

Cherwell District Council

Executive

Minutes of a meeting of the Executive held at 39 Castle Quay, Banbury, OX16 5FD, on 7 September 2026 at 4.30 pm

Present:

Councillor Lesley McLean (Leader of the Council and Portfolio Holder for Strategic Leadership) (Chair)
Councillor Chris Aramini-Brant (Deputy Leader of the Council and Portfolio Holder for Planning and Development) (Vice-Chair)
Councillor Nicola Borkmann, Portfolio Holder for Customer and Community Services
Councillor Ian Middleton, Portfolio Holder for Housing and Greener Communities
Councillor Rob Pattenden, Portfolio Holder for Property and Assets
Councillor Dr Lisa Smith, Portfolio Holder for Leisure

Apologies for absence:

Councillor David Hingley, Portfolio Holder for Finance
Councillor Alisa Russell, Portfolio Holder for Neighbourhood Services

Also Present:

Councillor Paul Jeffreys, Leader of Reform UK Group

Also Present Virtually:

Councillor David Rogers, Chair, Overview and Scrutiny Committee
Councillor Les Sibley

Officers:

Gordon Stewart, Chief Executive
Ian Boll, Executive Director Place & Regeneration
Stephen Hinds, Executive Director Resources
Kristian Aspinall, Executive Director Neighbourhood Services
Michael Furness, Assistant Director Finance & S151 Officer
Shiraz Sheikh, Assistant Director Law & Governance and Monitoring Officer
Kaimi Ithia, Head of Chief Executive's Office
Nicola Riley, Assistant Director Wellbeing and Housing
Mona Walsh, Assistant Director - Property
Peter Sharp, Head of Regeneration and Economy
Natasha Clark, Governance and Elections Manager

Officers Attending Virtually:

Steve Brown, Programme Manager – Environmental Services
Richard Smith, Head of Housing

36 **Declarations of Interest**

There were no declarations of interest.

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

There were no petitions or requests to address the meeting.

The Chair advised that Councillor Sibley had requested to address the Executive on item 7, Local Area Development Funds – Proposal for Allocation.

38 **Minutes**

Subject to an amendment on exempt Minute 31 regarding shared funding, the minutes of the meeting held on 17 July 2026 were agreed as a correct record and signed by the Chair.

39 **Chair's Announcements**

The Chair made the following announcements:

1. Information had been received from the Planning Inspectorate regarding the Local Plan, which was continuing through the process and which would move forward in due course. The Deputy Leader – Planning and Enforcement thanked officers for their hard work to date.
2. The consultation period for Site A – Bicester Garrison was between 7 and 17 September and it was important all parishes were aware.
3. The Parish Liaison Meeting scheduled for 10 September would be cancelled in light of the Government announcement to pause Local Government Reorganisation.
4. There was a CEO sleepover at the beginning of October, which members of the Executive would be taking part in. More information would be provided in due course.
5. The Monitoring Officer and members of the legal team would be representing Cherwell District Council taking part on the Local Government Challenge on Friday 11 September raising money for the British Heart Foundation and Cancer Research.

6. The Government had earlier in the day announced its decision to pause Local Government Reorganisation (LGR). The Leader explained that she had communication from the BBC at lunchtime in relation to this and communication from the Government at 4pm. It was disappointing the Government had advised the media before local authorities. There was still no clarity on what the decision meant beyond local elections taking place in May 2027 as they would have done without LGR.

40 Urgent Business

There were no items of urgent business.

41 Local Area Development Funds - Proposal for Allocation

The Executive Director Place and Regeneration submitted a report which set out the next tranche of projects that had been discussed and recommended by Area Oversight Groups (AOGs) for Local Area Development Funding. This funding was agreed as part of the annual budget setting process by Council on 23 February 2026. The report also provided an update on projects previously approved for funding by the Executive in July 2026.

In introducing the report, the Leader thanked the Head of Regeneration and Growth and council officers supporting the work for their comprehensive work and detailed updates.

Councillor Sibley addressed Executive expressing support for the projects in Bicester. In response to a question if the funds could be used to further extend the opening of public convenience at Manorsfield Road from March 2027 to March 2028., the Leader confirmed that the Bicester business case set out the longer-term funding arrangements would be considered by the Bicester AOG in due course.

Resolved

- (1) That it be agreed to allocate £524k of Local Area Development Funds to progress the following projects for the 2026/27 financial year as discussed and recommended at the respective Area Oversight Group and to agree to add the capital projects to the capital programme:

Figure 1: Project Summary

Project	Est. Cost (£)		AOG
	RDEL	CDEL	
Banbury Town Centre Revitalisation – Look and Feel Phase 2		£100k	Banbury
Pioneer Square Conveniences (Manorsfield Road)	£26k		Bicester
Langford Village Park Improvements		£100k	
Dangerfield Nature Reserve Boardwalk		£60k	
Sports Pavilion – RIBA Stages 2-4	£33k		Kidlington

*Green Spaces Improvements – Yarnton		£110k	
Town Centre Improvements	£30k		
*Oxford-Banbury Road Corridor Options Appraisal	£45k		
Community Insight Fund	£20k		
Total Revenue / Capital Funding	£154k	£370k	
Total Funding Requested	£524,000		
<i>* The allocations for these two projects are for match funding to support delivery of a wider initiative</i>			

- (2) That the use of £47,281 of S106 funds to top up the proposed allocation for Green Spaces Improvements for Yarnton (Appendix 3) be approved to create a total scheme budget of £157,281 in the capital programme.
- (3) That authority be delegated to the Executive Director Place and Regeneration, in consultation with the Portfolio Holder for Strategic Leadership and Regeneration and the Assistant Director Finance, to agree final cost plans for the above projects subject to the maximum cost envelope outlined in Figure 1 above.
- (4) That the progress of previously approved projects be noted and it be agreed to receive further updates as project delivery progresses.

Reasons

This report seeks to agree an allocation of £524k of Local Area Development Funds for delivery of specific projects in Bicester, Banbury and Kidlington.

The proposed projects are supported by the respective AOG and support the council's priorities around delivering economic prosperity and community leadership.

Alternative options

Option 1: Do not proceed with projects proposed - Funds have already been allocated as set out in Section 4 and priorities have been agreed by Area Oversight Groups. This report is intended to utilise some of this funding for enhancements identified by ward councillors as representatives of our communities. Doing nothing means that identified priorities will not be funded and commitments made to the district as part of the budget setting process will not be fulfilled.

Additional Temporary Accommodation Purchases

The Assistant Director Wellbeing and Housing submitted a report to seek approval to add additional funds from grants received to the capital budget for purchases of property for temporary accommodation.

In response to Executive member comments, the Portfolio Holder for Housing and Greener Services explained that the additional funding would focus on providing homes suitable for larger households. As it was funded from resettlement grant, the properties must be targeted at assisting families that were intended to benefit from this grant. Using the grant funding in this way is within grant conditions

Resolved

- (1) That the increase to the Council's capital programme of £1,000,000 for additional temporary accommodation purchases, using grant funding from resettlement, be approved.

Reasons

The report will enable more suitable temporary accommodation options within the district. The increase in capacity within the portfolio will also reduce revenue pressures that would otherwise arise.

Alternative options

Option 1: Not to use the grant money in this way. The Council could seek to use the grant money in other ways that would be of benefit to the Afghan Resettlement households. However, it is unclear whether other means would be able to prevent their homelessness, as these are the steps we are currently taking. When the households do become homeless, temporary accommodation costs are likely to be incurred and are likely to be significant. Not spending this grant on increasing stock size would create revenue pressure. This is rejected.

Option 2: Spend further grant on nightly charged temporary accommodation. This is an option and the grant would cover the costs of this. However, nightly charge offers no income and no return on investment, which the proposed option does. The income received from property would be Council revenue and would not require repayment. Additionally, families would be in nightly charged accommodation, such as hotels, for periods of over 6 weeks, due to the lack of availability of alternative accommodation. It is not permitted by government for any household with children to be in hotel accommodation for longer than 6 weeks. This is rejected.

Voluntary and Community Sector (VCS) and Community Asset Transfer (CAT) Policy

The Assistant Director Property submitted a report to seek Executive approval for the Council's Voluntary and Community Sector (VCS) and Community Asset Transfer (CAT) Policy, providing a consistent corporate framework for the occupation, leasing, subsidised use and transfer of Council-owned property assets to voluntary, community and charitable organisations. The Policy also established the Council's approach to Community Asset Transfers

and subsidised occupation whilst protecting the Council's strategic property interests.

Resolved

- (1) That the Voluntary and Community Sector (VCS) and Community Asset Transfer (CAT) Policy be approved.
- (2) That the introduction of a standard subsidy framework whereby occupation of Council assets by eligible voluntary and community organisations will normally be offered at up to a 50% discount to independently assessed market rent, for a maximum period of five years, subject to the requirements of the Policy, be approved.
- (3) That authority be delegated to the Assistant Director Property, in consultation with the Portfolio Holder for Property & Assets, Chief Finance Officer and Monitoring Officer to enter into property dispositions and occupation agreements under the VCS and CAT policy and in accordance with the Scheme of Delegation under Part 3 of the Constitution.

Reasons

The Council's community centres provide an important resource for local communities, supporting a wide range of voluntary and community organisations that deliver significant social, health and wellbeing benefits across the district. However, the current arrangements have evolved over many years without a consistent corporate framework, resulting in varying lease arrangements, undocumented occupation, inconsistent subsidy levels and differing approaches to statutory compliance and asset management.

The proposed Voluntary and Community Sector (VCS) and Community Asset Transfer (CAT) Policy establishes a consistent, transparent and proportionate framework for the occupation, leasing and transfer of community assets. It supports the Council's Corporate Landlord approach by introducing clear governance arrangements, standardising subsidy, strengthening statutory compliance and providing a structured process for Community Asset Transfers where these deliver sustainable long-term community benefit.

The Policy balances the Council's responsibility to safeguard public assets with its commitment to supporting the voluntary and community sector. It does not seek to reduce community provision or remove existing organisations from Council-owned buildings. Instead, it establishes a sustainable funding model that enables the Council to meet its statutory responsibilities as landlord, maintain safe and compliant community buildings, and maximise community benefit whilst continuing to provide significant financial support to community organisations.

Approval of the Policy will enable the Council to progressively regularise existing occupation arrangements, prioritise those assets presenting the greatest compliance and governance risks, improve the utilisation of

community assets and ensure future decisions relating to community occupation are made consistently, transparently and in accordance with an approved corporate policy framework.

Alternative options

Option 1: Continue with existing arrangements

This option has been rejected. The current arrangements have evolved over many years without a consistent corporate policy and have resulted in varying lease structures, undocumented occupation, inconsistent subsidy arrangements and differing responsibilities for repairs, maintenance and statutory compliance. The Council cannot currently demonstrate consistent compliance across its community centre portfolio and continuing with the existing arrangements would expose the Council to ongoing health and safety, governance and financial risks.

Option 2: Require all community organisations to pay full market rent and assume responsibility for statutory compliance

This option has also been rejected. Whilst this approach would reduce the Council's financial liabilities, it would place significant additional financial and operational pressures on voluntary and community organisations and could undermine the valuable services they provide to local communities. The Council also considers that retaining responsibility for key statutory compliance activities provides greater assurance that community buildings remain safe and compliant.

Option 3: Approve the proposed Voluntary and Community Sector (VCS) and Community Asset Transfer (CAT) Policy

This is the recommended option. The Policy establishes a consistent and transparent corporate framework for community occupation, subsidy and Community Asset Transfers. It enables the Council to meet its statutory responsibilities as corporate landlord, supports sustainable community provision, introduces appropriate governance arrangements and creates a long-term funding model that will enable community buildings to remain safe, compliant and well maintained whilst continuing to provide significant financial support to the voluntary and community sector.

Budget Process 2027/28

The Assistant Director Finance (S151 Officer) submitted a report to inform the Executive of the proposed approach to the 2027/28 Budget Process and provides context and background information on the existing Medium-Term Financial Strategy (MTFS) and information on latest government announcements relevant to the Strategy.

Resolved

- (1) That the Budget Process for 2027/28 be approved.

- (2) That the base assumptions to be used for the 2027/28 budget as set out below be approved.

The proposed planning assumptions for the updated MTFS period will include provision for inflation on pay, contracts, and fees and charges and council tax. It will assume 3.5 percent pay awards over the MTFS period. Contract inflation will be provided for at 3 percent in all years of the MTFS. Fees and charges will be reviewed and increased by a minimum of 3 percent for in all years of the MTFS (where the fee is set by the council) to reflect cost recovery. Council tax increases will be assumed at the maximum allowable (£5 or 2.99%) without a referendum.

- (3) That a five-year period for the Medium-Term Financial Strategy to 2031/32 and five-year period for the Capital Programme to 2031/32 be approved.

Reasons

The Council has a legal obligation to set a balanced budget and ensure it maintains a suitable level of reserves each year. The process laid out in this report will allow CDC to develop budget proposals that will allow it to meet these legal obligations.

Alternative options

There are no alternative options to consider. The process laid out in this report will allow CDC to develop budget proposals to meet its legal obligations.

45 Finance, Performance and Risk Monitoring Report Quarter 1 2026-2027

The Assistant Director Finance (S151 Officer) and Head of Chief Executive's Office submitted a report to report to Executive the council's forecast year-end financial, performance, and risk position as of the end of Q1 of the 2026/27 financial year.

Resolved

- (1) That the council's finance, performance, and risk management report as at the end of Q1 for the financial year 2026/27 be noted.
- (2) That the reprofiling of projects in the capital programme and the subsequent update to the programme budget for this financial year be approved.
- (3) That the (exempt) debt write offs be approved.
- (4) That the £0.655m treasury savings to be vired to Policy Contingency and made available as general contingency be approved.

- (5) That the release of £0.030m from Policy Contingency for a performance post within Place & Regeneration be approved.
- (6) That the change to the final transfer to reserves reported in the 2025/26 Outturn report as per the Reserves Policy be noted.

Reasons

The report updates the Committee on the financial, performance, and risk position of the council for the end of Q1 2026-27. 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 financial, performance, and risk position up to the end of Q1 2026-27, therefore there are no alternative options to consider.

46 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, Paragraph 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.

47 Finance, Performance and Risk Monitoring Report Quarter 1 2026/2027 - Exempt Appendix 5

The exempt appendix had been agreed as part of agenda item 11, Minute 45 refers.

48 A New Arts Centre for Banbury

The Assistant Director Wellbeing and Housing submitted an exempt report in respect of a new Arts Centre for 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.

49

Utility Contract Procurement - Property Services

The Assistant Director Property submitted an exempt report in respect of the procurement of a utility contract, property services.

Resolved

- (1) As set out in the exempt Minutes.
- (2) As set out in the exempt Minutes.
- (3) As set out in the exempt Minutes.
- (4) As set out in the exempt Minutes.

Reasons

As set out in the exempt Minutes.

Alternative options

As set out in the exempt Minutes.

50

Cherwell Futures Programme: Environmental Services Operational Improvement Programme – Full Business Case

The Executive Director Neighbourhood Services submitted an exempt report in respect of the Cherwell Futures Programme: Environmental Services Operational Improvement Programme – Full Business Case.

Resolved

- (1) As set out in the exempt Minutes.
- (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 6.00 pm

Chair:

Date: