
2021	7	3	43	£334,026	421
2022	9	4	44	£202,810	513
2023	8	4	50	£267,7782	2887
2024	12	7	58	£669,430	1926
2025	10	4	44	£584,064	1624

indicative

Area	Scheme Narrative	Planning Ref	Contribution	Clawback	Received date	Current Balance
Banbury	2 West Bar and 10/11 Horsefair Land at County Chambers	13/00211/F	Health contribution	No (UU)	13/04/2017	£5,349.79
Banbury	Banbury Rise	17/00189/F (13/00444/OUT)	Health Contribution	No	29/07/2018 27/09/2018 29/09/2020 25/03/2021	£300,618.01
Bicester	Land at Charlotte Avenue (Bicester Eco Village)	19/01036/HYBRID	Health Facility contribution	15 years; 30/05/2037	30/05/2022	£4,910.10
Bicester	Eco Town Exemplar Site Phase 4	21/01227/F	Health Facility Contribution	15 years; 03/08/2037	03/08/2022	£19,955.91
Kidlington	Land on the South East side of Green Road	19/02341/F	Health Care	No	03/08/2022	£1,009.26
Steeple Aston	Land at Sandy Lane	20/01561/F	Primary Care Contribution	No	30/06/2023	£46,272.73
Adderbury	Land on the North side of Berry Hill Road, Adderbury	19/00963/OUT & 22/00969/REM	Healthcare Contribution	No	13/06/2024	£27,692.04
Banbury	Phase 1 Land North & West of Bretch Hill Reservoir Adj to Balmoral Avenue, Banbury	20/01643/OUT & 22/00996/REM	Healthcare Contribution	No	11/09/2024	£56,342.28
Banbury	"Brooklands Development OS Parcel 3900 Adjoining Foxhill And West Of Southam Road Banbury"	18/00273/OUT	Healthcare Contribution	No	18/03/2025	£94,961.45
Bicester	"Land to the North of Anniversary Avenue Graven Hill Bicester OX25 2BF"	24/02058/F	Primary Health Care Contribution	No (UU)	10/06/2025	£23,760.00
Bodicote	Tappers Farm, Bodicote	18/00792/OUT	Healthcare Contribution	10 years; 17/10/2035	17/10/2025	£20,617.20
						£601,488.77

Last March 2026

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IFS Year	Planning Ref.	Parish	Location	Description	Dwellings	Contribution Detail	Amount(£)
2020	(13/00321/OUT) 14/01932/OUT	Banbury	OS Parcel 7400 Adjoining And South Of Salt Way Banbury	Outline - Development of up to 1,000 dwellings together with a mixed use local centre [including A1 retail up to 1,000 m2, financial services (A2), restaurants, pubs and takeaways (A3, A4, A5), community uses (D1)]; primary school and safeguarded additional primary school land; secondary school playing field land; green infrastructure including formal (including playing fields) and informal open space, landscape and amenity space; changing and sports facilities (including D2); sustainable drainage systems; highway, cycle and pedestrian routes; car parking; infrastructure (including utilities); engineering works including ground remodelling; demolition, site reclamation and removal of structures. Formation of a new roundabout access from the A361 together with associated alterations to alignment of Bloxham Road and provision of a section of link road through the site up to its eastern-most boundary. ("Wykham Park") Persimmon Homes	1000		
2020	14/02121/OUT	Bicester	Proposed Himley Village North West Bicester, Middleton Stoney Road, Bicester	OUTLINE - Development to provide up to 1,700 residential dwellings (Class C3), a retirement village (Class C2), flexible commercial floorspace (Classes A1, A2, A3, A4, A5, B1, C1 and D1), social and community facilities (Class D1), land to accommodate one energy centre and land to accommodate one new primary school (up to 2FE) (Class D1). Such development to include provision of strategic landscape, provision of new vehicular, cycle and pedestrian access routes, infrastructure and other operations (including demolition of farm buildings on Middleton Stoney Road)	1700	Local Health Contribution	£441,078.22
2020	18/00487/F	Banbury	Land To The Rear Of 7 And 7a, High Street, Banbury	Part three storey, part two storey development of 14 flats with ground floor commercial units, on land to rear on 7 High Street; car parking area to rear accessed from George Street	14		
2020	18/00587/F	Kidlington	Taylor Livock Cowan Suite F Kidlington Centre High Street Kidlington OX5 2DL	The erection of ten residential flats with associated under croft car parking, cycle storage and bin storage	10		
2020	18/00792/OUT	Bodicote	Land At Tappers Farm Oxford Road Bodicote Banbury OX15 4BN	Reserved matters application to 18/00792/OUT - for the demolition of existing buildings and erection of up to 46 no. dwellings, with associated works and provision of open spaces	46	Health Contribution	£41,234.40
2020	18/01206/OUT	Banbury	Broken Furrow Warwick Road Banbury OX17 1HJ	Outline development for up to 46 dwellings including the demolition of existing buildings, structures and associated infrastructure (all matters reserved except the means of access onto Warwick Road).	46		
2020	18/01491/OUT	Shipton-on-Cherwell and	Land Adj To Cotwold Country Club And South Of Properties On Bunkers Hill Shipton On Cherwell	OUTLINE - Demolition of existing club house, bowling club pavilion and ancillary store. Erection of 10 no. dwellings and access improvements (further to outline planning permission 14/02132/OUT, dated 8th April 2016) and having a lesser proposed cumulative floor area than that permission.	10		
2020	18/01569/F	Banbury	Robert Keith Cars Sales Ltd 2 Cherwell Street Banbury OX16 2BB	Redevelopment of site for mixed use development comprising 19 apartments, commercial space and associated cycle and bin storage facilities	19		
2020	18/01882/OUT	Banbury	Land For Proposed Development At Drayton Lodge Farmhouse Warwick Road Banbury	OUTLINE: Residential development, comprising the erection of up to 320 dwellings including affordable housing, together with a local centre of 0.5ha (providing retail and community facilities), landscaping, public open space, playing fields, allotments, access and associated infrastructure.	320	Health Contribution	£276,480.00
2020	18/01894/OUT	Sibford Ferris	Os Parcel 4300 North Of Shortlands And South Of High Rock Hook Norton Road Sibford Ferris	Approval of reserved matters pursuant to condition 1 of planning permission 18/01894/OUT for details of layout, appearance, scale, landscaping, access and parking for 25 dwellings	25		
2020	18/02056/OUT	Ambrosden	Land North Of Merton Road Ambrosden	OUTLINE - Erection of up to 84no dwellings with public open space, landscaping and sustainable drainage system (SuDS) and vehicular access point from Merton Rd - All matters reserved except for means of access - Redrow Homes	84		
2020	19/00446/F	Heyford Park	Heyford Park Camp Road Upper Heyford Bicester OX25 5HD	Erection of up to 57 residential units (Use Class C3) comprising a mix of open market and affordable housing, together with associated works including provision of vehicular and pedestrian accesses, public open space, landscaping, infrastructure and site clearance.	57		
2020	22/01564/OUT	Banbury	Caravan Park, Station Approach, Banbury, OX16 5AB	Development of car park and caravan park to comprise up to 63 apartments all within Use Class C3; provision of vehicular and cycle parking together with all necessary internal roads and footpaths; provision of open space and associated landscape works; and ancillary works and structures (resubmission of 18/00293/OUT)	63		
2021	15/02074/OUT	Bicester	Former Lear Corporation Bessemer Close Bicester	Demolition of existing industrial buildings and erection of 21 affordable dwellings and 49 open market dwellings, with associated new access, open space and landscaping	70		
2021	16/02446/F	Heyford Park	Heyford Park Camp Road Upper Heyford Bicester OX25 5HD	Erection of 296 residential dwellings (Use Class C3) comprising a mix of open market and affordable housing, together with associated works including provision of new and amended vehicular and pedestrian accesses, public open space, landscaping, utilities and infrastructure, and demolition of existing built structures and site clearance works ("Heyford Park Phase 9")	296	Health Facility	Physical Provision
2021	16/02446/F	Heyford Park	Heyford Park Camp Road Upper Heyford Bicester OX25 5HD	Erection of 296 residential dwellings (Use Class C3) comprising a mix of open market and affordable housing, together with associated works including provision of new and amended vehicular and pedestrian accesses, public open space, landscaping, utilities and infrastructure, and demolition of existing built structures and site clearance works ("Heyford Park Phase 9")	296	Health Contribution	£296,296.00

2021	18/02147/OUT	Banbury	Stone Pits Hempton Road Deddington Banbury OX15 0QH	Outline planning application for up to 21 dwellings comprising 1, 2, 3 and 4 bedroom dwellings together with access, garaging and landscaping (all matters reserved except the principal means of access from Hempton Road)	21		
2021	19/02311/OUT	Bicester	Kings End Antiques Kings End Bicester OX26 2AA	10 apartments within a scheme of 2 to 2.5 storeys	10		
2021	19/02444/OUT	Deddington	Land South Of Home Farm House Clifton Road Deddington OX15 0TP	Outline planning permission for the residential development of up to 14 dwellings - all matters save for the means of access are reserved for subsequent approval - revised scheme of 19/00831/OUT ("Clifton Gate superseded") Burrington Estates	14		
2021	20/01561/F	Yarnton	The Ley Community Sandy Lane Yarnton OX5 1PB	Erection of 10no dwellings (C3 Use Class) and Care Home (C2 Use Class), new access, parking, landscaping, demolition and other ancillary works - 376 Estates	10	Health Contribution	£37,730.00
2022	19/00616/OUT	Fritwell	OS Parcel 9507 South Of 26 And Adjoining Fewcott Road Fritwell	The erection of up to 28 dwellings and associated site access onto Fewcott Road. Outline application. All matters reserved except for means of access.	28		
2022	19/00831/OUT	Deddington	Land South Of Home Farm House Clifton Road Deddington	OUTLINE - Residential development of up to 15 dwellings ("Clifton Gate") - Burrington Homes	15	Health Facility Contribution	42336
2022	19/02126/F	Banbury	Phase 3 OS Parcel 5863 Adjacent Briar Close And East Of Warwick Road Banbury	Erection of 36 dwellings with associated infrastructure and public open space	37		
2022	19/02341/F	Kidlington	Kidlington Green Social Club 1 Green Road Kidlington OX5 2EU	Redevelopment to form 32 No apartments for older people (60 years of age and/or partner over 55 years of age), guest apartment, communal facilities, access, car parking and landscaping	32	healthcare contribution	17496
2022	19/02948/F	Steeple Aston	Land To The South And Adj To South Side Steeple Aston	Erection of 10no. two storey residential dwellings with access off South Side including a new pedestrian footway, parking and garaging, landscaping and all enabling and ancillary works	10		
2022	20/00286/F	Hook Norton	Land South And Adj To Cascade Road Hook Norton	Erection of 12no Passivhaus homes along with associated works including community building, landscaping, parking, vehicular and pedestrian accesses	12		
2022	20/00293/OUT	Chesterton	Bicester Gateway Business Park, Wendlebury Road, Chesterton	Outline application (Phase 1B) including access (all other matters reserved) for up to 4,413 sqm B1 office space (47,502 sqft) GIA, up to 273 residential units (Use Class C3) including ancillary gym, approximately 177 sqm GIA of café space (Use Class A3), with an ancillary, mixed use co-working hub (794 sqm/ 8,550 sqft GIA), multi-storey car park, multi-use games area (MUGA), amenity space, associated infrastructure, parking and marketing boards	273	Health and Wellbeing contribution	142200
2022	20/01643/OUT	Banbury	Phase 1 Land North And West Of Bretch Hill Reservoir Adj To, Balmoral Avenue, Banbury	Erection of up to 49 homes, public open space and other infrastructure, with all matters reserved except access - revised scheme of 19/01811/OUT	49		
2022	21/01227/F	Bicester	Bicester Eco Town Exemplar Site, Banbury Road, Bicester	A full planning application for 57 dwellings and associated infrastructure	57	Health Facility Contribution	778.38
2023	16/01268/OUT	Bicester	South East Bicester Wretchwick Way Bicester	Outline application with all matters reserved apart from access for residential development including up to 1,500 dwellings, up to 7ha of employment land, a local centre with retail and community use, up to a 3 Form Entry Primary School and associated facilities.	1500	Healthcare Infrastructure Contribution	1566300
2023	18/00825/HYBRID	Heyford Park	Heyford Park, Camp Road, Upper Heyford, Bicester, OX25 5HD	A hybrid planning application consisting of: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> demolition of buildings and structures as listed in Schedule 1; outline planning permission for up to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> >1,175 new dwellings (Class C3); >60 close care dwellings (Class C2/C3); >929 m2 of retail (Class A1); >670 m2 comprising a new medical centre (Class D1); >35,175 m2 of new employment buildings (Class B1/B2a/B8); >new primary school building on 2.33 ha site (Class D1); >925 m2 of community use buildings (Class D2); >30m in height observation tower with zip-wire with ancillary visitor facilities; >1,000 m2 energy facility/infrastructure (sui generis); >2,520 m2 additional education facilities (Class D1); >creation of areas of Open Space, Sports Facilities, Public Park and other infrastructure. the change of use of the following buildings and areas listed within the schedule the continuation of use of areas, buildings and structures already benefiting from previous planning permissions, as specified in Schedule 2. associated infrastructure works, including surface water attenuation provision and upgrading Chilgrove Drive and the junction with Camp Road. 	1175	Health Facilities Contribution	1010880
2023	19/02350/OUT	Banbury	Land at Deerfields Farm Canal Lane Bodicote	Outline planning permission for up to 26 dwellings including Access	26		
2023	20/02083/OUT	Deddington	Hempton Gate Land North Of Hempton Road And West Of, Wimborn Close, Deddington	Outline - Erection of 14 two-storey dwellings	14		
2023	21/00500/OUT	Hook Norton	Land North Of Railway House Station Road Hook Norton	Erection of up to 43 new homes, access from Station Road and associated works including attenuation pond	43		

2023	21/01278/REM	Deddington	Land South Of Home Farm House Clifton Road Deddington	Reserved Matters application to 19/00831/OUT - (Appearance, Landscaping, Layout and Scale) Application for the erection of 15 dwellings (10 open market dwellings and 5 affordable dwellings)	15		
2023	21/03644/OUT	Banbury	OS Parcel 6372 South East Of Milestone Farm Broughton Road Banbury	Erection of up to 49 dwellings, associated open space, sustainable urban drainage systems, and access from Balmoral Avenue	49	Health Care Infrastructure Contribution	42336
2023	21/04112/OUT	Launton	OS Parcel 2778 Grange Farm North West Of Station Cottage Station Road Launton	Outline application for the erection of up to 65 dwellings, including up to 8 live-work dwellings (use class sui generis), public open space, access, infrastructure and demolition of existing buildings (all matters reserved except principle means of access from Station Road)	65	Oxfordshire Clinical Commissioning Group Contribution	58266
2024	15/01357/F	Heyford Park	Land East Of Larsen Road Heyford Park	Erection of 89 dwellings, creation of new access arrangement from Camp Road, creation of open space, hard and soft landscaping and associated ancillary works and infrastructure	89		
2024	21/01630/OUT	Bicester	Land at North West Bicester Home Farm, Lower Farm and SGR2 Caversfield	Outline planning application for up to 530 residential dwellings (within Use Class C3), open space provision, access, drainage and all associated works and operations including but not limited to demolition, earthworks, and engineering operations, with the details of appearance, landscaping, layout, and scale reserved for later determination	530	Healthcare Contribution	190080
2024	21/03066/OUT	Finmere	Land West Of Chinalls Close Adj To Banbury Road Finmere	OUTLINE application for up to 30 Dwellings and detailed access from Banbury Road, with all other matters reserved	30		
2024	21/03522/OUT	Yarnton & Begbroke	Os Parcel 3673 Adjoining And West Of 161 Rutten Lane Yarnton OX5 1LT	The erection of up to 540 dwellings (Class C3), up to 9,000sqm GEA of elderly/extra care residential floorspace (Class C2), a Community Home Work Hub (up to 200sqm)(Class E), alongside the creation of two locally equipped areas for play, one NEAP, up to 1.8 hectares of playing pitches and amenity space for the William Fletcher Primary School, two vehicular access points, green infrastructure, areas of public open space, two community woodland areas, a local nature reserve, footpaths, tree planting, restoration of historic hedgerow, and associated works. All matters are reserved, save for the principal access points.	540	ICB Contribution	280918.8
2024	21/03523/OUT	Heyford Park	Land At Heyford Grange Letchmere Farm Camp Road Heyford Park	Outline planning application for the erection of up to 31 dwellings, public open space, landscaping, associated parking, vehicular access and ancillary works (all matters reserved except means of access)	31	OCCG Contribution	26784
2024	22/01976/OUT	Ambrosden	OS Parcel 3489 Adjoining And South West Of B4011 Allectus Avenue Ambrosden	Outline Application (except for access) for residential development of up to 75 dwellings including bungalows; open spaces (including children's play space); community woodland and other green space; new vehicular and pedestrian access off Blackthorn Road; and associated landscaping, earthworks, parking, engineering works, demolition, and infrastructure	75	Healthcare Contribution	64800
2024	22/02101/OUT	Banbury	Land Adjoining Withycombe Farmhouse Stratford Road A422 Drayton	Outline planning application for a residential development comprising up to 250 dwellings (with up to 30% affordable housing), public open space, landscaping and associated supporting infrastructure. Means of vehicular access to be determined via Edinburgh Way, with additional pedestrian and cycle connections via Dover Avenue and Balmoral Avenue. Emergency access provision also via Balmoral Avenue. All other matters reserved	250		
2024	22/02104/F	Milcombe	Land To The Rear Of No.12 And South Of Dismantled Railway Heath Close Milcombe OX15 4RZ	Erection of 35 two storey dwelling houses, construction of access off Rye Hill, together with garaging, parking, open space with LAP, landscaping and all enabling works	35	Health Contribution	34848
2024	22/03452/F	Banbury	OS Parcel 6920 East Of Oxford Road And Adjoining And South Of Canal Lane Bodicote	Erection of new 128-bed residential care home (Use Class C2) together with associated access, parking and landscaping	128	Primary Care Infrastructure Contribution	46080
2024	23/00065/OUT	Bloxham	Os Parcel 0006 Adjoining North Side Of Ells Lane Bloxham	Outline planning permission for up to 30 dwellings including access off Ells Lane and demolition of the existing stabling on site - All Matters Reserved except for access	30	Healthcare Contribution	25920
2024	23/00173/OUT	Chesterton	Land South Of Green Lane Chesterton	Outline planning application for up to 147 homes, public open space, flexible recreational playing field area and sports pitches with associated car parking, alongside landscaping, ecological enhancements, SuDs, green/blue and hard infrastructure, with vehicular and pedestrian/cycle accesses, and all associated works (all matters reserved except for means of access)	147		
2024	23/01771/F	Bicester	Former Pakefield House to Fortescue House St Johns Street Bicester OX26 6SL	Redevelopment for retirement living accommodation for older people comprising 41 no retirement apartments including communal facilities, access, car parking and landscaping	41		
2025	19/01047/OUT	Banbury	Land North East Of Oxford Road West Of Oxford Canal And East Of Bankside Banbury	Outline planning application for a residential development of up to 820 dwellings; green infrastructure including formal (playing fields with changing rooms, allotments) and informal open space; landscaping and associated infrastructure including a balancing pond; on land off the A4260, with access off the existing Longford Park access off the A4260 (Oxford Road), and a new access off the A4260 (Banbury Road). All matters of detail reserved, save for access. - Hallam Land Management	820		
2025	21/01966/F	Adderbury	Land To Rear Of Gracewell Care Home, Gardner Way, Adderbury	The erection of 18 dwellings and access road	18		
2025	21/03426/OUT	Banbury	Land Opposite Hanwell Fields Recreation Adj To Dukes Meadow Drive Banbury	Outline planning application for up to 78 dwellings and associated open space with all matters reserved other than access	78		
2025	22/00017/F	Kidlington	1 Bicester 1 Bicester Road Kidlington OX5 2LA	Demolition of existing vehicle showroom and associated garages. Erection of 2 new housing blocks containing total of 15 flats including car parking and ancillary supporting uses with landscaping	15		

2025	22/00203/OUT	Adderbury	Land To Rear Of St Marys House Adj To Henge Close Adderbury Banbury OX17 3GA	Outline application for the erection of up to 10no houses, with all matters reserved except access	10		
2025	22/00747/OUT	Gosford and Water Eaton	Land At Bicester Road Kidlington	Outline planning application for the development of up to 370 homes, public open space (including play areas and woodland planting), sports pitches and pavilion, drainage and engineering works, with all matters reserved (appearance, landscaping, layout and scale) except for vehicular and emergency accesses to Bicester Road.	370	OCCG Contribution	319680
2025	22/02866/OUT	Ambrosden	Land East Of Ploughley Road Ambrosden	OUTLINE planning application for up to 120 dwellings, vehicular and pedestrian access off Ploughley Road, new pedestrian access to West Hawthorn Road, surface water drainage, foul water drainage, landscaping, public open space, biodiversity and associated infrastructure. Access off Ploughley Road is not reserved for future consideration	120	NHS Contribution	103680
2025	22/03063/F	Heyford Park	Land East Of Larsen Road Heyford Park	Erection of 123 dwellings with access from Camp Road, provision of public open space and associated infrastructure.	123	OCCG Contribution	108864
2025	22/03868/OUT	Banbury	Land West Adj To Salt Way And West Of, Bloxham Road, Banbury	Development of up to 60 homes including open space provision, parking, landscaping, drainage and associated works, with All Matters Reserved (appearance, landscaping, layout and scale) except for Access	60	Health Contribution	51840
2025	23/00130/F	Wroxton	Laurels Farm, Dark Lane, Wroxton, Banbury, OX15 6QQ	Demolition of 3no existing barns followed by the erection of 9no new dwellings; conversion and alterations to existing barn to form 1no dwelling; formation of new primary access from Newington Road, parking, landscaping and other associated works	10		

This report is public	
Overview and Scrutiny Committee Annual Report – 2025-26	
Committee	Overview and Scrutiny
Date of Committee	24 March 2026
Portfolio Holder presenting the report	Not applicable as this is a report of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee
Date Portfolio Holder agreed report	N/A
Report of	Assistant Director – Law & Governance/Monitoring Officer

Purpose of report

For the Overview and Scrutiny Committee to consider and approve the draft annual report for 2025-26, for submission to full Council.

1. Recommendations

The Overview and Scrutiny Committee resolves:

- 1.1 To consider and provide feedback on the draft Overview and Scrutiny Committee Annual Report for 2025-26.
- 1.2 To delegate authority to the Assistant Director Law and Governance, in consultation with the Overview and Scrutiny Chair, to finalise the report for submission to full Council.

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

Implications	Commentary
Finance	Signed off on the basis that there are no financial implications – Rachel Ainsworth, FBP for Resources, 11 March 2026.

Legal	<p>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> <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, Assistant Director – Law & Governance/Monitoring Officer, 16 March 2026</p>			
Risk Management	<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 and Insight Team Leader, 12 March 2026</p>			
Impact Assessments	Positive	Neutral	Negative	Commentary
Equality Impact				Not applicable.
A Are there any aspects of the proposed decision, including how it is delivered or accessed, that could impact on inequality?		X		
B Will the proposed decision have an impact upon the lives of people with protected characteristics, including employees and service users?		X		
Climate & Environmental Impact				Not applicable.

ICT & Digital Impact				Not applicable.
Data Impact				Not applicable.
Procurement & subsidy				Not applicable.
Council Priorities	The work of OSC during 2025-26 covered all of the Council's priorities			
Human Resources	N/A			
Property	N/A			
Consultation & Engagement	None			

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 At the time of drafting there is still one formal meeting of the Committee to take place. The Committee are asked to delegate authority to the Assistant Director Law and Governance, in consultation with the Chair, to finalise the report as required for its submission to full 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.

6 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

Key Decision	N/A as not an Executive report
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	Overview and Scrutiny Committee Annual Report 2025-26
Background Papers	None
Reference Papers	None
Report Author	Emma Faulkner, Principal Officer – Scrutiny & Democratic Lead
Report Author contact details	Democracy@cherwell-dc.gov.uk 01295 221534
Corporate Director Approval (unless Corporate Director or Statutory Officer report)	



Cherwell

DISTRICT COUNCIL
NORTH OXFORDSHIRE

Overview and Scrutiny Annual Report 2025/26

DRAFT

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Draft

Foreword

[To be added]

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

Draft

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 six time 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

These items are due for consideration at the March meeting of the Committee, and will have details added after that meeting:

- *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.

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

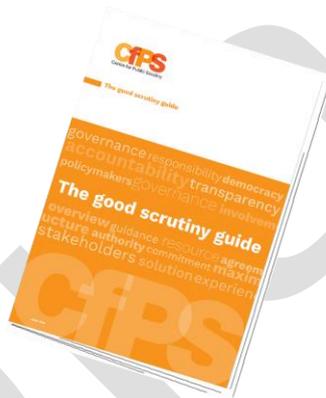
- 3.20. The Committee will continue to track progress and outcomes of the various recommendations during the 2026-27 Municipal Year.

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.

Membership of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee

Councillor David Rogers (Chairman)
Councillor Dr Isabel Creed (Vice-Chairman)
Councillor Gordon Blakeway
Councillor John Broad
Councillor Phil Chapman
Councillor Gemma Coton
Councillor Frank Ideh
Councillor Harry Knight
Councillor Simon Lytton
Councillor Lynne Parsons
Councillor Dom Vaitkus
Councillor Barry Wood

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

Email: democracy@cherwell-dc.gov.uk

Draft

Cherwell District Council

March 2026

www.cherwell.gov.uk

Indicative Overview and Scrutiny Work Programme 2026-27

(Updated: 13 March 2026)

Items allocated to specific meeting dates		
9 June 2026		
Year end Performance Monitoring 2025/26	Performance Monitoring To consider the year end performance report, with a focus on amber / red indicators, and provide comments to the Executive.	Celia Prado-Teeling, Performance and Insight Team Leader Portfolio Holder for Corporate Services, Councillor Chris Brant
Work Programme Planning for 2026-2027	The Chair, Assistant Director – Law and Governance/Monitoring Officer and the Principal Officer – Scrutiny and Democratic Lead will facilitate a discussion on work programme planning for the 2026-2027 Municipal Year.	Shiraz Sheikh, Assistant Director Law & Governance/Monitoring Officer, Emma Faulkner, Principal Officer – Scrutiny and Democratic Lead
28 July		
Graven Hill	Holding Executive to Account/External Scrutiny Review of previous year's performance and monitoring of Phase 2 implementation. Annual item	Stephen Hinds, Shareholder Representative Leader & Portfolio Holder for Strategic Leadership, Councillor David Hingley
Tracking of Recommendations to Executive	Holding Executive to Account Following Executive's response to four sets of recommendations from the Committee during 2025-26, an update on implementation of recommendations to be submitted for information	Emma Faulkner, Principal Officer – Scrutiny and Democratic Lead



8 September		
Quarter One (April to June) Performance Monitoring Report	Performance Monitoring To consider the Quarter one performance report, with a focus on amber / red indicators, and provide comments to the Executive.	Celia Prado-Teeling, Performance and Insight Team Leader Portfolio Holder for Corporate Services, Councillor Chris Brant
13 October		
17 November		
Quarter Two (July to September) Performance Monitoring Report	Performance Monitoring To consider the Quarter two performance report, with a focus on amber / red indicators, and provide comments to the Executive.	Celia Prado-Teeling, Performance and Insight Team Leader Portfolio Holder for Corporate Services, Councillor Chris Brant
15 December		
26 January 2027		
23 March		
Overview and Scrutiny Committee Annual Report	To consider the draft annual report of the Committee, prior to submission to full Council	Emma Faulkner, Principal Officer – Scrutiny and Democratic Lead
Quarter Three (October to December)	Performance Monitoring To consider the Quarter three performance report, with	Celia Prado-Teeling, Performance and Insight Team Leader

Performance Monitoring Report	a focus on amber / red indicators, and provide comments to the Executive.	Portfolio Holder for Corporate Services, Councillor Chris Brant
Corporate Performance and Insight Strategy	To consider and make comments / recommendations to Executive on the draft strategy for 2027-2028 prior to Executive adoption.	Celia Prado-Teeling, Performance and Insight Team Leader Portfolio Holder for Corporate Services, Councillor Chris Brant
Items to be discussed/allocated		
Area Oversight Groups	Executive authorised the establishment of non-decision making Area Oversight Groups (AOGs) in November 2024. This item would be an overview of their work to date.	
Local Government Reform update	External Scrutiny Update to Committee on progress of LGR proposals	
Lessons Learnt from Kidlington Illegal Landfill	External Scrutiny To review lessons learnt from the recent illegal landfill at Kidlington, with the Environment Agency invited to attend	Tim Hughes, Head of Regulatory Services and Community Safety Kristian Aspinall, Executive Director Neighbourhood Services Councillor Ian Middleton, Portfolio Holder for Neighbourhood Services
Cherwell Futures Programme (may feed into Local Government Reorganisation and Budget Planning)	Holding the Executive to account. To consider regular updates on the Cherwell Futures Programme	Stephen Hinds, Executive Director Resources Charlene Greenaway, Transformation Programme Manager Leader & Portfolio Holder for Strategic Leadership, Councillor David Hingley

<p>Action Plans stemming from Planning and Development To include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • PAS Review • Merton College PR9 Site Appeal • Housing Delivery Action Plan (as discussed at 3.6.25 Committee) 	<p>Holding the Executive to account Multiple items across the year; Scrutinising implementation of the various action plans. Full detailed report on each action plan.</p>	<p>David Peckford, Assistant Director Planning & Paul Seckington, Head of Development Management Portfolio Holder for Planning and Development Management, Councillor Jean Conway</p>
<p>Police and Crime Commissioner and Chief Constable Thames Valley Police Attendance</p>	<p>External Scrutiny - Annual recurring item To fulfil the Council's requirement regarding crime and disorder scrutiny to review or scrutinise decisions made, or other action taken, in connection with the discharge by the responsible authorities of their crime and disorder functions no less than once in every twelve-month period. All Members are invited to attend the meeting. Annual item</p>	<p>Kristian Aspinall, Executive Director Neighbourhood Services Portfolio Holder for Healthy and Safe Communities, Councillor Rob Pattenden</p>
<p>Year end Performance Monitoring 2026/27</p>	<p>Performance Monitoring To consider the year end performance report, with a focus on amber / red indicators, and provide comments to the Executive.</p>	<p>Celia Prado-Teeling, Performance and Insight Team Leader Portfolio Holder for Corporate Services, Councillor Chris Brant</p>

Meeting dates 2025-26 (All Tuesday 6:30pm unless indicated)

9 June; 28 July; 8 September; 13 October; 17 November; 15 December; 26 January; 23 March

Members are reminded of the five roles of scrutiny when considering items for the work programme: Performance Monitoring; Policy Development; Policy Review; Holding the Executive to Account; External Scrutiny
The Executive Forward Plan is [published on the Cherwell District Council website monthly](#).



Cherwell District Council

Overview and Scrutiny Guidance

May 2025

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

It builds upon the Cherwell Council Scrutiny Guide February 2025.

Agreed by the Council on 21 May 2025.

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 - Departmental Officers
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- 4. Work Planning**
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- 16. Further resources and reviewing and updating of this guide**

1. Introduction

What is Overview and Scrutiny?

- 1.1. Overview and Scrutiny is a key part of local authority decision making governance arrangements. It was introduced by the Local Government Act 2000 which created separate Executive and Overview and Scrutiny functions within local authorities, with an Executive making executive Key Decisions, Overview and Scrutiny Committees to provide a check and accountability and provide an opportunity for non-Executive Members to make reports and recommendations to the Executive and a full Council that sets the overall policy and budgetary framework.
- 1.2. Councils operating executive decision making arrangements are required to create one or more Overview and Scrutiny Committees made up of councillors who are not members of the Executive,
- 1.3. Cherwell District Council operates an Executive/Cabinet and scrutiny decision making model, which is broadly, conceptually, based on the Westminster Parliamentary model, which has a government Cabinet executive and parliamentary select committees.
- 1.4. The purpose of Overview and Scrutiny is to ensure that decision-making in local government is transparent, accountable and provides an opportunity for non-executive Members of the Council to contribute to policy making and review. The scrutiny process should help to ensure that all decisions are taken in the interests of the residents of Cherwell.
- 1.5. Scrutiny committees are led by elected Members of the Council, which provides them with a particular democratic mandate and legitimacy.
- 1.6. Scrutiny committees are independent and hold the Executive to account by acting as a “critical friend”, as well as providing a vehicle for the wider membership of the Council to contribute to policy development and review.
- 1.7. Overview and Scrutiny committees have the power to consider any issue which “affects the area or the area’s inhabitants” and to examine cross-cutting issues and context to local decision making, including local partnerships and community wellbeing.
- 1.8. Overview and Scrutiny committees may:
 - require information that is held by the Council (with councillors sitting on overview and scrutiny committees having particular rights to access certain information - for example, information that might be commercially confidential),
 - require attendance at committee meetings by Executive members and Council officers,
 - require from the Executive responses to recommendations made by scrutiny committees.

What are the aims of scrutiny?

- 1.9. At Cherwell District Council the aims of scrutiny are:
- *To contribute to ongoing service improvement*
 - *To hold the Executive to account on behalf of local residents*
 - *To contribute to policy development and review through scrutiny reports and recommendations to the Executive.*
- 1.10. Scrutiny meets these aims by carrying out independent scrutiny inquiries and reviews of Council and community policies and services. These are carried out either as a full Committee or by a small group of Members in a time-limited scrutiny working group.

What are the benefits of scrutiny?

- 1.11. Overview and Scrutiny should help to drive improvement and accountability in local government through the democratic and governance process. It can also help to build a more inclusive decision making process by involving non-executive members, as well as community partner organisations and local people.

How does scrutiny work at Cherwell?

- 1.12. Every local authority is required to put in place arrangements for Overview and Scrutiny; however the particular arrangements for this is for the individual authority to decide. In Cherwell, scrutiny undertakes the majority of its scrutiny inquiries through the main Overview and Scrutiny Committee, but also via a combination of scrutiny working groups and spotlight reviews.
- 1.13. Cherwell Council has one Overview and Scrutiny Committee (OSC), established by the Council, to carry out the Overview and Scrutiny function.
- 1.14. The OSC is politically proportionate and meets roughly six times a year. The Committee may consider any policy issue across the range of Council services or which affect the wellbeing of the local community. This includes services provided by, or on behalf of the Council; or by external agencies. Scrutiny can consider the impact of Council policies and decisions and outcomes for residents.
- 1.15. It may consider issues before the Executive makes a decision (“pre-decision scrutiny”) and also has the power to Call In any Executive Decision made by the Executive or delegated to an officer, for review.
- 1.16. Regulatory decisions, i.e. those relating to planning or licensing applications, are not within the remit of OSC.
- 1.17. Section 5 of the OSC Constitution provides more detail on the specific functions of Committee.

2. Advice and Support to Scrutiny Committees

- 2.1. Scrutiny committees also receive professional advice from council chief officers and directorates according to their purview. In particular scrutiny committees may draw upon the advice and support of the Council's statutory officers, including the Monitoring Officer, Chief Finance Officer and Chief Executive.
- 2.2. In addition, Overview and Scrutiny committees receive advice and administrative support from the Democracy and Elections Team.
- 2.3. Scrutiny committees may also be allocated with support from one or more Scrutiny Officers, to provide specialist advice and support on the scrutiny process and provide practical support in drafting scrutiny reports and recommendations, preparing briefings, drafting report requests and acting as an interlocutor between scrutiny committees, the Executive and council departments.

The Monitoring Officer

- 2.4. The Monitoring Officer is the statutory officer responsible for the legal governance of a local authority. As such, this includes providing advice and support on the Council's Constitution, governance and decision making arrangements and relationships, including Overview and Scrutiny.

Scrutiny Officers

- 2.5. Scrutiny officers provide professional impartial advice and support to members of the scrutiny committees leading up to a scrutiny meeting, during the meeting itself and subsequently. They can advise on the scrutiny process, as well as support with analysis and desk research on items being considered by scrutiny and assist in developing questions to witnesses, scrutiny reports and scrutiny recommendations for agreement by the committee.

Democratic Services Officers

- 2.6. The scrutiny committees may also be allocated committee support from the Democracy and Elections Team. Democratic Service Officers provide specialist committee advice and support on committee procedures and provide the committee administration, including agenda preparation, agenda and reports publication, drafting and publishing committee minutes and following up on matters arising from committee meetings. Democratic Service Officers work closely with scrutiny officers to ensure the smooth running of the committee and scrutiny processes.

Departmental Officers

- 2.7. Senior Council officers for each department provide expert advice and support on Council services within their purview, this includes advice and support to Overview

and Scrutiny Committees when scrutiny committees are considering matters within their departmental and service area.

- 2.8. Council departmental officers provide advice and information on issues being considered by Scrutiny to ensure that Scrutiny Members have access to the information and expert advice they need to understand issues they are considering. In the scrutiny process they are key “expert witnesses”, being responsible for the delivery of Council policy and services and also being experts in their respective areas.
- 2.9. Council departments provide information reports to scrutiny committees and other information requested, for matters being considered by the Overview and Scrutiny Committee and its Scrutiny Working Groups. In addition to information requests made ahead of or during a committee, senior officers should review the Annual Scrutiny Work Programme to anticipate reports requested to be provided to scrutiny committees and the deadlines for reports.
- 2.10. Because Council officers also advise and support the Executive and because senior officers also manage services and make decisions (including Key Decisions where delegated to them), their role is also part of supporting Executive accountability by answering questions in committee, along with the Executive.

3. Appointing the Chairman and Vice-Chairman

- 3.1. A special meeting of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee will be scheduled as soon as possible after the Annual Council Meeting, when committee appointments have been approved, to allow the Overview and Scrutiny Committee to consider any proposals for the appointment of Chairman and Vice Chairman from among its members. Any member of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee may stand to be elected for these positions and any member may propose (and second a proposal) for any other member for to make their case for being appointment as Chairman and Vice Chairman, so long as those persons accept the nomination.
- 3.2. Prior to the meeting, those wishing to stand for Chairman Vice Chairman will have an opportunity address fellow committee members, explaining their reasons for being considered for the role(s). This is also an opportunity for any member wishing to propose another member of the Committee to explain their reasons for the proposal. The expectation is that an informal session will take place shortly before the formal Committee meeting to facilitate discussions between members who wish to be considered for the role of Chairman and Vice Chairman.
- 3.3. The Chairman of OSC has a responsibility for establishing the profile of the committee, its influence across the council and its ways of working, as well as ensuring that the scrutiny process is managed in a fair and balanced environment, is free from political point scoring and allows for effective scrutiny of all issues presented for consideration. Members putting themselves forward for the role may wish to use these points as guidance for the basis of their discussions with the committee.

- 3.4. Committee members will have the opportunity to ask questions of the prospective chairs and vice-chairs before the formal meeting.
- 3.5. The appointment of Chairman will normally take place at the first formal meeting of the Committee in the usual way.
- 3.6. The Monitoring Officer or his representative will call for nominations to the position of Chairman of the Committee, with seconders as appropriate. Voting will take place for each nominated candidate, via a show of hands, in line with section 4, paragraph 4.26 of the Constitution, with steps repeated as necessary until one candidate is successful.
- 3.7. The newly appointed Chairman will then take the Chair, and preside over the appointment of the Vice Chairman, which will follow the same process. Once the Vice Chairman has been appointed, the meeting will be brought to a close.
- 3.8. *Note – those wishing to stand as Chairman/Vice Chairman will be expected to attend in person.*

4. Work Planning

- 4.1. Scrutiny committees should plan their work carefully throughout the year to ensure that the scrutiny process can be effective. At Cherwell Council this includes development of an Annual Scrutiny Work Programme of issues that will be considered throughout the year through its main committee and through commissioned scrutiny working groups, as well as planning ahead of scrutiny committee meetings to plan out the objectives, key information required, key lines of enquiry and possible outcomes for each scrutiny topic.
- 4.2. There are normally six formal committee meetings scheduled throughout the year. In addition, OSC can appoint working groups to carry out detailed research and inquiries on behalf of the formal Committee (as detailed in Constitution section 4a)

The Annual Scrutiny Work Programme

- 4.3. Each year the scrutiny committees consider and agree a programme of work for the municipal year ahead, after considering what the key issues facing the Council and local community where consideration by a scrutiny committee might add value are. Usually, the work programme is for the municipal year period following the Annual Council Meeting, from June to May the following year.
- 4.4. Each year, in drawing up the Annual Scrutiny Work Programme, there is held an informal planning session, where members of the scrutiny committees may consider and discuss proposed topics for inclusion on the work programmes.
- 4.5. This informal session with members of the scrutiny committee allows for the committee to consider key background information and to consult the relevant

Council directorates and other stakeholders on the key issues for the Council and community partners that may usefully be considered by the scrutiny committees and to identify:

- the main topics for consideration throughout the year,
 - the purpose and scope of each topic
 - when each topic should be considered, and
 - which departments, external agencies and expert witnesses should be called as witnesses to provide evidence.
- 4.6. The identified topics can then be developed into a work programme for the scrutiny committee that can be agreed by the next formal meeting of the committee, reported to full Council and used to plan the meetings of the committees throughout the year ahead.

Topic Selection and Prioritisation

- 4.7. Initial subjects for consideration will be requested from members of the Committee at a work programme planning session, with committee members given the opportunity to suggest subjects for inclusion on the Annual Scrutiny Work Programme.
- 4.8. Scrutiny members should consider key background information for the Council and the District to help prioritise and scope its Work Programme topics. This includes key strategic documents such as:
- Cherwell District Council Corporate Plan
 - the Annual Delivery Plan priorities,
 - Cherwell District Council Residents' Survey
 - Annual Corporate Performance reports
 - Budget Performance reports
 - The Executive Forward Plan.
- 4.9. An important document the Committee may wish to refer to during the planning session is the Executive Forward Plan (also known as the Executive work programme), the statutory document that is published on a monthly basis covering a rolling four-month period. More detailed information on the requirements of the Forward Plan can be found in section 6 of the Constitution, paragraph 6.1.
- 4.10. OSC may find it useful to refer to the latest version of the Forward Plan throughout the year, as well as during the work programme planning session, to consider upcoming items for the Executive and whether they would benefit from detailed discussion by OSC.
- 4.11. The OSC should prioritise possible issues carefully to ensure that only a manageable amount of issues are selected for consideration throughout the year; eg no more than twelve substantive issues and ensure that the issues selected are of significance to the Council and local residents and where consideration by the scrutiny committee can add value to the decision making process.

- 4.12. The OSC should be clear on the purpose of consideration by the scrutiny committee. Broadly there are two main rationales for scrutiny review, either:
- To provide accountability – eg performance reports and reviews,
 - Policy development and review – considering policy and service areas before a decision by the Executive – eg “pre-decision scrutiny”.
- 4.13. The proposed Work Programme needs to balance issues throughout the year and ensure that these are timely, appropriate and when scrutiny review can be effective, eg when a policy or service review reaches maturation, when information becomes available and ahead of when the Executive will make a decision on the issue (so that the Executive may receive recommendations from the OSC).
- 4.14. The OSC should review proposed issues for the Annual Scrutiny Work Programme to ensure that work of the Committee remains timely, adds value and does not duplicate activity already underway or undertaken by external regulators.
- 4.15. After the planning session, the Chairman and Vice Chairman will meet with officers from the Democratic and Elections Team to consider which subjects will be taken forward for the formal Annual Scrutiny Work Programme and what style of scrutiny (see the options below) would best suit each subject. The proposed Annual Scrutiny Work Programme will be presented to OSC at the next meeting for approval.
- 4.16. The OSC should review the Annual Scrutiny Work Programme throughout the year to ensure that work of the Committee remains timely, adds value and does not duplicate activity already underway or undertaken by external regulators. The working group scoping document ensures that the key questions that members want to address are listed.
- 4.17. The Chairman of the Committee will be responsible for allocating the Committee’s time to each work programme item, to ensure the best approach to each subject.

“Scrutiny members should accept that shortlisting can be difficult; scrutiny committees have finite resources and deciding how these are best allocated is tough. They should understand that if work programming is robust and effective there might well be issues that they want to look at that nonetheless are not selected.”

Statutory Scrutiny Guidance 2024

How do Committees choose what to scrutinise?

- 4.18. The OSC should ensure that it consults key stakeholders in developing its Annual Scrutiny Work Programme, particularly the main departments and chief officers of the Council and the Executive. Additionally, suggestions can be received from partner organisations or the public.
- 4.19. Effective scrutiny requires a balanced work programme, which examines the most important challenges facing the district and responds to the concerns of residents.

- 4.20. It is important to remember that scrutiny is an independent member-led process and it is ultimately the responsibility of the Chairman and the committee to determine what is scrutinised and when. This should, however, be based upon officer advice.
- 4.21. The *Criteria for selecting scrutiny topics* Guidance Note explains some of the key factors in determining whether an issue should be scrutinised.
- 4.22. Here are a few key points to remember when choosing subjects to scrutinise:
- It is not possible to scrutinise everything that might be suggested. Therefore, a rigorous approach should be taken to prioritising which topics are to be scrutinised.
 - thinking about the work of commissioned organisations and the monitoring other public bodies, and how scrutiny inquiries should involve and engage external witnesses and partner organisations
 - The Committees have to be realistic about what can effectively be scrutinised and needs to be prepared to say 'No' to some suggestions and be able to explain why they will not be scrutinised.
 - It is also important to consider what the best method to deal with any given scrutiny topic is. The choice may depend on the nature of the activity and the capacity of members and officers to conduct further topic groups within the suggested timeframe.
- ❖ If necessary, further items can be added to the work programme during the year, with additional meetings between the Chairman, Vice Chairman and officers being scheduled as necessary.

What methods are there to conducting scrutiny?

- 4.23. Overview and Scrutiny can use a range of different approaches depending on the issue being scrutinised. An important part of the work planning process is deciding on how a topic will be examined. Using the full range of methods open to it, scrutiny will be able to mix in-depth and searching inquiries with concise and effective reviews.
- 4.24. Here are some examples of different methods open to committee, some of which are discussed in more detail below:
- Whole committee scrutiny working groups
 - Scrutiny working groups with other non-executive Members of the Council
 - Single issue meetings ("Spotlight Reviews")
 - Calling witnesses or experts to provide specific information to members at committee
 - Site visits.

5. Scrutiny Pre-Meetings and Agenda Planning

- 5.1. There are normally six meetings of the OSC in each municipal year. Ahead of the main meeting, but after the formal agenda and reports have been published, an

informal meeting of the committee members may be held with the scrutiny officer to plan the key lines of enquiry, questions and possible outcomes for each item, which may include considering possible draft conclusions and recommendations from the committee.

Scrutiny Planning Meetings

- 5.2. Before the start of each formal meeting, an informal meeting of the committee may also be held to organise the key questions and possible outcomes for each item.
- 5.3. The agenda for the informal pre-meetings should include:
 - Introduction by the Chairman (setting out the purpose of the meeting)
 - Briefing on the Meeting Plan – including main agenda items, key witnesses for each item, proposed agenda timetable etc
 - Key Questions in Committee – prioritisation, rationalisation and allocation of questions for each agenda item.
 - Possible Outcomes – including key consultation and scrutiny recommendations. Key questions need to be included for these to ensure that they are evidence based.
- 5.4. These informal meetings can be important to making the scrutiny process effective, as they provide an opportunity for members of the committee to get organised in considering the key information they need to find out, organising their questions for the main meeting and considering possible outcomes from the meeting, such as proposed key conclusions and recommendations. Attendance and participation in these meetings is therefore highly encouraged.
- 5.5. There should be a clear rationale and agenda for the pre-meetings so that it is clear to members what the meetings are for. The meeting also provide an important opportunity for the Chairman and scrutiny officers to discuss the approaches, meeting plan and outcomes with the members of the committee.
- 5.6. These meetings should pay particular attention to the possible key conclusions, observations and recommendations to the Executive which may arise in the main meeting. It can be very challenging to develop appropriate conclusions and scrutiny recommendations in the formal meeting, so this is an important opportunity to consider how these might be framed and worded.
- 5.7. Scrutiny recommendations should be clearly addressed to the relevant decision maker (eg the Executive), and SMART (specific measurable, achievable, realistic and time based). They also need to be clearly linked to evidence received in the report and in questions, so links back to planning the key questions. This usually requires some consideration and forethought.

“Good preparation is a vital part of conducting effective evidence sessions. Members should have a clear idea of what the committee hopes to get out of each session and appreciate that success will depend on their ability to work together on the day.”

Statutory Scrutiny Guidance 2024

Scrutiny Briefing Plans

- 5.8. Ahead of each meeting, the scrutiny officer will normally provide a short briefing on the meeting, including the expected participants, the items being considered, along with any suggested considerations for the committee. The scrutiny officer will normally provide a specific briefing for the Chair of the committee to provide additional guidance on the main stages and directives from the chair.
- 5.9. The scrutiny officer may also provide advice on suggested key lines of enquiry and suggested questions to witnesses, which may be discussed in committee.

6. Options and Approaches for Scrutiny Reviews

Single item on a committee agenda

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

At a single meeting - ‘Spotlight Review’

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

A Scrutiny Working Group - ‘light touch’ review (eg two or three meetings)

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

A Scrutiny Working Group - longer-term - ‘full length’ review

- 6.4. Multiple meetings spread over a number of months. This is most appropriate when scrutiny needs to dig into a complex topic in significant detail. This may be suited to the most complex subjects, due to the length of time and wider resource implications for a long review.

7. Scrutiny Working Groups

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

- 7.2. For this reason each review starts with the completion of a scoping template (see *Scrutiny Working Group Inquiry Scoping Document template*) which outlines the key lines of enquiry,, outcomes and constraints, time- scale, key sources of information and principal witnesses.
- 7.3. At its meeting, the working group will hear from a range of witnesses and the lead officer. Depending on the topic, this may include expert witnesses and stakeholders, service users, managers and the relevant executive member/s.
- 7.4. Councillor questioning skills are a significant element of scrutiny and the quality of the questions is instrumental to achieving clear outcomes and strong recommendations.
- 7.5. A short report on the scrutiny inquiry undertaken, its findings, key witnesses and evidence considered and scrutiny recommendations (and the evidence to substantiate those recommendations) is referred to the OSC for ratification and agreement and then published.. The relevant Executive member is required to respond to the report and its recommendations within two months. Six months following the scrutiny, the OSC will monitor implementation of the recommendations.

8. 'Call In' of Executive Decisions

- 8.1. The Local Government Act 2000 allows Overview and Scrutiny Committees to Call In any Executive Key Decision for review (these are Key Decisions taken by the Executive or a key decision made by officers, but not yet implemented).
- 8.2. Unless it meets exemption criteria (detailed in paragraph 13.1 of Part 4a the Constitution), any Executive or officer Key Decision can be called in by noon within four working days of publication of a Key Decision made by the Executive or by an officer (Executive decisions will be published as soon as practicable after the Executive meeting). A key decision can be called in for scrutiny by five Non-Executive members specifying the reason or reasons for the proposed Call In review.
- 8.3. A meeting of OSC will be held within 10 working days. Implementation of the decisions will be delayed while OSC meets and considers the decision.
- 8.4. One of the councillors who submitted the Call In notice are expected to address the committee and, for Key Decisions made by Executive, the relevant Executive Member will respond on behalf of the Executive.
- 8.5. Having reviewed the decision, OSC can:
 - a) Let the decision stand (take no further action).
 - b) Refer the decision back to the Executive or officer (as the case may be) for re-consideration, stating its concerns and the decision that the Committee wish the decision taker to make.
 - c) Determine if the reviewed decision is contrary to the policy framework or to the budget; and in which case refer the matter to Full Council for consideration.
Decisions referred for further consideration remain suspended until redetermined.

- 8.6. Call In should not be used on an issue that has previously been considered by OSC.
- 8.7. *Sections 13 to 17 of the OSC Constitution give more detailed information and guidance on the call-in process at Cherwell.*

9. Access to Information and Reports

- 9.1. A scrutiny committee needs access to relevant information the authority holds and to receive it in good time, if it is to do its job effectively. This need is recognised in law, with members of scrutiny committees enjoying powers to access information¹
- 9.2. Scrutiny committees normally access information through requesting officer reports to committee for items on the agenda and may also request information at a meeting of the committee.
- 9.3. Where the committee makes requests for information in committee, this is normally made available to all members of the committee thereafter. This should be done before or at the next meeting of the committee.

Report Requests

- 9.4. There is a general expectation that officers will provide a written report for items on a scrutiny committee agenda. There is a standard format for this, which should provide the main information pertinent to the matter under consideration. Scrutiny members should expect this standard report be made available to the committee and not simply a PowerPoint presentation slides.
- 9.5. The general expectation is that reports will be made available to a committee upon request with a reasonable notice period, sometimes at relatively short notice. However, scrutiny members should also be aware of the time it can take to prepare a formal report and also the Council's operational report clearance processes and make report request in good time to allow for this.
- 9.6. The report also needs to be available at least five "clear days" ahead of the meeting as a minimum to meet the statutory publication deadlines. Deadlines for reports should normal b provided with the report requests. The deadline for final reports will usually be at least ten days ahead of a meeting to allow time for compilation and publication within the statutory deadlines.

¹ Regulation 17 - Local Authorities (Executive Arrangements) (Meetings and Access to Information) (England) Regulations 2012; article 10 Combined Authorities (Overview and Scrutiny Committees, Regulation 17 - Local Authorities (Executive Arrangements) (Meetings and Access to Information) (England) Regulations 2012; article 10 Combined Authorities (Overview and Scrutiny Committees, Access to Information and Audit Committees) Order 2017.
↪ [The Local Authorities \(Executive Arrangements\) \(Meetings and Access to Information\) \(England\) Regulations 2012](#)

- 9.7. As far as practicable, five to six weeks before a meeting of the committee, a report request is submitted by the scrutiny officer to the relevant department, which provides a still brief but more detailed scope of the topic and the key information to be addressed in the report. This is normally drawn up by the scrutiny officer in consultation with the Chairman of the committee.
- 9.8. This should be used by the department to guide the preparation of any requested reports to the committee.
- 9.9. The report requests should include the subject for consideration, the purpose of the inquiry, the key lines of enquiry being addressed, the relevant Executive Member and directorate, any external witnesses anticipated and the deadline date for submission of any papers for publication with the agenda, (which must be at least 5 “clear days” before the meeting). Normally, a draft copy of the report will be requested for at a week before the final report deadline to allow the Chairperson of the scrutiny committee to review the draft report.

Scrutiny Agenda Publication

- 9.10. Scrutiny agendas and papers must be published five clear days in advance of the meeting and are published on the Council website.

10. Questions in Committee

- 10.1. Members of scrutiny committees will put questions to witnesses in committee, including to Executive Members, council officers and external witnesses. Putting the right questions in a scrutiny committee can be key to ensuring that the scrutiny process is effective in obtaining evidence in support of scrutiny recommendations and in providing focused accountability. Scrutiny Members need to be careful however that questions are focused and strategic towards the objectives of the scrutiny inquiry being undertaken.
- 10.2. Broadly, the purpose of questions in committee is either:
 - To hold the executive to account,
 - To better understand the area under consideration,
 - To seek information to inform the development of any proposals (scrutiny recommendations) or conclusions drawn from the matter under consideration.
- 10.3. Questions from the committee may be put in committee without any advance notice and answered in committee.
- 10.4. Questions from members of the committee may be sent to the scrutiny officer or collated ahead of the meeting, and with the permission of the members of the committee, submitted to the department, may provide for a more considered or extensive answers in committee, but such questions are still to be put and answered at the meeting, along with any supplementary information made available in response.

11. Scrutiny Reports and Recommendations

- 11.1. The main statutory role of scrutiny committees is the power to make reports and recommendations to the Executive. Scrutiny recommendations may be made in committee to the Executive or other local decision makers. The Executive has a statutory duty to respond to scrutiny reports and recommendations made.
- 11.2. Scrutiny reports and recommendations may be drawn up in advance, with the advice and support of a scrutiny officer, sometimes through a Scrutiny Working Group. Scrutiny reports and recommendations are agreed by resolution of the committee in committee.
- 11.3. The resolutions of the committee should be put to the committee verbatim by the Chair (or through the clerk or scrutiny officer in assisting the Chair), or tabled in written form (such as on an officer report with officer recommendations). Such proposed resolutions may then be debated and amended before being resolved upon. Scrutiny recommendations may also include those made in scrutiny reports agreed in committee (e.g. through Scrutiny Working Groups).
- 11.4. Consideration should be given before and during the meeting as to how scrutiny recommendations should be worded so that they are worded in the most meaningful and effective way. The wording of scrutiny recommendations should be framed in such a way as to provide possible executive decisions if agreed by the Cabinet (or other decision maker).
- 11.5. As far as possible, scrutiny recommendations should be SSMART – Strategic, Specific, Measurable, Achievable and Time-based.
- 11.6. What is the best way to make sure our recommendations are implemented?
- 11.7. A scrutiny inquiry will conclude by making recommendations to decision-making bodies, such as the Council's Executive.
- 11.8. The following tips can help ensure that scrutiny recommendations are implemented:
 - Recommendations that are specific, strategic, substantive, achievable and few in number:
 - Recommendations based on logical argument drawing on evidence.
 - Ensure those responsible for implementing recommendations are asked about what the feasibility of proposed recommendations and can suggest modifications in evidence if that is going to make it more likely that the recommendation will be implemented.
 - Recommendations will be drawn up and presented clearly by the working group as part of its final report. Executive, via the appropriate Executive member, will provide a response to all recommendations explaining the reasons for accepting or not accepting any of the recommendations.
 - Implementation of recommendations should then be monitored.

12. The Executive Response

- 12.1. Once a scrutiny committee has resolved to make a report and/or recommendations to the Executive, the scrutiny report and/or recommendations are referred to the Executive (or other decision maker) for an Executive Response.
- 12.2. The Scrutiny Officer will prepare an officer cover report to the Executive or Executive Member (as appropriate) to present the scrutiny report or recommendations and once this is authorised for publication by the Monitoring Officer, will be placed upon the agenda of the Executive. This serves as the formal notice to the Executive of a scrutiny report or recommendations . This notice must require the Executive to respond within two months of receiving the report notice.
- 12.3. Where a scrutiny report or recommendations are referred to the Executive, at the relevant meeting of the Executive, the Chairman of the OSC relevant Scrutiny Working Group will be permitted, at the discretion of the Chairman of Executive (the Leader), to briefly address Executive to provide a brief oral summary report on the key findings and scrutiny reports and recommendations being made, requesting an Executive Response to any reports and recommendations made.
- 12.4. It is a statutory duty of the Executive to respond a scrutiny committee:
 - (a) to consider the report or recommendations,
 - (b) to respond to the scrutiny committee indicating what (if any) action the authority, or the executive, proposes to take,
 - (c) if the overview and scrutiny committee has published the report or recommendations, to publish the response.

<http://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2000/22/section/9FE>

- 12.5. The Executive Response is made at a formal meeting of Executive (or other decision making body), by formal resolution.
- 12.6. The draft Executive Response should be drawn up in advance by the relevant department, in consultation with the relevant decision maker. The Executive Response should provide clear executive decisions for each scrutiny recommendation.
- 12.7. The Executive Response should be drafted in such a way as to provide clarity on whether the scrutiny recommendation is agreed or rejected, or if an alternative course will be agreed, the relevant portfolio holder (Executive member), the implementing department and when the agreed actions and decisions will be implemented.
- 12.8. The Executive must respond **within two months** beginning with the date on which it received the notice of the scrutiny report or recommendations.

13. Scrutiny Review of Implementation

13.1. *How are recommendations monitored?*

- 13.2. Six months after the OSC has made recommendations to the Executive, progress on the implementation of those recommendations should be reported to OSC. The format of the monitoring may differ from subject to subject, but may include:
- A table listing each recommendation with a 'progress' column
 - A written report from relevant Executive member/officer
 - A presentation
- 13.3. OSC should evaluate and assess the impact of their previous recommendations, referring back to the initial scoping document and compiling a brief evaluation summary for publication.

14. Scrutiny Co-optees

- 14.1. The constitution allows co-option of external people to assist with specific scrutiny reviews (section 4a, paragraph 6.9). Such co-options can be made to the formal OSC, however it is more likely that committee will want to appoint co-optees to task and finish scrutiny working groups that are established for specific reviews.
- 14.2. Once a scrutiny working group has decided to co-opt members, Expressions of Interest to join the working group may be sought from the desired background, included other non-executive Members of the Council, external organisations, experts in the field, service users.
- 14.3. In considering co-option of people outside of the Council and external organisations particular care should be given to consider appropriate persons, mindful of the fact that people and organisations may have particular political and personal interests in an issue. Elected Members and external cooptees need to bring an objective and independent mindset to the scrutiny process, along with their knowledge and expertise.
- 14.4. In seeking Expressions of Interest the following details need to be defined and communicated to people who may be interested, the following steps may be followed:
- the subject under review
 - an indicative timeframe for the whole review
 - an estimate as to the number of meetings that the co-optees will be expected to attend
 - the format and anticipated location of the meetings, i.e. online via MS Teams, in person at Council offices, or a hybrid approach
 - how interested parties should make their application, eg. via a CV and covering letter, email or application form
 - the deadline for applications/expressions of interest.

- 14.5. In identifying Expressions of Interest from external people and organisations, an advertisement of the co-option opportunity may be sent out to relevant agencies and advertised through Council media and other available media, providing the details of the role and scrutiny inquiry.
- 14.6. Members of the scrutiny working group may consider expressions of interest received, creating a short list for interview. Shortlisted candidates will be invited to attend a meeting, and the task and finish group will decide who to appoint.
- 14.7. The Scrutiny Working Group will reserve the right to not appoint any co-optees following interview.
- 14.8. Any appointments made will be for a specified time period, likely to coincide with the estimated timeframe for the scrutiny inquiry.
- 14.9. Once the recruitment process has completed, meetings of the scrutiny working group will take place in line with the process detailed at paragraph 6.6 of the Constitution.

15. Scrutiny Training and Development

- 15.1. The Statutory Scrutiny Guidance 2024 says that Local Authorities should ensure committee members are offered induction when they take up their role and ongoing training so they can carry out their responsibilities effectively and that authorities should pay attention to the need to ensure committee members are aware of their legal powers, and how to prepare for and ask relevant questions at scrutiny sessions.
- 15.2. Cherwell District Council draws up an annual programme of scrutiny training and development for members and officers, including training and development for new members of the a scrutiny committee, training and development for all members of the OSC and scrutiny working groups, scrutiny training for all members of the Council, including Members of the Executive, training for council officers involved with Overview and Scrutiny.

16. Further resources and reviewing and updating of this guide

- 16.1. The Monitoring Officer and Democratic and Elections Team will periodically review this guide with the Chairman and Vice Chairman, gathering feedback from OSC as required, to ensure it remains up-to-date and appropriate.
- 16.2. In addition to this guide and the formal CDC Constitution, OSC members may wish to consult further resources, such as the LGA's Councillor Workbook on Scrutiny - <https://www.local.gov.uk/publications/councillors-workbook-scrutiny> (updated September 2023) which gives more detailed information about possible approaches to Scrutiny.

- 16.3. *This guidance should be read in conjunction with the [Cherwell District Council Constitution](#)² and the [Statutory Scrutiny Guidance](#)³ issued by the Ministry of Housing, Communities & Local Government.*

² The Cherwell District Council Constitution

<https://modgov.cherwell.gov.uk/ieListDocuments.aspx?CId=531&MId=3982&Ver=4&Info=1>

(Accessed 11 February 2025).

³ Statutory guidance - Overview and scrutiny: statutory guidance for councils, combined authorities and combined county authorities, Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government
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