

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 11 November 2025 at 6.30 pm

Present:

Councillor Phil Chapman (Vice-Chair in the Chair, minute 29)
Councillor David Rogers (Chair, minute 30 onwards)
Councillor Dr Isabel Creed (Vice-Chair minute 31 onwards)
Councillor John Broad
Councillor Gemma Coton
Councillor Frank Ideh
Councillor Simon Lytton
Councillor Lynne Parsons
Councillor Dom Vaitkus

Substitute Members:

Councillor Fiaz Ahmed (In place of Councillor Barry Wood)

Apologies for absence:

Councillor Gordon Blakeway
Councillor Harry Knight
Councillor Barry Wood

Also Present:

Councillor David Hingley, Leader of the Council
Councillor Rob Pattenden, Portfolio Holder for Healthy Communities

Also Present Virtually:

Councillor Robert Parkinson, Portfolio Holder for Safer Communities

Officers:

Nicola Riley, Interim Executive Director Neighbourhood Services
Michael Furness, Assistant Director Finance & S151 Officer
Ed Potter, Assistant Director Environmental Services
Tim Hughes, Head of Regulatory Services & Community Safety
Celia Prado-Teeling, Performance Team Leader
Neil Whitton, Environmental Protection and Enforcement Manager
Emma Faulkner, Principal Officer - Scrutiny and Democratic Lead
Martyn Surfleet, Democratic and Elections Officer

Officers Attending Virtually:

Susan Asbury, Safeguarding Officer

29 **Appointment of Chair**

It was proposed by Councillor Lytton and seconded by Councillor Creed that Councillor Rogers be elected Chair of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee for the remainder of the municipal year 2025/2026.

There were no further nominations.

Resolved

- (1) That Councillor David Rogers be elected Chair of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee for the remainder of the 2025/2026 Municipal Year.

30 **Appointment of Vice-Chair (if required)**

Councillor Phil Chapman resigned the role of Vice-Chair, and the committee were asked to nominate a new Vice-Chair for the remainder of the municipal year.

It was proposed by Councillor Creed and seconded by Councillor Vaitkus that Councillor Creed be elected Vice-Chair of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee for the remainder of the 2025/2026 Municipal Year.

There were no further nominations.

Resolved

- (1) That Councillor Dr Isabel Creed be elected Vice-Chair of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee for the remainder of the 2025/2026 Municipal Year.

31 **Declarations of Interest**

There were no declarations of interest.

32 **Minutes**

The Minutes of the meeting of the Committee held on 09 September 2025 were agreed as a correct record and signed by the Chair.

33 **Chair's Announcements**

There were no Chair's announcements.

34 **Urgent Business**

There were no items of urgent business.

35 **Performance Monitoring Report Quarter 2 2025 - 2026**

The Committee considered a report from the Assistant Director – Finance that detailed the council's performance position at the end of quarter 2 2025-2026.

In introducing the report, the Portfolio Holder for Corporate Services advised that the Council was performing well against its quarter 2 objectives, with 89% of measures on target or within tolerance.

Out of the 36 total measures, 4 reported red, 13 were amber and 19 were green. On the annual delivery plan there were 18 milestones to deliver in quarter 2, 8 of which had been achieved or were within the agreed tolerance, and 10 slightly behind target.

Members were also advised that of the 11 targeted corporate key performance indicators, 5 achieved their Q2 target or reported within the agreed tolerance, and 2 reported slightly behind target, and 4 were red.

In response to a question regarding indicator BP1.2.10, % of major planning applications overturned at appeal, and what work the Executive were doing to address the Council's high percentage of appeals, the Assistant Director Planning reminded the Committee of the spotlight scrutiny working group that had met at the start of the calendar year. A full response was due for consideration by the Executive shortly and would then be reported to this Committee. Members were also reminded that the Planning Advisory Service had reviewed the council's decision making in May and a report had been received in August. The report would be published in due course.

The Assistant Director Planning also explained to Members that work was due to commence to rectify how the data within the performance report was presented regarding % of major applications overturned at appeal, due to complications regarding the reporting periods. Performance of planning applications was monitored nationally over a two financial year period, with an additional 9 months added to allow for appeal decisions to come through. This meant that the Council was currently being monitored for the periods April 2023 to March 2025, April 2024 to March 2026, and April 2025 to March 2027. Officers were discussing how best to present the information to accurately reflect the performance over the national monitoring period.

In response to a question regarding paragraph 4.4.1 - average time to process new Housing Benefit claims and Council Tax Reduction applications,

and how many applications exceeded the 18 day maximum, the Assistant Director of Finance agreed to circulate a detailed response after the meeting. Members were advised that officers monitored claims on a monthly basis, and any that were over and above the 18 day maximum were investigated to understand what had caused the delays.

In response to a further question regarding paragraph 4.4.1 - agreements for lease for two new lettings at Castle Quay, and how many units remain unoccupied, the Assistant Director of Finance explained that they did not currently have those figures to hand and that officers would follow up with a written response to members.

In response to a question regarding BP1.2.05, % of Homelessness cases successfully prevented, indicator reporting as red, and what measures were in place to improve this measure, the Interim Executive Director Neighbourhood Services explained that the council reported 50% of successful preventions against a target of 60%. The Interim Executive Director Neighbourhood Services agreed to provide further written detail after the meeting regarding the number of residents that had been taken on as part of the Council's statutory homelessness duty during the quarter.

In response to a question regarding paragraph 4.3.3 - Net Additional Housing Completions to meet Cherwell needs, and what percentage of the housing yet to be delivered comprised of affordable housing, and whether priority could be given to the delivery of affordable housing, the Assistant Director Planning explained that as the Council was half way through its reporting period and as the data had yet to be reconciled they were not able to comment on the current amount of affordable housing completions.

In response to a question regarding housing delivery and the Council's 5 year housing supply and what steps were being taken to ensure that housing completions were achieved, the Assistant Director Planning explained that the Council's delivery figures reflected national trends and the health of the housing market. The Assistant Director Planning reassured the Committee that there were currently 11,000 homes with planning permission, which indicated the issue was with building the homes rather than land being released for development. The Council had a Housing Delivery Action Plan and a new Local Plan that was due for examination, and both would help alleviate the pressures on housing delivery in the district.

Resolved

- (1) That having given due consideration, the Council's Performance Monitoring Report Quarter 2 2025 - 2026 performance be noted, and no comments be submitted for Executive consideration.

Cherwell District Council Safeguarding Self-Assessment

The Committee considered a report from the Interim Executive Director Neighbourhood Services detailing the progress made on safeguarding measures and activity across Cherwell District Council.

In introducing the report, the Portfolio Holder for Healthy Communities advised members that this was an annual report that highlighted the Council's dedication to providing rigorous and thorough training to staff that encouraged professional curiosity and aided members and officers to report situations that required further investigation.

Members then considered a presentation from the Deputy Designated Safeguarding Lead further detailing the Safeguarding Self-Assessment and changes to the Safeguarding Partnership. Members were advised that as a result of these changes, the Safeguarding Self-Assessment was put on hold for 2025, whilst in its place a Professional Curiosity Survey was undertaken, and feedback from the Learning From Reviews workshop documents were reviewed.

In response to a question regarding multi-organisational involvement in complex safeguarding cases and the potential for individuals to be overlooked by the system, the interim Executive Director Neighbourhood Services explained that Oxfordshire as a whole was confident in its processes for responding and learning from such cases. Members were advised that the Safeguarding Partnership focused on a family approach to ensure that cases were handled with consideration to the wider family unit and encompassed a multifaceted approach from organisations within the partnership.

In response to a question regarding the Oxfordshire Annual Safeguarding Report and the next steps to tackle the higher demand and growing complexity of issues as a result of a more rigorous reporting process, and targeted mental health support for those in need, the interim Executive Director Neighbourhood Services explained that, the Oxfordshire annual safeguarding report was a report of the safeguarding partnership to which the Council was a part of and provided input. Members were also advised that the Council was focused on a unilateral approach to safeguarding and that the Council worked closely with the Health and Wellbeing Board, the Health Improvement Board as well as the Integrated Care Board to provide support to ensure the wellbeing of residents.

In response to a question regarding the link between children and adults social care and the associated safeguarding concerns that were linked to the transition between them at the age of 18, the interim Executive Director Neighbourhood Services explained that now that the Council was focused on a one partnership practice, this would lead to a more cohesive approach to the bridge between child and adult social care.

In response to a question regarding the increase in reports of domestic violence and what protocols were in place to handle this rise, the interim Executive Director Neighbourhood Services explained that the figures

represented the total reports made by officers via the See it, Report it system, where they had concerns about possible domestic violence incidents. Not all reports made were subsequently reported to Thames Valley Police for a variety of reasons, and in some instances the cases reported via the SIRI system were not domestic violence.

It was suggested by the interim Executive Director Neighbourhood Services and endorsed by members that the following actions would be proposed for future Safeguarding briefings:

- To provide continued opportunities for staff learning and member development around safeguarding.
- To provide further details on safeguarding data either within the quarterly performance report or as a separate report should that be necessary.

Resolved

- (1) That having given due consideration, the Council's Report on Safeguarding and the annual return be noted.
- (2) That the proposed actions for future Safeguarding briefings for Members be supported;
 - i. Provide continued opportunities for staff learning and member development around safeguarding.
 - ii. To provide further details on safeguarding data either within the quarterly performance report or as a separate report should that be necessary.

Kerbside Glass Collection Service

The Committee considered a report from the Assistant Director Environmental Services and Corporate Director Communities detailing options for Kerbside glass collection, and other new requirements driven by the Environment Act.

In introducing the report, the Leader of the Council & Portfolio Holder for Strategic Leadership, highlighted that he was delighted to announce that the Executive was supporting the introduction of kerbside glass recycling collection, fulfilling a long term desire from residents of the district.

In further introducing the report, the Assistant Director Environmental Services explained that due to legislative changes, by April 2026 councils were required to provide residents kerbside collections of paper, cardboard, cans, plastic bottles, and glass.

Members were also advised of the Deposit Return Scheme and the Extended Producer Responsibility scheme, which would introduce refundable deposits for drinks containers, as well as greater responsibility for packaging producers to reimburse councils for collection and treatment costs.

Members were also advised of the Emissions Trading Scheme that would target energy from waste plants and would pose increased costs for processing of non-recyclable waste, and therefore an emphasis would be placed on encouraging and facilitating recycling practices for residents and businesses in the district.

In response to a question regarding kerbside collection of glass, and whether residents would be able to place glass in their blue bins or would they require a dedicated glass bin, the Assistant Director Environmental Services explained that there was a potential for residents to require an additional separate receptacle for some recycled items in the future, however initially glass could go in the existing blue bin. As recycling trends shift going forward due to initiatives such as the Deposit Return Scheme, the amount and type of material residents had to recycle could change. More detail on the various schemes was expected during 2026, which would help the Council plan to meet those needs.

In response to a question regarding what the Council was doing to encourage positive behavioural changes in residents regarding waste collection, the Assistant Director Environmental Services explained that ongoing consultation with members and residents was needed over the next 18 months regarding the format of waste collection services. Possible changes in residual waste collection would potentially encourage further usage of recycling services, as well as the food waste collection service.

In response to a question regarding plans for the bottle banks in the wake of kerbside collection of glass recycling, and whether the relation between bottle banks and fly tipping had been considered, Assistant Director Environmental Services explained that bottle banks would be removed from problem areas first, and then from other areas across the wider district. Specific timeframes for the removal of all banks wasn't currently known, as it would depend on how quickly people altered their habits with disposing of glass. The Assistant Director Environmental Services confirmed that associated signage and communications with residents would be used to notify of the changes.

In response to a question regarding whether consideration was given to the impact of the removal of bottle banks on other collection banks such as textile and charity collections at the same locations, the Assistant Director Environmental Services explained that it was highly likely that other collection banks would be removed alongside the bottle banks due to issues with collection and associated fly tipping.

Regarding whether the Council had made plans relating to publicity for textile recycling if specific collection banks were removed, the Assistant Director Environmental Services explained that as the Council had made efforts to expand its collection services in the past to include batteries and small

electrical items, it was not unlikely that if there was a need for kerbside textile collection then it could be considered.

In response to a question regarding the potential loss of income resulting from the lack of separation of more valuable coloured glass at bottles banks, the Assistant Director Environmental Services explained that prices for glass fluctuate and that there would be repercussions from no longer colour separating glass. However, glass would be separated by colour at processing centres and there would still be an income for the Council. On the whole the glass industry was positive about the changes being made to glass recycling.

In response to a question regarding the value of the potential loss of income, the Assistant Director Environmental Services explained that as the wholesale prices for glass was set by global trends that it was subject to change, and in recent years had fluctuated from £20 to £100 per tonne. On average glass collection within the district was currently around 3,500 tonnes and the current value was £70 per tonne.

In response to a question regarding the potential lack of uptake of the Deposit Return Scheme with residents as a result of low deposits not being perceived as worthwhile, the Assistant Director Environmental Services explained that the uptake would very much depend on the value of the deposits set, and a higher value would incentivise returns of recyclable goods under the scheme.

Resolved

- (1) That having given due consideration, the Kerbside Glass Collection Service report be noted.

Flytipping Presentation

The Committee considered a presentation from the Head of Regulatory Services and Community Safety and the Environmental Protection and Enforcement Manager that detailed issues related to fly tipping in Cherwell and how the Council responded to and investigated cases of fly tipping.

In introducing the presentation, the Head of Regulatory Services and Community Safety explained that fly tipping was handled by both Regulatory Services and Environmental Enforcement teams, and that as well as fly tipping reports they also investigated issues with commercial and domestic waste accumulation, dog fouling and abandoned vehicles.

Members were advised that fly tipping was a national issue, that was on an upward trend, but comparatively Cherwell was trending below average against other comparable Councils. National reports of fly tipping had increased by 6% in 2023-24, going from 1.085 million to 1.15 million instances in 2022/23. 60% of those reported fly tips, 688,000, involved household waste, an increase of 5% on the 2022/23 figures of 654,000

Members were also advised that the Council and its officers employed a range of responses to fly tipping offences, from fixed penalty notices to community protection notices and out of court settlements. The Council were operating a proactive approach to deterring and preventing incidences of fly tipping, by means of increased officer presence, use of CCTV cameras to catch and deter, improvements to reporting software and channels as well as the removal of bottle banks which were often targets for such activities. It was also mentioned that efforts to educate residents and businesses of the available waste collection services as well as the implications of fly tipping and illegal waste disposal.

In response to a question regarding the recent report of a very large incident of fly tipping on the River Cherwell in Kidlington and what measures were being taken to deal with it, the Environmental Protection and Enforcement Manager explained that due to the scale and nature of the case that it was being treated as an illegal land fill site and that investigations were ongoing alongside the Environment Agency Officers would provide a written update to members after the meeting detailing the situation and progress so far.

In response to a question regarding fly tipping on roadsides and who was responsible for the clearances in such areas, the Environmental Protection and Enforcement Manager explained that waste deposited on County Council roads was handled by Cherwell District Council, but waste on motorways such as the M40 was handled by contractors on behalf of the Highways Agency.

In response to a question regarding the prioritisation of urban versus rural fly tipping and whether priority was given to known areas prone to frequent incidents of illegal waste disposal, the Environmental Protection and Enforcement Manager explained that work was underway to analyse incidents on a ward by ward basis to identify target areas, with efforts being given to improving reporting software to enable an emphasis on an evidence led approach that would be needed to ensure that data was being collated to assist in identifying and prosecuting offenders.

In response to a question regarding business waste removal licenses and whether all businesses within the district held the appropriate licenses, the Environmental Protection and Enforcement Manager explained that licenses relating to the collection, processing and disposal of waste were issued and managed by the Environment Agency, and that also extended to any enforcement powers under those licences.

In response to a question relating to bulky waste amnesties and collection events and whether or not they were successful in tackling illegal dumping of waste, the Head of Regulatory Services and Community Safety explained that such events were of mixed success and often resulted in encouraging fly tipping in the areas holding the events and causing more costs for the removal of said waste.

In response to a question regarding whether increasing the volume of public bins would help with the issue of littering, the Environmental Protection and Enforcement Manager explained that public bins were the responsibility of

Town and Parish Councils, and that the collection was often undertaken by the Cherwell District Council, but the issue of littering was a behavioural issue and that providing more bins would be costly and not necessarily fix the issue.

In response to a question regarding officer attendance at Parish Liaison meetings, and whether that would be a good route for dissemination of information relating to waste disposal, the Head of Regulatory Services and Community Safety said the team would look into attending going forward.

In a response to a question regarding the role of Town and Parish Councils in aiding in reporting of fly tipping, the Head of Regulatory Services and Community Safety explained that any form of additional reporting would be welcomed and that building relationships with Town and Parish Councils was a priority in tackling localised fly tipping.

Resolved

- (1) That having given due consideration, the Fly tipping presentation be noted.

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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 Cherwell Futures Programme had been moved from the December meeting to January 2026, to allow for full consideration of the Police and Crime Commissioner and Chief Constable Thames Valley Police Attendance scheduled for the December meeting.

Members were also advised that the recommendations from the Working Groups from the last municipal year had been formally submitted to the Executive in October, and that the Executive would be considering the responses at their December meeting. The responses would be submitted to the January meeting of the Overview and Scrutiny committee.

Resolved

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

The meeting ended at 8.45 pm

Chair:

Date: