

## **Cherwell District Council**

### **Executive**

Minutes of a meeting of the Executive held at Bodicote House, Bodicote, Banbury, Oxon OX15 4AA, on 3 July 2023 at 6.30 pm

Present:

Councillor Barry Wood (Chairman), Leader of the Council and Portfolio Holder for Policy and Strategy

Councillor Adam Nell (Vice-Chairman), Deputy Leader of the Council and Portfolio Holder for Finance

Councillor Sandy Dallimore, Portfolio Holder for Corporate Services

Councillor Donna Ford, Portfolio Holder for Regeneration

Councillor Nicholas Mawer, Portfolio Holder for Housing

Councillor Andrew McHugh, Portfolio Holder for Cleaner and Greener Communities

Councillor Eddie Reeves, Portfolio Holder for Property

Councillor Dan Sames, Portfolio Holder for Planning and Development

Apologies for absence:

Councillor Phil Chapman, Portfolio Holder for Healthy and Safe Communities

Councillor Nigel Simpson, Portfolio Holder for Sport and Leisure

Also Present:

Councillor John Broad, Chairman Overview and Scrutiny Committee

Officers:

Yvonne Rees, Chief Executive

Stephen Hinds, Corporate Director Resources

Michael Furness, Assistant Director Finance & S151 Officer

Shiraz Sheikh, Assistant Director Law, Governance & Democratic Services/Monitoring Officer

Aaron Hetherington, Principal Officer - Electoral Services Lead

Officers in attendance virtually:

Celia Prado-Teeling, Performance and Insight Manager

## **1 Declarations of Interest**

There were no declarations of interest.

## 2 **Petitions and Requests to Address the Meeting**

There were no petitions or requests to address the meeting.

The Chairman welcomed Councillor Broad, Chairman of the Overview & Scrutiny Committee. Councillor Broad would be speaking on Item 6 – Performance, Risk and Finance Monitoring Report – End of Year 2022-23 and Item 7 – Performance, Risk and Finance Monitoring Report - May 2023.

## 3 **Minutes**

The minutes of the meeting held on 3 April 2023 were agreed as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

## 4 **Chairman's Announcements**

There were no Chairman's announcements.

## 5 **Performance, Risk and Finance Monitoring Report End of Year 2022 - 2023**

The Assistant Director of Finance and Assistant Director – Customer Focus submitted a report which updated the Executive on the council's performance, risk, and financial positions for the period up to the end of the financial year 2022-2023.

Councillor Broad, Chairman of Overview & Scrutiny Committee addressed the Executive. Cllr Broad reported that the Overview & Scrutiny Committee had asked general questions of clarification on the report but had no specific comments to make to Executive and had noted the report.

### **Resolved**

- (1) That the Performance, Risk and Finance Monitoring Report for End of year 2022- 2023 be noted.
- (2) That the Annual Report 2022 – 2023 be noted.
- (3) That the carry forward of funding into reserves be approved and the allocations being released for use in 2023/2024 (Annex to the Minutes as set out in the Minute Book) be agreed.
- (4) That the capital carry forwards (Annex to the Minutes as set out in the Minute Book) be approved.
- (5) That the Use of / Contributions to Reserves (Annex to the Minutes as set out in the Minute Book) be approved.

- (6) That the outturn underspend for 2022/2023 be noted.

### **Reasons**

This report provides a summary of the council's delivery against its business plan priorities including its, risk, and financial positions for the 2022/23 financial year.

### **Alternative Options**

This report summarises the council's performance, risk and financial positions for the 2022/23 financial year, therefore there are no alternative options to consider.

## **6 Monthly Performance, Risk and Finance Monitoring Report May 2023**

The Assistant Director of Finance and Assistant Director – Customer Focus submitted a report to update the Executive on the council's performance, risk, and financial positions for the 2023/24 financial year to the end of May 2023.

Councillor Broad, Chairman of Overview and Scrutiny Committee addressed the Executive. Councillor Broad reported that the Overview and Scrutiny Committee had asked questions of clarification regarding the performance measures, and whether the quoted targets were local or national.

Regarding indicator BP4.1.02, Support Community Safety and Reduce Anti-Social Behaviour, the Overview and Scrutiny Committee had discussed whether the indicator should be geared towards the prevention of anti-social behaviour, rather than intervention.

The Overview and Scrutiny Committee resolved to make the following comment to Executive: 'That Executive give consideration to review the wording of measure BP4.1.02 Support Community Safety and Reduce Anti-Social Behaviour'.

### **Resolved**

- (1) That the Performance, Risk and Finance Monitoring Report for May 2023 be noted.
- (2) That the Budget Management Report be noted.
- (3) That the proposed changes in use of reserves (Annex to the Minutes as set out in the Minute Book) be approved,
- (4) That the Virements agreed under Section 151 Officer delegations be noted.

### **Reasons**

This report provides an update on progress made during May 2023, to deliver the council's priorities through reporting on its performance, risk and financial positions.

### **Alternative Options**

This report summarises the council's performance, risk, and financial positions up to the end of May, therefore there are no alternative options to consider. However, members may wish to request further information from officers or for inclusion.

## **7 Cherwell Digital Futures Strategy**

The ICT and Digital Lead submitted a report to present the Digital Futures Strategy, a forward-thinking blueprint designed to greatly improve the experience for all stakeholders - citizens, businesses, partners, visitors, staff, and elected members. The Strategy deviated from traditional IT strategies because instead of centring on specific technology implementations, it prioritised identifying innovative technologies and approaches that align with the ambition to become the best version of ourselves. The aim was to leverage digital advancements to foster an improved, engaging, and seamless experience for all.

### **Resolved**

- (1) That the Digital Futures Strategy be approved.

### **Reasons**

Embracing the digital approaches proposed in this strategy will align our services with the evolving expectations and daily digital interactions of our customers. By automating routine tasks, we empower our council officers to devote their expertise to more complex cases and to community members who would benefit from a more personal touch. Our commitment to gradual and strategic "evolution" rather than abrupt "revolution" allows us to manage the cost implications effectively. As such, most expenses related to the digital transformation will seamlessly integrate within our existing transformational budget or coincide with our planned system replacement schedules. This thoughtful approach ensures a smoother transition towards our digital future, minimising disruption while maximising benefits and value for our community.

### **Alternative Options**

Option 1: To request the creation of a more traditional IT Strategy. Due to the drivers for transformation, a traditional IT Strategy would not provide the framework required to support radical change if needed.

## **8 Discretionary Housing Payments Policy reviewed 2023/2024**

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

### **Resolved**

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

### **Reasons**

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

### **Alternative Options**

Option 1: Returning the funds to Department for Works and Pensions and Oxfordshire County Council has been rejected as this would not be in line with Cherwell's objectives of responding to the cost of living crisis and working to prevent homelessness.

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## **Implementation of Car Parking Pricing**

The Assistant Director Environmental Services submitted a report to inform Executive of the changes proposed to the implementation of car park price increases during summer 2023 and provided the rationale for the revised implementation.

The new scheme did not raise prices beyond those approved by Council. It set out an implementation plan which ensured the Council's car park charges strike a balance between the Medium Term Financial Plan (MTFP) priorities and being responsive to the current economic climate.

### **Resolved**

- (1) That the following proposed car parking changes be noted:
  - Increase the 1<sup>st</sup> hour from £1.10 to £1.20. This will increase income broadly in line with inflation.
  - Keep the 2<sup>nd</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> hour unchanged as parking usage has demonstrated that use has declined and is not competitive with alternative car parking offers.
  - Increase the daily charge from £5.00 to £5.50 – an increase of 10p per hour - in line with inflation and as long stay car parks are showing increasing demand from increasing numbers of workers returning to office.

- Increase the ultra short stay from £1.10 to £1.20 for ½ hour. Increase the hour rate from £1.60 to £1.70 in ultra short stay car parks, where it is evidenced that there is increasing demand.

(2) That the publishing of the revised charges be approved.

### **Reasons**

The proposed changes protect against inflation pressures of car parking operational costs and income, and to reflect market forces and changes in use.

### **Alternative Options**

Option 1: To raise charges in line with the MTFP. This is not recommended as it is anticipated to have an adverse impact on use and therefore income due to competing offers from other car park providers in Banbury and Bicester, and to a lesser extent from competing towns outside of Cherwell.

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## **Budget and Business Planning Process 2024/25 - 2028/29**

The Assistant Director of Finance submitted a report to inform Executive of the proposed approach to the 2024/25 Budget and Business Planning Process and provided context and background information on the existing Medium-Term Financial Strategy and information on the latest Government announcements relevant to the Strategy.

### **Resolved**

- (1) That the Budget and Business Planning Process for 2024/25 be approved.
- (2) That the base assumptions to be used for the 2024/25 budget be approved.
- (3) That a five-year period for the Medium-Term Financial Strategy to 2028/29 and five-year period for the Capital Programme to 2028/29 be approved.
- (4) That the revised Reserves Policy (Annex to the Minutes as set out in the Minute Book) be approved.

### **Reasons**

The Council has a legal obligation to set a balanced budget and ensure it maintains a suitable level of reserves each year. The process laid out in this report will allow CDC to develop budget proposals that will allow it to meet these legal obligations.

### **Alternative Options**

The Council has a legal obligation to set a balanced budget and evaluate its level of reserves to ensure they are held at a suitable level. Therefore, there are no alternative options other than to carry out a budget process that reviews the levels of reserves and identifies a budget proposal that can be delivered within the overall level of resources available to the Council.

11 **Award of Contract for the Repair and Refurbishment of Town Centre House**

The Assistant Director Wellbeing and Housing submitted a report to seek delegated authority to the Assistant Director Wellbeing and Housing to award the contract to the successful tender for the repair and refurbishment of Town Centre House.

**Resolved**

- (1) That authority be delegated to Assistant Director Wellbeing and Housing to award the contract for the repair and refurbishment of Town Centre House in consultation with the Monitoring Officer and s151 Officer.
- (2) That authority be delegated to the Monitoring Officer to enter into the agreement with the successful tenderer.

**Reasons**

To agree to delegating authority for procuring contractors and entering into a contract to complete the necessary works on Town Centre House following a competitive tendering exercise and formal costed evaluation of the bids received.

**Alternative Options**

Option 1: Do not award a contract over the summer. This option has been rejected because Cherwell District Council must meet its financial and housing obligations in order to receive the Local Authority Housing Fund (LAHF) grant.

Option 2: Not to take the LAHF grant This option has been rejected because Cherwell District Council is committed to supporting refugees as well as delivering where possible quality homes at local housing allowance rents.

12 **Updates to Terms of Reference of the Future Oxfordshire Partnership**

The Monitoring Officer submitted a report to set out and seek approval of adjustments to the Future Oxfordshire Partnership's Terms of Reference following recent changes to the programmes within the Oxfordshire Housing and Growth Deal.

## **Resolved**

- (1) That the Future Oxfordshire Partnership's revised Terms of Reference and Memorandum of Understanding be approved.

## **Reasons**

The revised governance documents are required to set out how the councils in the Future Oxfordshire Partnership will meet the requirements set out in the DLUHC letter dated 5 December 2022, securing the final £30 million of funding for infrastructure to support the accelerated delivery of new homes.

## **Alternative Options**

Option 1: Do not approve the adjustments to the Terms of Reference. Rejected as it would not meet the requirements set out by central government to secure the funding for infrastructure. It would mean that the Council would not benefit from the opportunities that are presented from joint working with other councils in the Future Oxfordshire Partnership.

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## **Pledges to Oxfordshire Inclusive Economy Partnership's Charter**

The Assistant Director - Growth and Economy submitted a report that advised on the use of the delegated authority granted in January 2023 for the Council to make Pledges towards the implementation of the Oxfordshire Inclusive Economy Partnership (OIEP) Charter.

## **Resolved**

- (1) That Cherwell District Council's commitment to the adoption of twelve pledges (Annex to the Minutes as set out in the Minute Book) aligned with Oxfordshire Inclusive Economy Partnership (OIEP) 2023-24 and to support delivery of the pledges through appropriate services areas.
- (2) That engagement with and membership of the OIEP Steering Group and Working Groups on behalf of the Council be delegated to the Corporate Director – Communities, in conjunction with the Portfolio Holder for Regeneration.

## **Reasons**

The OIEP has developed a Charter as a statement of shared commitment to creating a more inclusive local economy, reflecting the ambitions of partners from throughout the county to enable everybody to be economically active within stronger, more sustainable communities. To enact the Charter, partners are invited to make pledges towards it and this Council has led by example.

The Council's Inclusive Communities plan will ensure that the Council can commit to delivering its pledges in 2023-24.



By implementing these pledges, the Council will demonstrate good practice and encourage other organisations and businesses through continuing its active participation in the OIEP.

### **Alternative Options**

Option 1: Not to pledge towards delivering Oxfordshire Inclusive Economy Partnership's Charter. This was rejected because it would suggest that the Council is not committed to the creation of an inclusive economy. By not gaining external recognition of its own inclusive policies, it would also miss an opportunity to encourage others to engage and would therefore restrict its ambition to tackle the significant issues being faced by residents who are not currently benefitting as fully as they might from any increasing prosperity within the local economy.

Option 2: To make alternative pledges to Oxfordshire Inclusive Economy Partnership's Charter. This was rejected because the Council should firstly identify pledges that are realistically achievable within existing resources. It is expected that in future years, additional pledges could be considered, subject to resource availability.

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### **Urgent Business**

There were no items of urgent business.

The meeting ended at 7.11 pm

Chairman:

Date: