

Cherwell District Council

Executive

Minutes of a meeting of the Executive held at 39 Castle Quay, Banbury, OX16 5FD, on 3 February 2026 at 6.30 pm

Present:

Councillor David Hingley (Leader of the Council & Portfolio Holder for Strategic Leadership) (Chair)
Councillor Lesley McLean (Deputy Leader of the Council and Portfolio Holder for Finance, Property & Regeneration) (Vice-Chair)
Councillor Tom Beckett, Portfolio Holder for Greener Communities
Councillor Jean Conway, Portfolio Holder for Planning and Development Management
Councillor Nick Cotter, Portfolio Holder for Housing
Councillor Ian Middleton, Portfolio Holder for Neighbourhood Services
Councillor Rob Pattenden, Portfolio Holder for Healthy Communities

Apologies for absence:

Councillor Chris Brant, Portfolio Holder for Corporate Services

Also Present Virtually:

Councillor Amanda Watkins, Leader of the Labour Group
Councillor Les Sibley, Leader of the Independent Group
Councillor David Rogers, Chair, Overview and Scrutiny Committee

Officers:

Gordon Stewart, Chief Executive
Ian Boll, Executive Director Place & Regeneration
Stephen Hinds, Executive Director Resources
Nicola Riley, Interim Executive Director Neighbourhood Services
Michael Furness, Assistant Director Finance & S151 Officer
Heidi Radcliffe Hill, Interim Head of Chief Executive's Office
Tim Hughes, Head of Regulatory Services & Community Safety
Denzil Turbervill, Head of Legal Services
Natasha Clark, Governance and Elections Manager

Officers Attending Virtually:

Mona Walsh, Assistant Director - Property
Richard Smith, Head of Housing

95 **Declarations of Interest**

There were no declarations of interest.

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

There were no petitions or requests to address the meeting.

The Chair welcomed Councillor David Rogers, Chair of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee and Deputy Leader of the Cherwell Conservative and Independent Alliance; Councillor Amanda Watkins, Leader of the Labour Group; and, Councillor Les Sibley, Leader of the Independent Group, to the meeting and invited them to indicate if they wished to speak.

97 **Minutes**

The minutes of the meeting held on 6 January 2026 were agreed as a correct record and signed by the Chair.

98 **Chair's Announcements**

Councillor Parkinson

The Chair advised that Councillor Parkinson had taken the decision to step down from the Executive for personal reasons. The Chair thanked Councillor Parkinson for his hard work as Portfolio Holder for Safer Communities and everything he has contributed to Executive and the Council as a member of the Executive. Councillor Parkinson's insights had been of great value and he would be missed on the Executive.

The Chair advised that for the remainder of this municipal year Councillor Parkinson's portfolio of safer communities would be overseen by Councillor Pattenden in a "healthy and safe communities" portfolio. The Chair thanked Councillor Pattenden for taking on those responsibilities.

Devolution Expression of Interest Update

The Chair referred to the Thames Valley Devolution Expression of Interest that Executive had endorsed in December 2025 and subsequently been sent to the Government by the County Council in conjunction with authorities in Berkshire and advised that a response had been received from the Government. The response had commended Oxfordshire and Berkshire on its interest in the programme and indicating a willingness to discuss this further. Council Leaders would be meeting next week to discuss the evolution going forward.

Local Government Reorganisation Government Consultation

The Chair advised that the Government's consultation on Local Government Reorganisation would commence on Thursday and would run for a seven week period.

99 **Budget Setting and Corporate Plan for 2026/2027 and the Medium-Term Financial Strategy up to 2030/2031**

The Assistant Director Finance (Section 151 Officer) submitted a report to consider and recommend the Budget Setting for 2026/27 and Medium Term Financial Strategy (MTFS) 2030/31.

In introducing the report, the Portfolio Holder for Finance, Regeneration and Property advised that the proposed net budget of the Council was £32.3 million, an increase of £6.1 million from 2025/2026. It was planned to fund £1.9 million of service improvements and £1.3 millions of development funds would be set aside for strategic development and local area development. £2.3 million of savings proposals and operational efficiencies would be delivered as well as a capital programme of £31.6 million, of which £17.9 million was expected to be spent in 2026/2027, including significant investment in homeless provision.

Over the last two years, there had been significant engagement with the Government on the potential impacts of the fair funding review and the business rates reset which could have had a detrimental effect for Cherwell. The Government's provisional financial settlement resulted in the council receiving £4.4 million additional funding in 2026/2027 compared to what it had anticipated it would receive at the time of the public consultation on the budget.

The Portfolio Holder for Finance, Regeneration and Property confirmed that, in addition to the balanced budget for 2026/2027, as legally required, based on current estimates, including growth in business rates and council tax, there would be a balanced budget over the next three years.

In seconding the report, the Chair thanked all respondents to the public consultation for their comments and feedback, which had been taken in consideration when setting the budget.

Councillor Watkins, Leader of the Labour Group, addressed the meeting commenting that she was pleased and appreciated that Executive had considered and acted upon the consultation feedback in respect of proposed changes to the funding of Banbury Museum.

Resolved

- (1) That the budget proposal be recommended to Council, and the summary of consultation responses be noted.
- (2) That authority be delegated to the Section 151 Officer (S151), following consultation with the Leader of the Council and Portfolio Holder for Finance, Regeneration and Property to complete the legal Council Tax calculations once all the information required has been received and submit as appendices to the budget report to Council.

- (3) That authority be delegated to the S151, following consultation with the Leader of the Council and Portfolio Holder for Finance, Regeneration and Property to make appropriate changes to the proposed budget to Council including policies and plans.
- (4) That Council be recommended to approve the proposed Fees and Charges schedule for 2026/27 (Appendix 7 to the report) and statutory notices be placed where required.
- (5) That Council be recommended to consider and note the Equality Impact Assessments of the Budget (Appendix 8 to the report).
- (6) That Council be recommended to note the Corporate Plan Vision and Strategy (Appendix 1 to the report).
- (7) That Council be recommended to approve the Annual Delivery Plan (Appendix 2 to the report).
- (8) That, in relation to the Revenue Budget Strategy (Section 4.2 of the report) and Medium-Term Financial Strategy (MTFS) (Section 4.6 of the report), Council be recommended to approve:
 - i. The net revenue budget for the financial year commencing on 1 April 2026 (Table 4.2.1 of the report) and further analysed in the Budget Book (Appendix 12 to the report).
 - ii. The MTFS and Revenue Budget 2026/27 (Sections 4.6 and 4.2 respectively of the report), including the Savings Proposals and Investments included at Appendices 4 and 5 respectively.
- (9) That, in relation to Council Tax (Section 4.2.49 of the report), Council be recommended to approve:
 - i. An increase in the Basic Amount of Council Tax for Cherwell District Council for the financial year beginning on 1 April 2026 of £5, resulting in a Band D charge of £163.50 per annum.
 - ii. From 1 April 2027 the implementation of a premium (second homes premium) of 100% for dwellings that are no one's sole or main residence and are substantially furnished, following consultation undertaken in November and December 2024 which showed 88% support for the introduction.
 - iii. That the mandatory notice of 12 months to all owners of second homes that a premium will commence from 1 April 2027 be issued.
 - iv. That relevant exceptions be applied as set out by Government guidance (Appendix 22 to the report).
- (10) That, in relation to the Capital Programme and related strategies (Section 4.3 of the report), Council be recommended to approve:

- i. The Capital Bid(s) and Capital Programme at Appendices 17 and 18 of the report respectively.
 - ii. The Capital and Investment Strategy 2026/27 (Appendix 19 to the report), including the Minimum Revenue Provision (MRP) Policy.
 - iii. The Treasury Management Strategy, including the Prudential Indicators, and Affordable Borrowing Limit for 2026/27 (Appendix 21 the report).
- (11) That, in relation to reserves (Section 4.4 of the report), Council be recommended to approve:
- i. A minimum level of General Balances of £8.011m as supported by Appendix 15 of the report.
 - ii. The Reserves Policy (Appendix 14 of the report).
 - iii. The medium-term reserves plan described in Appendix 16 of the report.
- (12) That Council be recommended to approve The Pay Policy Statement, as required by the Localism Act 2010, detailed in Appendix 9 to the report.
- (13) That, in relation to the Pension Fund (Section 4.5 of the report), Council be recommended to approve a pension fund prepayment for the years 2026/27 – 2028/29 of £5.028m.

Reasons

This report provides information around the various building blocks that make up the proposed budget for 2026/27 and beyond, allowing members to consider and scrutinise the elements of the budget and provide advice and guidance to council to help further shape both budget setting for 2026/27 and the MTFS up to 2030/31.

Alternative options

It is a legal requirement to set a balanced budget and the recommendations as outlined set out a way to achieve this. The following alternative option has been identified and rejected for the reasons set out below.

Option 1: To reject the current proposals and make alternative recommendations. Members will not be aware of the medium-term financial forecast or implications of alternatives if they choose to take this option.

The Assistant Director of Finance (Section 151 Officer) and Interim Head of Chief Executive's Office submitted a report to update Executive on the council's forecast year-end financial, performance and risk position as of the end of Quarter 3 2025/2026.

Resolved

- (1) That the council's finance, performance, and risk management report as at Quarter 3 be noted.
- (2) That the approval of £0.010m from Policy Contingency for the Climate Change Action Plan for 2025/26, approved within S151 delegations be noted.
- (3) That the reprofiling of projects in the capital programme (Annex to the Minutes as set out in the Minute Book) be approved.
- (4) That the following budgets approved under S151 delegations within in the capital programme be noted.

S151 Officer Approved Grant Funded Budgets - Q3	2025/26 £m	2026/27 £m
Disabled Facilities Grants	0.186	
Burnehyll - Bicester Country Park	0.025	
UKSPF Rural Fund	0.147	
S106 - Banbury Cricket Club Pavilion Project	0.011	
S106 - Yarnton Village Hall Project		0.023
S106 - Bloxham Bowls Club Roofing Contribution	0.014	
S106 – Fritwell Playing Fields Equipment Contribution	0.067	
Grand Total	0.450	0.023

Reasons

The report updates Executive on the projected year-end financial position of the council for 2025/26, Quarter 3 performance position and updated Leadership Risk Register. Regular reporting is key to good governance and demonstrates that the council is actively managing its financial resources sustainably.

Alternative options

Option 1: This report summarises the council's forecast financial position up to the end of End of Year 2026, and a snapshot of our Performance and Risk position for Quarter 3 2025-26, therefore there are no alternative options to consider.

101

Air Quality Update

The Head of Regulatory Services and Community Safety submitted a report to request Executive approval to confirm the revocation of the Air Quality Management Area (AQMA) in Bicester.

Resolved

- (1) That the Air Quality Management Area (AQMA) No.4 (Kings End/Queens Avenue, Bicester) be revoked.

Reasons

In AQMA No.4 (Kings End/Queens Avenue, Bicester) the measured levels of nitrogen dioxide have been below the air quality objective of 40µg/m³ for the last five years. The guidance from DEFRA is that revocation of an AQMA should be considered following three consecutive years of compliance with the relevant objective, and where there have been no exceedances for the past five years, the AQMA must be revoked. The Executive is therefore recommended to approve the revocation of this AQMA.

Alternative options

Option 1: To not revoke AQMA No.4 (Kings End/Queens Avenue, Bicester). This option was rejected because local authorities are required to revoke AQMAs where there have been no exceedances of the relevant objective for the past five years.

102 **Exclusion of the Press and Public**

Resolved

That under Section 100A of the Local Government Act 1972, the public and press be excluded from the meeting for the following items of business on the ground that, if the public and press were present, it would be likely that exempt information falling under the provisions of Schedule 12A, Part 1, Paragraph 3 would be disclosed to them, and that in all the circumstances of the case, the public interest in maintaining the exemption outweighs the public interest in disclosing the information.

103 **Approval to Appoint a Contract for the Provision of Temporary Accommodation for Homeless Households**

The Interim Executive Director Neighbourhood Services submitted an exempt report to seek approval to appoint a contract for the provision of temporary accommodation for homeless households.

Resolved

- (1) As set out in the exempt Minutes.

Reasons

As set out in the exempt Minutes.

Alternative options

As set out in the exempt Minutes.

104 **Adoption of an Agency Model for the Leisure Centre Service Delivery**

The Interim Executive Director Neighbourhood Services submitted an exempt report to adopt an agency model for the Leisure Centre service delivery.

Resolved

- (1) As set out in the exempt Minutes.
- (2) As set out in the exempt Minutes.
- (3) As set out in the exempt Minutes.

Reasons

As set out in the exempt Minutes.

Alternative options

As set out in the exempt Minutes.

105 **Proposed New Lease to Banbury Young Homeless Project (BYHP)**

The Assistant Director Property submitted an exempt report to approve a proposed new lease to Banbury Young Homeless Project (BYHP)

Resolved

- (1) As set out in the exempt Minutes.
- (2) As set out in the exempt Minutes.
- (3) As set out in the exempt Minutes.
- (4) As set out in the exempt Minutes.
- (5) As set out in the exempt Minutes.

Reasons

As set out in the exempt Minutes.

Alternative options

As set out in the exempt Minutes.

106 **Sale of Bodicote House Site, White Post Road, Bodicote, OX15 4AA**

The Assistant Director Property submitted an exempt report in respect of the sale of the Bodicote House site, White Post Road, Bodicote.

Resolved

- (1) As set out in the exempt Minutes.
- (2) As set out in the exempt Minutes.
- (3) As set out in the exempt Minutes.
- (4) As set out in the exempt Minutes.
- (5) As set out in the exempt Minutes.

Reasons

As set out in the exempt Minutes.

Alternative options

As set out in the exempt Minutes.

107 **Approval to Appoint a Contract for the Provision of the Council's Revenues and Benefits Software**

The Assistant Director Finance (Section 151 Officer) submitted an exempt report to seek approval to appoint a contract for the provision of the Council's Revenues and Benefits software.

Resolved

- (1) As set out in the exempt Minutes.
- (2) As set out in the exempt Minutes.

Reasons

As set out in the exempt Minutes.

Alternative options

As set out in the exempt Minutes.

108 **Urgent Business**

There were no items of urgent business.

The meeting ended at 7.36 pm

Chair:

Date: