

## **Cherwell District Council**

### **Executive**

Minutes of a meeting of the Executive held at 39 Castle Quay, Banbury, OX16 5FD, on 3 March 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 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 Rob Pattenden, Portfolio Holder for Healthy and Safe Communities

#### **In Attendance Virtually:**

Councillor Les Sibley, Leader of the Independent Group  
Councillor Donna Ford  
Councillor Dr Chukwudi Okeke

#### **Officers:**

Gordon Stewart, Chief Executive  
Ian Boll, Executive Director Place & Regeneration  
Stephen Hinds, Executive Director Resources  
Kristian Aspinall, Executive Director Neighbourhood Services  
Nicola Riley, Assistant Director Wellbeing and Housing (Interim Executive Director Neighbourhood Services, at the time of agenda publication)  
Joanne Kaye, Head of Finance and Deputy S151 Officer  
Shiraz Sheikh, Assistant Director Law & Governance and Monitoring Officer  
David Peckford, Assistant Director Planning  
Kaimi Ithia, Head of Chief Executive's Office  
Jacey Scott, Head of Revenues and Benefits  
Natasha Clark, Governance and Elections Manager

#### **Officers Attending Virtually:**

Mona Walsh, Assistant Director - Property  
Claire Cox, Assistant Director Human Resources

109 **Declarations of Interest**

There were no declarations of interest.

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

There were no petitions or requests to address the meeting.

The Chair welcomed Councillor Ford, who, as proposer of the motion, would be speaking in respect of item 7, Response to Motion: Free Parking on Remembrance Sunday; Councillor Dr Okeke, who as proposer of the motion, would be speaking in respect of item 8, Non-Domestic Rate Discretionary Relief Policy and Response to Motion: Supporting our High Streets”; and, Councillor Sibley, Leader of the Independent Group.

111 **Minutes**

The minutes of the meeting held on 3 February 2026 were agreed as a correct record and signed by the Chair.

112 **Chair's Announcements**

There were no Chair's announcements.

113 **Urgent Business**

There were no items of urgent business.

114 **Response to Motion: Free Parking on Remembrance Sunday**

The Assistant Director Property submitted a report to respond to the motion raised at Full Council in December 2025 requesting Executive to consider providing free car parking each year in Council owned and managed car parks on Remembrance Sunday.

Councillor Ford, who had proposed the motion at Council, thanked Executive for the positive response agreeing to implement the motion.

In considering the report, Executive members thanked Councillor Ford for bringing the motion forward. The provision of free parking in Council owned and managed car parks on Remembrance Sunday, was, as the motion set out, a practical and meaningful gesture of support for the Armed Forces community.

**Resolved**

- (1) That free car parking be provided each year in Council owned and managed car parks, except those at Castle Quay, on Remembrance Sunday.

### **Reasons**

Provision of free car parking in council owned car parks (excluding Castle Quay) supports Remembrance Sunday is a national day of remembrance to honour the service and sacrifice of the Armed Forces, veterans, and their families.

### **Alternative options**

Option 1: Not supporting the motion could infer that the Council is not supportive of the wider purpose and aims of Remembrance Sunday.

115

### **Non-Domestic Rate Discretionary Relief Policy and Response to Motion, "Supporting our High Streets"**

The Assistant Director Finance (Section 151 Officer) submitted a report to inform Executive of the reviewed policy for Non-Domestic Rate Discretionary Rate Relief and seek approval of the updated policy and respond to the motion from Council on supporting our high streets.

Councillor Dr Okeke, who had proposed the motion at Council, addressed Executive, commenting on the importance of supporting local businesses and thanked Executive for the response.

### **Resolved**

- (1) That the contents of the reviewed policy for Non-Domestic Rate Discretionary Rate Relief be noted.
- (2) That the policy for Non-Domestic Rate Discretionary Rate Relief be approved.
- (3) That the response to the motion "Supporting our High Streets" be noted.

### **Reasons**

The Non-Domestic Rate Discretionary Rate Relief policy was last reviewed in 2024. It is good practice to review policies to ensure they remain relevant and in line with supporting the delivery of the Council's policies.

The report also sets out a response to the motion "Supporting our High Streets". Council supports the intent of the motion and acknowledges the ongoing challenges faced by high streets, including changes in consumer behaviour, rising costs, and the legacy of wider economic disruption. Cherwell District Council has already taken, and continues to take, a range of targeted

and place-based actions to support town centres and high streets, working closely with partners and stakeholders.

### **Alternative options**

Option 1: To not approve the discretionary rate relief policy. Members could choose not to agree the proposed policy, but it would mean that we wouldn't be able to continue to support local businesses, charities and voluntary organisations and would also reduce our financial flexibility in the future. The local authority must have a system in place to allow a person to make the request.

## 116 **Housing Payments Policy**

The Assistant Director Finance (Section 151 Officer) submitted a report to inform Executive of the reviewed policy for Housing Payment (HP), formally known as Discretionary Housing Payments (DHP), and proposed updates.

### **Resolved**

- (1) That the contents of the reviewed policy for Housing Payments be noted.
- (2) That the policy for Housing Payments be approved.

### **Reasons**

Housing Payments are vital for residents in the current economic climate and help to support our most vulnerable residents with housing costs. It is recommended that the policy is endorsed by Executive to continue delivering support to these customers.

### **Alternative options**

Option 1: Returning the funds to Department for Works and Pensions has been rejected as this would not be in line with Cherwell's objectives of continuing to respond to the cost-of-living crisis and working to prevent homelessness.

## 117 **Biodiversity Duty Report 2024-2025**

The Executive Director Place and Regeneration submitted a report to consider and endorse the Biodiversity Duty Report 2024-25.

### **Resolved**

- (1) That the Biodiversity Duty Report 2024-25 be endorsed.

- (2) That it be noted following the completion and adoption of a Community Biodiversity Plan, an annual update be presented to the Executive.

### **Reasons**

The Biodiversity Duty Report is presented for the reporting year 2024-25 to demonstrate what the Council is doing to conserve and enhance biodiversity, to highlight the relevant policies and objectives that are contributing to meeting the biodiversity objective and where delivery is being achieved. It also identifies the future actions necessary for on-going statutory compliance and to demonstrably improve the variety of the living organisms and ecosystems that comprise Cherwell's natural environment. Members are invited to endorse the report and the proposal for an annual report following the completion of the Community Biodiversity Plan which will also be presented to the Executive.

### **Alternative options**

Option 1: The Executive could decide not to endorse the Biodiversity Duty Report. This option is not recommended as the Report will assist in meeting statutory requirements notwithstanding the on-going commitment to produce the Community Biodiversity Plan within the new Biodiversity and Climate Resilience Service.

118

### **Whitelands Farm Sports Ground 3G**

The Interim Executive Director Neighbourhood Services (at the time of agenda publication) submitted a report to obtain Executive Approval to commence next steps on the development of a new 3G Football Pitch at Whitelands Farm Sports Ground in Bicester. The report outlined any financial risks.

In considering the report, Executive members commended the hard work of officers to secure external funds.

In response to comments from Councillor Ford and Councillor Sibley who welcomed and were supportive of the additional facilities but sought clarification regarding the communication and engagement with Bicester Town Council, the Portfolio Holder for Healthy and Safe Communities explained he had spoken with the Bicester Town Council Policy Committee Chair regarding the signing of the lease agreement. The Assistant Director Wellbeing and Housing confirmed that CDC had answered all questions raised by Bicester Town Council and confirmed the lease arrangements had now been signed.

The Portfolio Holder for Healthy and Safe Communities confirmed that he, together with the Assistant Director Wellbeing and Housing, would be happy to meet Bicester Town Councillors.

### **Resolved**

- (1) That the next steps in developing a new 3G Football Pitch at Whitelands Farm Sports Ground in Bicester, accounting for any financial risk, be approved.

### **Reasons**

An opportunity has been identified to increase and enhance the leisure facilities within Cherwell with the development of a new 3G Football Pitch at Whitelands Farm Sports Ground in Bicester which would add to the current provision. The funding for the proposed new 3G pitch is through identified S106 and partnership funding of up to 75% of project costs with the Football Foundation.

It is recommended that officers are to be instructed to continue to work in partnership with the Football Foundation to seek to secure grant funding. Whilst there is a risk that should the Council not wish to proceed with the project even after a grant offer from the Football Foundation the level of this risk is capped at circa £35,000.

### **Alternative options**

Option 1: Not to apply for grant funding from the Football Foundation  
This to be rejected on the basis that without Football Foundation/3<sup>rd</sup> Party Funding then the delivery of new facilities becomes unaffordable and the unmet demand for 3G pitches in Bicester remains. The ability to deliver on the actions within the Playing Pitch Strategy and provide excellent leisure facilities to residents is extremely important

119

### **Finance Monitoring Report January 2026**

The Assistant Director of Finance (Section 151 Officer) submitted a report to report to the Executive the council's forecast year-end financial position as at the end of the January 2026.

### **Resolved**

- (1) That the council's financial management report as at the end of January 2026 be noted.
- (2) That the Use of Reserves (Annex to the Minutes as set out in the Minute Book) be approved.
- (3) That Write Offs (exempt Annex to the Minutes as set out in the Minute Book) be approved.
- (4) That the Corporate Debt Policy be approved.

### **Reasons**

The report updates Executive on the projected year-end financial position of the council for 2025/26. 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 revenue financial position up to the end of March 2026, therefore there are no alternative options to consider.

## 120 **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, Paragraphs 1, 2 and 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.

## 121 **Finance Monitoring Report January 2026 - Exempt Appendix**

There being no questions on the exempt appendix, this had been agreed as set out under Minute 119.

## 122 **Thorpe Place Industrial Estate, Banbury – Roof Replacement**

The Assistant Director Property submitted an exempt report in respect of roof replacement at Thorpe Lane Industrial Estate Banbury.

### **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.

## 123 **Approval To Award a Contract for the Provision of the Council's HR and Payroll System and Managed Payroll Service**

The Assistant Director Human Resources submitted an exempt report to seek approval to award a contract for the provision of the Council's HR and Payroll System and Managed Payroll Service

**Resolved**

(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.

The meeting ended at 7.36 pm

Chair:

Date: