

Executive Response to the Report and Recommendations of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee

Name of Executive Portfolio Holder Councillor as at December 2025: Councillor Tom Becket – Portfolio Holder for Greener Communities	Name of Chief Officer(s) as at December 2025: Jo Miskin - Climate Action Manager, Environmental Services Hitesh Mahawar - Climate Change Programme Manager
Name of Executive Portfolio Holder Councillor as at July 2026: Councillor Ian Middleton - Portfolio Holder for Housing and Greener Services	Name of Chief Officer(s) as at July 2026: Michael Suddens – Head on Biodiversity and Climate Resilience. Hitesh Mahawar - Climate Change Programme Manager
Name of External Organisation (if relevant): N/A	Lead Scrutiny Officer contact: Emma Faulkner - Principal Officer - Scrutiny and Democratic Lead Emma.Faulkner@cherwell-dc.gov.uk

Overall response to the Scrutiny Report at December 2025

Cherwell District Council welcomes the recommendations of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee and acknowledges the importance of accelerating climate action across the organisation and district.

The Council has already embedded climate priorities within its corporate vision, notably through the “Environmental Stewardship” priority, and is actively progressing workstreams aligned with Net Zero pathways.

Key mechanisms such as the Annual Development Plan and Performance KPIs are in place to monitor delivery against agreed targets, with quarterly updates provided to the Executive and Overview & Scrutiny Committee. Climate Change Programme Board has been created to enable and drive the delivery of Climate Programmes.

The Council remains committed to developing a robust Climate Change Strategy, strengthening governance, and ensuring that sustainability remains ambitious, inclusive, and central to decision-making.

Executive Decisions (Response to Scrutiny Recommendations).

No.	Recommendation from Overview & Scrutiny	Agreed? (Yes/ No)	additional information	Update on progress as at July 2026
R1.	That a new Council Climate Action Strategy be prepared for agreement by the Executive and full Council, with clear strategies, ambitious yet realistic objectives to deliver year on year reductions in the Council's carbon emissions,	Yes	Officers have already started working on producing a climate strategy. This is being informed by Net Zero pathways' studies for Council and District. Engagement with every service area is	The Climate Action Plan 2026-27 was adopted by the Executive in March. The plan covers activities across council operations and the

	strategies, and targets to reduce district area emissions, to be agreed by full Council in 2025.		taking place and expected to complete in 2025 and climate team will be taking the Strategy to Executive in Feb'26.	wider district in line with net zero commitments.
R2.	That Climate Action be made a higher key corporate priority, reflected in the Council key priorities (to be agreed by Council), to be reflected in the Council's Corporate Plan, service delivery plans, and its annual and quarterly Performance Monitoring Reports, with ambitious but realistic measurable targets and performance measures.	Yes	The key element of this recommendation has already been incorporated in CDC's vision as one of the priorities i.e. "Environmental Stewardship". To ensure progress, the Annual Development Plan and Performance KPIs are in place, enabling quarterly monitoring against agreed targets and providing updates to both the Executive and Overview & Scrutiny (O&S) committees. Officers Climate Change Programme Board has been created to coordinate and drive the delivery of Council's Climate Programme and support District's Climate Programme agreed by the Strategic Programmes Board.	The Climate Action Plan 2026-27 contributes to the Environmental Stewardship priority of the Council's Annual Delivery Plan. To monitor and report progress, the climate action programme reports: - Monthly updates to Directorate Portfolio Board. - Bi-monthly updates to Transformation Board - Quarterly updates to Corporate Leadership Team - Annual updates to Executive
R3.	That the Council request that more detailed Environmental Impact Assessments be included in reports to the Planning Committee.	Yes	The Planning Committee report template will be amended to include a section on how the development has been considered having regard to climate change. Expected to be amended by January 2026	
R4.	That an evaluation and feasibility assessment of interim options and measures to replace the Council fleet of vehicles be carried out, with alternatives for less CO2 emissions.	Yes	CDC have commissioned a Fleet Decarbonisation pathway study and one of the recommendations was to use HVO as transition fuel before CDC switch to EV. Executive has approved use of HVO as a transition fuel, and Environmental	The council began purchasing HVO in July 2026 at the Bicester depot. Full roll-out is expected in September and continued thereafter.

			Services is in the process of going out with tender. Expected to award a supplier and implement HVO tentatively by December 2025.	The council continues to transition its fleet to electric where appropriate, recognising HVO as an interim solution to decarbonisation.
R5.	That the Council agree much greater focus, plans and targets, for reducing buildings emissions to achieve 2030 Net Zero targets, with clearly assessed deliverable measures to be put in place over the next five years, with clear objectives, milestones, and implementation dates.	Yes	The council acknowledges that it's pathway to becoming net zero by 2030 must change from its current trajectory - this is evidenced in the last Greenhouse Gas Reports which show that emissions remain stable, rather than falling steeply, as required. The need to decarbonise the corporate estate remains a significant challenge and a greater focus is required to ensure we have the necessary resources to implement the required, wide-ranging programme of works. CDC's Property Team have been tasked with producing a decarbonisation plan for the corporate estate and are currently working on rectifying legacy issues from PSDS1 as well as implementing PSDS4, both of which are government-funded schemes to support decarbonisation. Building/Estate Decarbonisation Plan by Q2 2026/27 if funds were made available. Climate Action Plan 2026 – 2028 by June 2026	The council is currently delivering Public Sector Decarbonisation Scheme 4 (PSDS) The Council secured £1,099,862 in capital grant funding from the Public Sector Decarbonisation Scheme (PSDS4). This is now under delivery and supporting decarbonisation of three council-owned buildings by replacing fossil-fuel-based heating systems with low-carbon alternatives and implementing energy efficiency upgrades. Rooftop solar PV (e.g. Spice Ball Solar PV) is being delivered through the Capital Work Programme. Additional opportunities for decarbonisation of heat and solar PV have been put forward as part of the 2026-27 MTFS. Delivery of these will be dependent on funding and capacity, in addition to other considerations.

				A low carbon asset register is in development to better understand performance of assets (e.g. heat pumps & solar PV). A property decarbonisation plan is not yet in delivery due to not securing funding to enable the activity.
R6.	That Council buildings be refurbished with space heating systems replacing gas powered radiators and insulation for energy conservation.	Yes	The executive acknowledges that decarbonising the corporate estates consist of two main elements. 1. How we provide heat, 2. Energy efficiency of building, both required an investment plan e.g. castle quay. which will come out from R5	Please see the update above in R5.
R7.	That the feasibility of introducing air-to-air heat pumps in buildings throughout the entire Council estate be investigated.		This is covered under R5	Please see the update above in R5.
R8.	That the Council agree hypothecated investment in Cherwell Council district corporate capacity to manage and optimise renewable energy and new technologies.		This is covered under R5	Planning and delivery of decarbonisation works in CDC owned assets will be dependent on capacity and resources in the Property team. Following retirement of the Capital Project Manager the post was advertised and we failed to appoint a suitably experienced candidate. The post will be readvertised. Recruitment to a further vacant Building Surveyor role will commence shortly. Note – decarbonisation work is only a part of the work undertaken by Property and the small team has multiple

				other workstreams in hand - all of which need to progress.
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