

## **Cherwell District Council**

### **Council**

Minutes of a meeting of the Council held at Bodicote House, Bodicote, Banbury, Oxon OX15 4AA, on 16 December 2024 at 6.30 pm

#### **Present:**

Councillor Dr Chukwudi Okeke (Chairman)

Councillor Dorothy Walker (Vice-Chairman)

Councillor Tom Beckett

Councillor Rebecca Biegel

Councillor Gordon Blakeway

Councillor Chris Brant

Councillor Besmira Brasha

Councillor John Broad

Councillor Phil Chapman

Councillor Mark Cherry

Councillor Becky Clarke MBE

Councillor Jean Conway

Councillor Grace Conway-Murray

Councillor Gemma Coton

Councillor Nick Cotter

Councillor Dr Isabel Creed

Councillor Andrew Crichton

Councillor Donna Ford

Councillor Ian Harwood

Councillor David Hingley

Councillor Matt Hodgson

Councillor Frank Ideh

Councillor Harry Knight

Councillor Simon Lytton

Councillor Kieron Mallon

Councillor Nicholas Mawer

Councillor Fiona Mawson

Councillor Andrew McHugh

Councillor Lesley McLean

Councillor Ian Middleton

Councillor Julian Nedelcu

Councillor Rob Parkinson

Councillor Lynne Parsons

Councillor Rob Pattenden

Councillor Chris Pruden

Councillor Edward Fraser Reeves

Councillor David Rogers

Councillor Alisa Russell

Councillor Les Sibley

Councillor Nigel Simpson

Councillor Dr Kerrie Thornhill

Councillor Dom Vaitkus

Councillor Linda Ward  
Councillor Amanda Watkins  
Councillor John Willett  
Councillor Douglas Webb  
Councillor Barry Wood

Apologies for absence:

Councillor Sean Woodcock

Officers:

Ian Boll, Corporate Director Communities  
Stephen Hinds, Corporate Director Resources and Transformation  
Michael Furness, Assistant Director Finance & S151 Officer  
Shiraz Sheikh, Assistant Director Law & Governance and Monitoring Officer  
Natasha Clark, Governance and Elections Manager

Officers Attending Virtually:

Gordon Stewart, Chief Executive

## 38 **Declarations of Interest**

There were no declarations of interest.

## 39 **Communications**

### **Councillor Barry Wood**

The Chairman advised that on 20 November, Councillor Wood had attended the prestigious 2024 LGUI & CCLA Cllr Awards at the Guildhall, London. Councillor Wood had been short listed for the 'Lifetime Legend' award.

Whilst Councillor Wood had sadly not won the award, on behalf of Council, the Chairman congratulated Councillor Wood on the phenomenal achievement of being a finalist for prestigious award.

### **Chairman's Engagements**

A copy of the events attended by the Chairman was published with the agenda. The Chairman thanked all Members who had attended or made a donation to his Charity Dinner which had been held on 16 November.

### **Meeting Etiquette**

The Chairman asked councillors to be respectful of each other when addressing the meeting and out of courtesy, to remain in their seat during items. If necessary, the Chairman would adjourn the meeting to allow for a comfort break at a suitable point.

### **Members' Pigeon Holes**

The Chairman reminded Members to check their pigeon hole and take any post with them.

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

There were no petitions or requests to address the meeting.

#### **41 Urgent Business**

There were no items of urgent business.

#### **42 Minutes of Council**

The minutes of the meeting held on 21 October 2024 were agreed as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

#### **43 Minutes**

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

##### **Resolved**

That the minutes of the meeting of the Executive and Portfolio Holder decisions as set out in the Minute Book be received and that it be noted that since the last meeting of Council on 21 October 2024, no decisions have been taken by the Executive which were not included in the 28 day notice.

##### **b) Minutes of Committees**

##### **Resolved**

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

#### **44 Questions**

##### **a) Written Questions**

The Chairman advised that three written questions, addressed to the Leader, had been submitted with advance notice in accordance with the Constitution and had been published with the agenda. Responses to the questions had been published as a supplement to the agenda (and as an annex to the Minutes as set out in the Minute Book).

The first question was from Councillor Reeves, in relation to a small business Champion. By way of a supplementary question, Councillor Reeves asked how many small businesses the Deputy Leader had met with in the past month. The Leader undertook to respond in writing.

The second question was from Councillor Ford, in relation to local banking facilities. By way of a supplementary question, Councillor Ford asked if the Leader would agree for Executive to take more positive steps. The Leader advised Executive would review and update Councillor Ford in due course.

The third question was from Councillor Ford, in relation to Oxfordshire County recycling centres. By way of a supplementary question, Councillor Ford asked if the Leader was concerned that the County Council policy change would result in more flytipping in the Cherwell District. The Leader undertook to respond in writing.

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

Questions were asked and answers received on the following issues:

Councillor Cherry: CCTV at the Sunshine Centre and Edmonds Road near Bretch Hill

Councillor Watkins: Banbury Community Insight Steering Group amalgamation with the Brighter Futures in Banbury (BFiB) partnership

Councillor Wood: Bollards in Kidlington

Councillor Rogers: Update on motion agreed at October Council regarding a response to letter requesting a meeting with Buckinghamshire, Oxfordshire and Berkshire West Integrated Care System Board ('BOBICS') and

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

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

## **Polling District and Polling Places Review 2024**

The (Acting) Returning Officer submitted a report to agree the recommendations of the council's Polling District and Polling Place Review 2024.

### **Resolved**

- (1) That the recommendations for Polling Districts and Polling Places within Cherwell (Annex to the Minutes as set out in the Minute Book) be agreed.
- (2) That it be noted that the Polling District codes will be updated for inclusion in the Electoral Register being published on 1 February 2025.

- (3) That it be noted that the Constitution gives delegated to the Returning Officer "To amend the Council's Polling Districts and Polling Places Order as necessary".

46 **Treasury Management Report - Mid-year review 2024-25 (September 2024)**

The Assistant Director of Finance (Section 151 Officer) submitted a report to provide information on treasury management performance and compliance with treasury management strategy for 2024-25 as required by the Treasury Management Code of Practice. The report demonstrated that all treasury management activities undertaken during the reporting period complied with the CIPFA Code of Practice and the council's approved Treasury Management Strategy.

**Resolved**

- (1) That the contents of the Treasury Management mid-year review, as recommended by the Accounts, Audit and Risk Committee on the 20 November 2024, be noted.

47 **Council Tax Reduction Scheme 2025/2026**

The Assistant Director Finance (Section 151 Officer) submitted a report to enable Members to consider the proposed banded scheme for Council Tax Reduction (CTR) for 2025/26.

**Resolved**

- (1) That the report and the financial implications for the council be noted.
- (2) That the option of no change to the Council Tax Reduction Income Banded Scheme for Working Age Applicants for 2025/26 be approved and it be approved to amend Working Age Regulations in line with annual uprating and to amend the Council Tax Regulations for pensioners in line with uprating announced by the Ministry for Housing, Communities and Local Government.

48 **Updates to the Constitution**

The Monitoring Officer submitted a report to update members with the latest changes agreed by the Constitution Review Group (CRG) and to propose: an additional ordinary meeting of Council in March 2025 and in March each municipal year; that the meeting of Council scheduled to take place on 25 February 2025 (and in February going forward) would deal only with the Council budget and any associated reports and no other business; and, certain changes to the Constitution regarding the Licensing Committee to comply with the Law.

The Constitution was the document by which, in accordance with the law, the Council exercised all its powers and duties. It was essential that it was reviewed to ensure it remained fit for purpose.

**Resolved**

- (1) That it be agreed that the meeting of Council scheduled to take place on 24 February 2025 and in February each municipal year will be regarded as the Budget Council.
- (2) That it be agreed that an additional ordinary meeting of Council take place on Monday 17 March 2025 and that a March Council meeting be included each municipal year in future calendars of meetings.
- (3) That the Budget Council Procedure Rules be approved.
- (4) That the separation of the Licensing Committee to a Licensing Acts Committee and General Licensing Committee with the proposed functions be agreed.
- (5) That authority be delegated to the Monitoring Officer to make the amendments to the Constitution following (i) these changes, and (ii) organisational changes.

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**Calendar of Meetings 2025/2026**

The Monitoring Officer submitted a report which asked Council to consider and agree the proposed calendar of meetings for the municipal year 2025/2026.

**Resolved**

- (1) That, subject to a review of the start time for All Member Briefings, the calendar of meetings for Cherwell District Council for the municipal year 2025/2026 be approved.

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**Amendment to Committee Membership**

The Chairman referred to the agenda which set out that the Liberal Democrat Group Leader, Councillor Hingley, had notified the Proper Officer of a change to the Liberal Democrat Group committee membership.

**Resolved**

- (1) That the following Liberal Democrat Group committee membership amendment be noted:

**Accounts, Audit and Risk Committee**

Remove: Councillor Jean Conway and Councillor Nick Cotter

Add: Councillor Frank Ideh and Councillor Rob Parkinson

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## Motions

The Chairman advised that three motions had been submitted. An amendment to the “Flooding” had been submitted. In line with the Constitution, no further amendments were now permitted.

### Motion One: Flooding

It was proposed by Councillor Mallon and seconded by Councillor McHugh that the following motion be adopted:

“Storm Bert brought significant flooding across the district. The flooding brought with it contamination of groundwater with sewage which then spilt onto roads and property across the district.

It is accepted that, in many cases, the sewage and drainage infrastructure is not able to cope with the new and increasing volumes of rainwater. However, the problems of flooding with inadequate infrastructure are compounded by a lack of routine maintenance. In the face of increased volumes of rainwater. We note that the number of gully’s cleaned by Oxfordshire County Council each year has dropped significantly over the last five years. It becomes more urgent for the county council, who have the primary responsibility for this, to increase their routine maintenance of drainage gullies, and where necessary, install drainage sumps to cope with increased water flows.

We call on the Leader of the Council to write to the Leader and Chief Executive of Oxfordshire County Council to urge Oxfordshire County Council to do more to alleviate the misery caused to Cherwell residents by increasing their flood prevention activities such as gulley clearance. Furthermore, we call on the county council to initiate a program of proactive gulley clearance, and any other prophylactic measures that may be deemed necessary, at known flooding hotspots on receipt of severe weather warnings.”

Councillor McLean proposed the following amendment (amendments struck through and revised text in italics), which was duly seconded by Councillor Brant.

“Storm Bert brought significant flooding across the district. The flooding brought with it contamination of groundwater with sewage which then spilt onto roads and property across the district.

~~It is accepted that, in many cases, the sewage and drainage infrastructure is not able to cope with the new and increasing volumes of rainwater. However, the problems of flooding with inadequate infrastructure are compounded by a lack of routine maintenance.~~ *The recent flood events have illustrated that our existing infrastructure is inadequate* in the face of increased volumes of rainwater. We note that the number of gully’s cleaned by Oxfordshire County Council each year has dropped significantly over the last five years. It

becomes more urgent for the county council, who have the primary responsibility for this *and flood mitigation plans*, to ~~increase~~ review their ~~routine-maintenance routine of drainage gullies~~, and, where necessary, install drainage sumps to cope with increased water flows.

We call on the Leader of the Council to write to the Leader and Chief Executive of Oxfordshire County Council to urge Oxfordshire County Council to do more to alleviate the ~~miser~~ *caused risk* to Cherwell residents by increasing their flood prevention activities such as gulley clearance.

Furthermore, we call on the county council to initiate a program of proactive gulley clearance, and any other ~~prophylactic~~ measures that may be deemed necessary *to protect our residents at known flooding hotspots on receipt of severe weather warnings.*"

The amendment was debated. On being put to the vote, the amendment was lost and therefore fell.

The motion as submitted was debated. On being put to the vote the motion was carried.

### **Motion Two: Oxfordshire County Council expenditure of development monies**

It was proposed by Councillor Reeves and seconded by Councillor Mawer that the following motion be adopted:

"Recalling its motion of 21 October 2024, this Council further regrets that Oxfordshire has not historically managed the expenditure of development agreements well. It also recognises that the law in this area must be more flexible to ensure that communities receive the improvements in infrastructure that are right for them as circumstances change.

Despite this District having taken its fair share of new homes in recent years, too often, development monies have gone unspent with elected members and parish colleagues forced to make circuitous enquiries of Council officers and developers to establish what local funds exist and when they might reasonably be spent.

Following work undertaken by Oxfordshire County Council's Performance & Corporate Services and Place Overview & Scrutiny Committees, and research conducted by the Homebuilders' Federation, £8 billion of developers' contributions stand to be spent nationwide with Oxfordshire the worst-performing county in the country, holding £287.5 million.

This Council requests the Leader to write to:

1. The Leader of Oxfordshire County Council to agree a more effective mechanism for ensuring that development monies are spent; and
2. The Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government to request that the law be updated to introduce a presumption of



reasonable expenditure on the part of local authorities or such other device as would enable Councils to spend money on improving local facilities that could not otherwise be envisaged when development agreements are signed.”

No amendments to the motion having been proposed, the motion was debated as submitted. On being put to the vote the motion was carried.

### **Motion Three: Government change to Inheritance Tax treatment of farmland**

It was proposed by Councillor Reeves and seconded by Councillor Webb that the following motion be adopted:

“This Council considers that the government’s changes in its Autumn budget to Inheritance Tax treatment of farmland, increases to employers’ National Insurance and introduction of a new fertiliser tax on key agricultural imports will have a detrimental cumulative impact on family farms across North Oxfordshire.

This Council notes with concern that these family farm taxes risk:

- Adversely affecting local farmers’ potential to employ people across North Oxfordshire’s rural economy;
- Damaging the ability for family farmers to pass on their farms to their children; and,
- Making food production at competitive prices more difficult for us as a district.

This Council resolves

1. to ask Executive to review that its policies are as supportive of local farmers as reasonably possible.
2. to ask the Leader to write to the Leader of Oxfordshire County Council to request that the newly integrated Oxfordshire Local Enterprise Partnership (‘OxLEP’) prioritises the local rural economy in its governance structure and ongoing development of its strategic plan, both of which are now under active consideration.
3. to ask the Leader to write to the Chancellor of the Exchequer and Secretary of State for the Environment, Food and Rural Affairs to ask that introduction of these family farm taxes be reconsidered for the sake of environmental protection and food security.”

No amendments to the motion having been proposed, the motion was debated as submitted. On being put to the vote the motion was carried.

### **Resolved**

- (1) That the following motion be adopted:

“Storm Bert brought significant flooding across the district. The flooding brought with it contamination of groundwater with sewage which then spilt onto roads and property across the district.

It is accepted that, in many cases, the sewage and drainage infrastructure is not able to cope with the new and increasing volumes of rainwater. However, the problems of flooding with inadequate infrastructure are compounded by a lack of routine maintenance. In the face of increased volumes of rainwater. We note that the number of gully’s cleaned by Oxfordshire County Council each year has dropped significantly over the last five years. It becomes more urgent for the county council, who have the primary responsibility for this, to increase their routine maintenance of drainage gullies, and where necessary, install drainage sumps to cope with increased water flows.

We call on the leader of the Council to write to The Leader and Chief Executive Oxfordshire County Council to urge Oxfordshire County Council to do more to alleviate the misery caused to Cherwell residents by increasing their flood prevention activities such as gulley clearance.

Furthermore, we call on the county council to initiate a program of proactive gulley clearance, and any other prophylactic measures that may be deemed necessary, at known flooding hot spots on receipt of severe weather warnings.”

- (2) That the following motion be agreed:

“Recalling its motion of 21 October 2024, this Council further regrets that Oxfordshire has not historically managed the expenditure of development agreements well. It also recognises that the law in this area must be more flexible to ensure that communities receive the improvements in infrastructure that are right for them as circumstances change.

Despite this District having taken its fair share of new homes in recent years, too often, development monies have gone unspent with elected members and parish colleagues forced to make circuitous enquiries of Council officers and developers to establish what local funds exist and when they might reasonably be spent.

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2. The Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government to request that the law be updated to introduce a presumption of reasonable expenditure on the part of local authorities or such other device as would enable Councils to spend money on improving local facilities that could not otherwise be envisaged when development agreements are signed.”

(3) That the following motion be agreed:

“This Council considers that the government’s changes in its Autumn budget to Inheritance Tax treatment of farmland, increases to employers’ National Insurance and introduction of a new fertiliser tax on key agricultural imports will have detrimental cumulative impact on family farms across North Oxfordshire.

This Council notes with concern that these family farm taxes risk:

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3. to ask the Leader to write to the Chancellor of the Exchequer and Secretary of State for the Environment, Food and Rural Affairs to ask that introduction of these family farm taxes be reconsidered for the sake of environmental protection and food security.”

The meeting ended at 9.20 pm

Chairman:

Date: