

Cherwell District Council

Council

Minutes of a meeting of the Council held at 39 Castle Quay, Banbury, OX16 5FD, on 15 December 2025 at 6.30 pm

Present:

Councillor Dorothy Walker (Chair)
Councillor Nigel Simpson (Vice-Chair)
Councillor Fiaz Ahmed
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 Dr Isabel Creed
Councillor Andrew Crichton
Councillor Dr Henry Elugwu
Councillor Donna Ford
Councillor Ian Harwood
Councillor David Hingley
Councillor Frank Ideh
Councillor Simon Lytton
Councillor Kieron Mallon
Councillor Nicholas Mawer
Councillor Fiona Mawson
Councillor Lesley McLean
Councillor Zoe McLernon
Councillor Ian Middleton
Councillor Julian Nedelcu
Councillor Dr Chukwudi Okeke
Councillor Robert Parkinson
Councillor Rob Pattenden
Councillor Chris Pruden
Councillor Edward Fraser Reeves
Councillor David Rogers
Councillor Les Sibley
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 Nick Cotter
Councillor Harry Knight
Councillor Lynne Parsons
Councillor Alisa Russell

Officers:

Gordon Stewart, Chief Executive
Ian Boll, Executive Director Place & Regeneration
Stephen Hinds, Executive Director Resources
Michael Furness, Assistant Director Finance & S151 Officer
Shiraz Sheikh, Assistant Director Law & Governance and Monitoring Officer
Heidi Radcliffe Hill, Interim Head of Chief Executive's Office
Natasha Clark, Governance and Elections Manager

Officers Attending Virtually:

Nicola Riley, Interim Executive Director Neighbourhood Services
Mona Walsh, Assistant Director - Property

46

Declarations of Interest

There were no declarations of interest.

47

Communications

Chair's Engagements

A copy of the events attended by the Chair or the Vice-Chair was published with the agenda.

The Chair referred to recent correspondence regarding the postponement of her Chair's Chairy lunch, which would now take place on 7 March at Exeter Hall, Kidlington. An updated invitation would be sent in the New Year.

Meeting Length

Due to the length of the agenda, out of courtesy to other Members, the Chair asked Members to remain in their seat during items and advised, if needed, she would adjourn the meeting to allow for a comfort break at a suitable point.

Members' Pigeon Holes

Members were reminded to check their pigeon hole and take any post.

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

There were no petitions or requests to address the meeting.

49 **Urgent Business**

There were no items of urgent business.

50 **Minutes of Council**

The minutes of the Council meeting held on 20 October 2025 and the Special Council meeting held on 10 November 2025 were agreed as a correct records and signed by the Chair.

51 **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 20 October 2025, 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.

52 **Questions**

a) Written Questions

The Chair advised that four 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, regarding the illegal fly-tipping at Kidlington. By way of a supplementary question, Councillor Reeves sought clarification on the chronology of events, the Leader advised that this was a

matter for the Environment Agency to respond to, but he would provide further information in writing.

The second question was from Councillor Reeves, regarding Government funding. By way of a supplementary question, Councillor Reeves asked the Leader to comment on the implications for CDC if the anticipated 5% – 7.5% reduction were confirmed. The Leader referred to the written response that set out ways that the Executive was working with officers to address future budget challenges, including through the Cherwell Futures Programme and identifying savings to avoid reductions to frontline services. Consultation on budget proposal was currently underway and the scrutiny of budget proposals by Budget Planning Committee had taken place. Lobbying of Government would also continue.

The third question was from Councillor Reeves, regarding CCTC services across Oxfordshire. By way of a supplementary question, Councillor Reeves sought clarification as to why CDC had not yet committed if there were benefits to the council. The Portfolio Holder for Safer Communities, Councillor Parkinson, provided background and context to the negotiations since CDC had agreed to join the CCTV Partnership in September 2024. Discussions were ongoing regarding the draft agreement, and it was important that matters were satisfactorily addressed. The Chief Executive would be meeting the Police and Crime Commissioner the following day to reinforce the council's commitment to finding a mutually acceptable way forward on behalf of our district and our residents.

The fourth question was from Councillor Roger, regarding the illegal fly-tipping at Kidlington. By way of a supplementary question, Councillor Rogers asked if the Leader could share any information regarding how the Environment Agency would fund clearing the site and if it would result in cuts elsewhere. 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 Rogers: Local Government Reform

Councillor Dr Okeke: Garages on Evenlode, Ruscote Estate

Councillor Biegel: Flytipping

Councillor Clarke MBE: Safety of pedestrians in Banbury town centre

Councillor Coton: Campsfield House Immigration Detention Centre on Langford Lane in Kidlington

Councillor Sibley: TVP Forensic Laboratory Building - Parking of Construction Vehicles

Councillor Sibley: A4095 Realigned Howes Lane Bicester

Councillor Mallon: Historic Banbury Borough Council Minute Books

Councillor Rogers: Discussion with Leader and CDC representative on the Joint Health Overview and Scrutiny Committee

Councillor Wood: Potential move to three-weekly residual waste collection

c) Questions to Committee Chairs on the Minutes

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

53

Council Tax Reduction Scheme 2026/27

The Assistant Director of Finance (Section 151) submitted a report to enable Members to consider the proposed banded scheme for Council Tax Reduction (CTR) for 2026/27.

Resolved

- (1) That the contents of the report, and any 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 2026/27 be approved and the Working Age Regulations be amended in line with annual uprating and Council Tax Regulations be amended for pensioners in line with uprating announced by Department for Levelling Up Housing and Communities.

54

Calendar of Meetings 2026/2027

The Assistant Director Law and Governance and Monitoring Officer submitted a report for Council to consider and agree the proposed calendar of meetings for the municipal year 2026/2027.

Resolved

- (1) That the calendar of meetings for Cherwell District Council for the municipal year 2026/2027 (annex to the Minutes as set out in the Minute Book) be approved.

55

Appointment of Independent Person to Accounts, Audit and Risk Committee

The Monitoring Officer submitted a report to appoint a second Independent Person to the Accounts, Audit and Risk Committee.

Resolved

- (1) That the appointment of Nelly Lukwo as an Independent Person, to be appointed for a four-year term expiring on the date of the December Council meeting in 2029, be endorsed and authority be delegated to the Assistant Director Law and Governance and Monitoring Officer to make the appointment.

(2) That it be noted that the appointment may be renewable in 2029 for a further term of four years, subject to the Independent Person wishing to continue in the role and Council agreeing the renewal of the appointment.

56 **Appointment of Independent Persons for Standards**

The Assistant Director of Law and Governance and Monitoring Officer submitted a report to appoint statutory Independent Persons as part of the standards arrangements.

Resolved

(1) That Tom Edwards and Terry Williams be appointed as Independent Persons for Standards for a four-year term expiring on the date of the December Council meeting in 2029.

57 **Castle Quay Banbury - Roof Works**

The Assistant Director Property submitted a report which sought approval of the utilisation of Capital Programme funds of £1.65 Million to undertake landlords works to ensure a fit for purpose watertight roof to mitigate loss of rent and further claims from occupiers at Castle Quay Banbury.

Resolved

(1) That the utilisation of Capital Programme funds of £1.65m to undertake landlords works to ensure a fit for purpose watertight roof to mitigate loss of rent and further claims from occupiers at Castle Quay, Banbury be approved.

58 **Treasury Management Report - Mid-year review 2025/26 (September 2025)**

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.

In introducing the report, the Portfolio Holder for Finance, Regeneration and Property confirmed that 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 Treasury Management mid-year review, as recommended by the Accounts, Audit and Risk Committee on the 19 November 2025, be noted.

59

Amendment(s) to Committee Membership

The Chair advised that no amendments to Committee membership had been notified to the Monitoring Officer by Group Leaders.

60

Motions

The Chair advised that three motions had been submitted. In accordance with Procedure Rule 4.18, motions were debated at Full Council on any issue over which the meeting has power or affects the District.

The detail of two motions, Free Parking on Remembrance Sunday, and Supporting our High Streets, fell within the remit of Executive, and there would therefore be no Council debate on the motions. The proposer of the motion would propose the motion and address Council, the seconder would confirm their seconding, and the Leader, Councillor Hingley, would respond to the motion. The motions would then be referred to Executive for consideration.

The detail of the third motion, Fire Services in Cherwell, was for debate by Council.

Motion One: Free Parking on Remembrance Sunday

Councillor Ford proposed and presented the following motion, which was duly seconded by Councillor Harwood. Councillor Hingley, Leader of the Council, responded to the motion.

“This Council notes that Remembrance Sunday is a solemn national occasion when communities come together to honour the memory of all who have served and sacrificed to protect our freedoms and way of life.

Many residents depend on Council-operated car parks to attend such commemorations. At present, standard parking charges apply, meaning serving personnel, veterans, bereaved families, and other attendees may face unnecessary financial barriers when paying their respects.

This Council recognises the profound sacrifice made by our Armed Forces and considers that providing free parking on this day is a practical and meaningful gesture of support for the Armed Forces community.

The financial impact of suspending charges for one day is minimal, while the benefit to residents and veterans is significant.

This Council therefore resolves to:

1. Suspend parking charges in all Cherwell District Council-operated car parks on Remembrance Sunday each year, beginning from the next Remembrance Sunday following this motion.
2. Publicise this measure in advance through the Council's communications channels to ensure residents are aware of the free-parking provision.
3. Work with local Royal British Legion branches, Armed Forces organisations, and town and parish councils to support attendance and ensure the policy benefits those it is intended to help."

Motion Two: Supporting our High Streets

Councillor Dr Okeke proposed and presented the following motion, which was duly seconded by Councillor Reeves. Councillor Hingley, Leader of the Council, responded to the motion.

"Local hospitality businesses across North Oxfordshire — from family-run restaurants, pubs and cafés to small independent venues — face substantial and growing financial pressures due to rising operating costs, higher taxes and a stagnating economy.

There is now a growing political consensus about the need to provide meaningful help to small independent retailers and hospitality businesses on our high streets.

This Council notes that District councils also have certain discretionary powers to support vulnerable local businesses where urgent relief is justified.

This Council resolves to:

1. Request that the Executive reviews any policies that are already in effect surrounding discretionary business rates relief, involving local independent business groups, together with the Overview & Scrutiny and/or Budget Planning committees (as appropriate) about any changes.
2. Ensure that any such changes focus on local independent businesses facing genuine financial hardship, rather than national chains and/or large retailers.
3. Further ensure that its discretionary policies surrounding business rates relief are better advertised to ensure that local businesses can benefit from Council support, where it is financially viable.
4. Ask the Leader to urgently write to the Secretary of State for Business and Trade, copied to North Oxfordshire MPs, urging him to review the national business rates system as regards its impacts on local hospitality and high street businesses as a matter of urgency.
5. Report back to members on progress surrounding the above steps without delay."

Motion Three: Fire Services in Cherwell

The Chair advised that one amendment to the motion had been received and published as a supplement to the agenda. In line with the Constitution, no further amendments were now permitted.

It was proposed by Councillor Crichton and seconded by Councillor Biegel that the following motion be adopted:

“Council notes

1. That Oxfordshire County Council is currently considering proposals that merge Rewley Fire Station with Kidlington Fire Station into a single Fire Station.
2. The proposals also include the loss of four full time Firefighters at Banbury Fire Station, and the implementation of 12 hour day shifts for firefighters at Bicester Fire Station.
3. Cherwell is a growing district which places greater demand on local emergency response capacity.
4. The proposals could affect response times and lead to diminished fire cover for incidents across Cherwell and Oxfordshire. The FBU has said the implementation of 12 hour shifts is unsafe.

Council believes

1. Closing and merging stations could increase average response times, when Oxfordshire Fire and Rescue Service's response times are already significantly longer than the national average.
2. The loss of four full time Firefighter positions in Banbury and implementation of 12 hour shifts at Bicester could have a detrimental impact on public safety in Cherwell.
3. That decisions on fire service changes must prioritise public safety above financial or administrative considerations.

Council therefore resolves to:

1. Support residents and Firefighters in Oxfordshire by making clear our opposition to the reduction in Firefighter numbers, implementation of 12 hour shifts, and the merger of Kidlington and Rewley Fire Stations.”

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

“Council notes

1. That Oxfordshire County Council is currently considering proposals that merge Rewley Fire Station with Kidlington Fire Station into a single Fire Station.
2. The proposals also include the loss of four full time Firefighters at Banbury Fire Station, and the implementation of 12 hour day shifts for firefighters at Bicester Fire Station.
3. Cherwell is a growing district which places greater demand on local emergency response capacity.
4. The proposals could affect response times and lead to diminished fire cover for incidents across Cherwell and Oxfordshire. The FBU has said the implementation of 12 hour shifts is unsafe.

Council believes

1. Closing and merging stations could increase average response times, when Oxfordshire Fire and Rescue Service's response times are already significantly longer than the national average.
2. The loss of four full time Firefighter positions in Banbury and implementation of 12 hour shifts at Bicester could have a detrimental impact on public safety in Cherwell.
3. That decisions on fire service changes must prioritise public safety above financial or administrative considerations.

Council therefore resolves to:

1. Support residents and Firefighters in Oxfordshire by making clear our opposition to concerns with the reduction in Firefighter numbers, implementation of 12 hour shifts, and the merger of Kidlington and Rewley Fire Stations."

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

The motion as submitted was debated. During his summing up, Councillor Crichton proposed that a recorded vote be taken. This was duly seconded by Councillor Dr Thornhill. Having been proposed and seconded, a recorded vote was taken. Members voted as follows:

Councillor Fiaz Ahmed	For
Councillor Tom Beckett	For
Councillor Rebecca Biegel	For
Councillor Gordon Blakeway	Abstain
Councillor Chris Brant	Abstain
Councillor Besmira Brasha	For
Councillor John Broad	For
Councillor Phil Chapman	For
Councillor Mark Cherry	For
Councillor Becky Clarke MBE	For
Councillor Jean Conway	Abstain
Councillor Grace Conway-Murray	For
Councillor Gemma Coton	Abstain
Councillor Dr Isabel Creed	For
Councillor Andrew Crichton	For
Councillor Dr Henry Elugwu	For
Councillor Donna Ford	Abstain
Councillor Ian Harwood	For
Councillor David Hingley	Abstain
Councillor Frank Ideh	Abstain
Councillor Simon Lytton	Abstain
Councillor Kieron Mallon	For
Councillor Nicholas Mawer	For
Councillor Fiona Mawson	For
Councillor Lesley McLean	Abstain
Councillor Zoe McLernon	For
Councillor Ian Middleton	For
Councillor Julian Nedelcu	Abstain

Councillor Dr Chukwudi Okeke	For
Councillor Robert Parkinson	Abstain
Councillor Rob Pattenden	Abstain
Councillor Chris Pruden	Abstain
Councillor Edward F Reeves	For
Councillor David Rogers	For
Councillor Les Sibley	For
Councillor Nigel Simpson	For
Councillor Dr Kerrie Thornhill	For
Councillor Dom Vaitkus	For
Councillor Dorothy Walker	Abstain
Councillor Linda Ward	For
Councillor Amanda Watkins	For
Councillor Douglas Webb	For
Councillor John Willett	For
Councillor Barry Wood	For

Resolved

(1) That the following motion be adopted:

“Council notes

1. That Oxfordshire County Council is currently considering proposals that merge Rewley Fire Station with Kidlington Fire Station into a single Fire Station.
2. The proposals also include the loss of four full time Firefighters at Banbury Fire Station, and the implementation of 12 hour day shifts for firefighters at Bicester Fire Station.
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2. The loss of four full time Firefighter positions in Banbury and implementation of 12 hour shifts at Bicester could have a detrimental impact on public safety in Cherwell.
3. That decisions on fire service changes must prioritise public safety above financial or administrative considerations.

Council therefore resolves to:

1. Support residents and Firefighters in Oxfordshire by making clear our opposition to the reduction in Firefighter numbers, implementation of 12 hour shifts, and the merger of Kidlington and Rewley Fire Stations.”

The meeting ended at 9.06 pm

Chair:

Date: