

Cherwell District Council

Executive

Minutes of a meeting of the Executive held at 39 Castle Quay, Banbury, OX16 5FD, on 10 June 2025 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 Chris Brant, Portfolio Holder for Corporate Services
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 Robert Parkinson, Portfolio Holder for Safer Communities
Councillor Rob Pattenden, Portfolio Holder for Healthy Communities

Also Present Virtually:

Councillor Amanda Watkins, Leader of the Labour Group
Councillor Lynne Parsons, Overview and Scrutiny Committee Chair

Officers:

Gordon Stewart, Chief Executive
Ian Boll, Corporate Director Communities
Michael Furness, Assistant Director Finance & S151 Officer
Shiraz Sheikh, Assistant Director Law & Governance and Monitoring Officer
David Peckford, Assistant Director Planning & Development
Hitesh Mahawar, Climate Change Programme Manager
Natasha Clark, Governance and Elections Manager

Officers Attending Virtually:

Stephen Hinds, Corporate Director Resources and Transformation
Ed Potter, Assistant Director Environmental Services
Julia Harrington, Head of Regeneration and Growth
Nicola Riley, Assistant Director Housing and Wellbeing
David North, Housing Grants & Standards Team Leader

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 Chair welcomed Councillor Watkins, Leader of the Labour Group, and Councillor Parsons, Chair of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee, to the meeting and invited them to indicate if they wished to speak on any item.

3 Minutes

The minutes of the meeting held on 7 April 2025 were agreed as a correct record and signed by the Chair.

4 Chair's Announcements

The Chair advised that following the submission in March by the councils in Oxfordshire of an interim proposal to the Government, which set out three options that would be developed into full proposals, Cherwell District Council had committed to developing the two-unitary option for consideration by the Government in partnership with West Oxfordshire, Vale of White Horse, South Oxfordshire and West Berkshire councils. Information about the two unitary proposals were available on the council's website and a public engagement exercise, which included three events and an online survey, had commenced.

5 Housing Delivery Action Plan

The Assistant Director Planning and Development submitted a report to present a Housing Delivery Action Plan (HDAP) and seek agreement to the actions to improve Cherwell's five year housing land supply position.

Councillor Parsons, Chair of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee, addressed Executive to provide feedback from the Committee's consideration of the Housing Delivery Action Plan at their 3 June meeting. In the course of its discussion, the Committee had commented on the importance of adequate staffing and resource to deliver the plan, robust recognition of the number of people on the housing waiting list, ensuring necessary infrastructure to deliver developments and had agreed seven recommendations to be submitted to Executive:

- (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.

The Portfolio Holder for Planning and Development Management and Chair thanked Councillor Parsons and the Overview and Scrutiny Committee for their feedback, which they confirmed would be taken on board. In response to the recommendations, the Portfolio Holder for Planning and Development explained that the Chief Executive had given reassurance that resource would be made available.

The Chair confirmed he would write to the Government as per the fourth recommendation.

With regards Section 106 agreements and infrastructure development, the Portfolio Holder for Planning and Development Management referred to the Area Oversight Groups (AOGs) that had been established to bring together key stakeholders and agree local priorities under an Area Priority Plan. The key areas of work included supporting Planning Officers to resolve outstanding S106 issues and Planning / preparation for the receipt of S106 infrastructure contributions to ensure efficient spend / delivery. Joint working was important to address and unblock obstacles to housing delivery.

Resolved

- (1) That, having had regard to the feedback from the Overview and Scrutiny Committee, the Housing Delivery Action Plan be approved for publication.
- (2) That officers be instructed to keep the Housing Delivery Action Plan under review, having regard to comments received, and to make any necessary changes in consultation with the Portfolio Holder for Planning and Development Management.
- (3) That officers be instructed to present a comprehensive review of the five year housing land supply position to the Executive, should there be evidence of a significant change.

Reasons

In order to improve the district's housing land supply position and address the obstacles and delays to housing delivery, it is recommended that the Housing Delivery Action Plan is agreed.

Alternative options

Option 1: Seek reconsideration of the Housing Delivery Action Plan. Officers consider that the proposed action plan provides the necessary foundation for improving the housing land supply situation. It can be reviewed in response to changing circumstances in consultation with the Portfolio Holder for Planning and Development Management.

6 A Future for Banbury update including the Banbury Area Priority Plan

The Corporate Director Communities submitted a report which provided an update on the work in progress in relation to the Banbury area following the publication of the Banbury 2050 report; and included the emerging Banbury Area Priority Plan (APP) as part of the developing Area Oversight Framework.

The Banbury APP was a compilation of the Banbury 2050 vision engagement findings and recommendations, whilst also included the priority plans currently under development at Oxfordshire County Council (OCC), with the aim to share one APP for the area.

In response to Executive member comments regarding community engagement and similar plans for Bicester Kidlington, the Portfolio Holder for Finance, Property and Regeneration explained dates for community engagement would be shared with Members in due course. Plans for Bicester and Kidlington were at a draft stage whilst Banbury was ahead as OCC had secured £300k of funding in its capital programme to deliver a Banbury masterplan in 2025/26. OCC had also secured funding for active travel projects focussing on design feasibility work for two active travel corridors in Banbury. Other funded projects included the installation of new seating and planting in Market Place and a Banbury Wayfinding project to be scoped.

Resolved

- (1) That the update be noted.

Reasons

The Banbury Area Priority Plan contains the projects currently identified from a variety of community engagement events and project action plans. The aim is for CDC and OCC to have one Banbury APP and to work jointly to enable and deliver projects. The APP is an important tool for enabling the delivery of projects within Banbury and it will be reviewed and monitored by the Banbury Area Oversight Group as part of the CDC Area Framework approach.

Alternative options

This report is submitted for information only.

7 **Housing Civil Penalties Policy**

The Assistant Director Wellbeing and Housing submitted a report to seek approval for the new Housing Civil Penalties Policy.

In response to Executive member comments regarding how cases came forward, the Portfolio Holder for Housing and Assistant Director Wellbeing and Housing explained that civil penalties were an alternative to prosecution for certain housing offences and were a good deterrent. The Housing Team followed up on complaints and/or concerns raised by tenants, Registered Providers, neighbours and elected Members.

Resolved

- (1) That the new Housing Civil Penalties Policy be approved.
- (2) That changes to the reviewed Housing Standards Enforcement Policy be approved.

Reasons

It is important that the Council has up to date policies and procedures for its statutory and key service areas and it is important that they are legislatively and operationally sound. A periodic review of policies is therefore appropriate.

Alternative options

Option 1: Not bring forward a new and amended policy.

Our current approach to determining civil penalties is not consistent with the recent Upper Tribunal decisions, in particular Leicester CC vs Morjaria. This means that our current approach to calculating penalties will be at increasing risk of challenge. Therefore updates to the civil penalties policy are necessary. Changes to the Housing Standards Enforcement Policy are necessary for the creation of the new, compliant policy. Furthermore, it is important the Council policies are reviewed regularly to ensure that they are able to meet customer needs, service needs and are legislatively sound. This option is therefore rejected.

Option 2: Amend but retain as a combined policy.

Owing to the level of detail and complexity contained within the new civil penalties policy, coupled with the benefits of being consistent with the approach taken by numerous other local authorities, means combining the policies would make both unwieldy, difficult to use and less effective. This option is therefore rejected.

8 **Acceptance of Public Sector Decarbonization Scheme (PSDS) 4 Grant**

The Climate Change Programme Manager submitted a report to provide an update to the Executive on the funding attached to the Public Sector Decarbonisation Scheme (PSDS), allocate resources and implement the delivery of the associated building decarbonisation works in line with the Council's Strategic Priorities and carbon emissions reduction to achieve CDC's Carbon Net Zero 2030 target.

In response to Executive member comments regarding the timescales and arrangements should a site not come forward, the Portfolio Holder for Greener Communities, Corporate Director Communities Climate Change Programme Manager explained that there was a three-year planned programme of work and a risk register would be set up as part of the management of the project. Confirmation had been received from three of the sites and there was wider work in the Climate Action Plan so there were contingency schemes to ensure use of the grant was optimised.

Resolved

- (1) That it be agreed to proceed with the implementation of grant funding of £ 1,099,862 from the Public Sector Decarbonisation Scheme (PSDS) 4 as awarded by Salix Finance.
- (2) That an increase in the capital programme of £1,099,862 in line with the level of grant award, profiled in line with the timetable for receipt of the grant, be approved.
- (3) That the Net Zero Capital Projects budget be reprofiled to meet the match funding contribution of £350,911.40 and a further £210,000 to support deliver of the PSDS programme to fund:
 - Property team capacity and budget resource (personnel and funding) to manage procurement, contracts, installation oversight, and maintenance.
 - Capacity and budget resource (personnel and funding) to address outstanding rectification works from the previous PSDS-funded projects.
- (4) That the financial implications associated with the acceptance of the Public Sector Decarbonization Scheme 4 Grant, including that the profile of grant receipts is not flexible and so any slippage in the project will result in a risk that the council's contribution to the scheme increases, be noted.

Reasons

Accepting the PSDS funding offers a cost-effective and timely opportunity to make meaningful progress toward the Council's Strategic Priorities and Carbon Net Zero 2030 target. The projects supported by this funding will make our estate more energy efficient, reduce long-term energy costs, and demonstrate leadership in sustainability across the district.

The Executive is therefore recommended to approve the acceptance of the PSDS grant and support the delivery of the funded projects, enabling timely mobilisation and ongoing oversight.

Alternative options

Option 1: Do Nothing: Rejected due to continued reliance on high-carbon heating systems, missed opportunity for grant funding, and failure to meet internal climate targets.

Option 2: Delay Decision: Rejected due to time-sensitive nature of funding acceptance and delivery deadlines imposed by Salix Finance.

Option 3: Fund Through Council Capital Only: Rejected due to high capital cost burden and absence of external match-funding opportunity.

9 Finance and Performance Monitoring Report End of Year 2024-2025

The Assistant Director of Finance (S151 Officer) and Assistant Director – Customer Focus submitted a report to report to Executive the council's financial position and performance at the end of Year 2024-2025.

Resolved

- (1) That the council's financial and performance report at the End of Year 2024-2025 be noted.
- (2) That the reprofiling of capital projects beyond 2024-2025 (annex to the Minutes as set out in the Minute Book) and the subsequent update to the programme budget for this financial year 2025-2026 be approved.
- (3) That the reserve movements (annex to the Minutes as set out in the Minute Book) be approved.
- (4) That the outturn for 2024-2025, which is a surplus of (£0.162m) after the proposed contributions to reserves of £2.020m, be noted.

Reasons

The report updates the Executive on the year-end financial position and performance of the council for 2024/25, and performance position as of the end of year 2024-25. Regular reporting is key to good governance and demonstrates that the council is actively managing its resources sustainably.

Alternative options

Option 1: This report summarises the council's forecast financial position and performance position up to the end of End of Year 2024-25, therefore there are no alternative options to consider.

10 **Appointments to Partnerships, Outside Bodies, Member Champions and Shareholder Committee 2025/2026**

The Assistant Director Law and Governance submitted a report to appoint representatives to Partnerships, Outside Bodies, where these are executive functions, Member Champions and the Shareholder Committee, for the municipal year 2025/2026.

Resolved

- (1) That appointments to partnerships, outside bodies, the Shareholder Committee, Member Champions and advisory groups for the 2025/2026 municipal year be made as set out in the annex to the report (as set out in the Minute Book).
- (2) That authority be delegated to the Assistant Director Law and Governance, in consultation with the Leader of the Council, to appoint Members to any outstanding vacancies and make changes to appointments, including new appointments, as may be required for the 2025/2026 Municipal Year.
- (3) That appointed Members be reminded to update their Register of Interests as may be required, to reflect these appointments.

Reasons

It is proposed that representatives are appointed to Partnerships, Outside Bodies and as Member Champions as set out in the 1 to the report (annex to the Minutes as set out in the Minute Book) to ensure that the Council is represented and maintains links with partnerships and outside bodies.

Delegation to the Assistant Director Law and Governance, in consultation with the Leader provides flexibility for the remainder of the Municipal Year to appoint to any outstanding vacancies, or if amendments are required to any appointments, and ensures they are made in a timely manner.

Alternative options

Option 1: Not to appoint representatives to outside bodies, partnerships and as Member Champions. This is not recommended as the internal working groups would be ineffective and the Council would not be represented on these outside bodies and could miss valuable information and opportunities.

11 **Urgent Business**

There were no items of urgent business.

The meeting ended at 7.35 pm

Chair:

Date: