

Message from Gordon Stewart, Cherwell District Council's New Chief Executive

It is with great pleasure and enthusiasm that I reach out to you as the newly appointed Chief Executive of Cherwell District Council. I started on Monday, 8 January, and I wanted to take this opportunity to introduce myself.

In the coming weeks and months, I will meet partners and get out into our communities to see our work first-hand. I am determined to ensure we continue to deliver outstanding services for our residents and build on our many successes. Your continued support in achieving our vision and goals for the district will be pivotal.

I am excited about the opportunities that lie ahead and look forward to working with you in the future.

Clerks with Scheduled Elections on 2 May

The Democratic and Elections Team have recently been in touch with all clerks that have elections scheduled to take place on 2 May, to advise the dates of our briefing sessions. The sessions will be held via MS Teams on the following dates:

Wednesday 6 March, 5pm start – Briefing one.

Thursday 11 April, 5pm start - Briefing two, for clerks with contested elections (i.e. more candidates than seats) and candidates in those elections.

Tuesday 23 April, 5pm start – This final briefing will be combined, with District agents and independent candidates invited to attend, as well as clerks with contested elections and the town/parish candidates.

Details have been added to the [Elections 2024](#) page of the Cherwell District Council website, alongside key timetable dates for the election period. The Electoral Commission also have specific guidance for town and [parish council elections via their website](#), which may be of interest to everyone.

REPF Village Hall Grants – Round 2

Village and community halls in Cherwell are being offered a second opportunity to apply for capital grants through our Rural England Prosperity Fund (REPF) financed scheme. In the first round eleven awards were made to village hall improvement projects around the district. Values ranged from £900 all the way up to £25,000.

We received enquiries from several halls that didn't manage to finalise an application (including provision of quotes etc) before the Round 1 deadline. We hope that this second round will enable them to progress to full applications. Other halls that have developed proposals in the meanwhile are also welcome to apply.

The deadline for round 2 applications is 04 February. Any enquiries should be directed to grants@cherwell-dc.gov.uk

Planning Inspectorate changes how it collects comments on appeals

The Planning Inspectorate has announced that from 1 April, people wanting to share their views on planning and enforcement appeals must submit their comments through the [Appeals Casework Portal \(ACP\)](#). Comments will no longer be accepted by email.

ACP provides several benefits to the interested party, the Planning Inspectorate and to Local Planning Authorities (LPAs) including:

- Certainty to the interested party that their comments have been received
- Ensuring personal data, such as email addresses, are not included on the response which reduces redaction requirements for councils when publishing public comments on their website
- Simplifying back-office processes, making the task of handling representations more efficient

From 1 April, interested parties who try to make a comment via email will be directed to the ACP. The Planning Inspectorate will continue to make provision for those with accessibility needs.

Village Defibrillators – Is Yours Correctly Recorded?

Emergency access to Public Access Defibrillators (PADs) is co-ordinated by South Central Ambulance service (SCAS). We have been made aware of a recent incident in a Cherwell village where access to the PAD was severely delayed whilst SCAS tried to find the access code for its cabinet.

The up to date details of all PADs should be known to SCAS, and mapped on the 'Save a Life' app. If a village PAD seems to be unregistered or details need to be updated, the responsible organisation should contact defib@scas.nhs.uk

Further Information: <https://www.scas.nhs.uk/what-we-do/community-first-responders/public-access-defibrillators/>

Elections – Overseas Electors

The Election Act 2022 has brought in the removal of the 15-year limit on expatriates' right to vote in UK Parliamentary elections. All British citizens overseas who were previously registered or resident in the UK will be allowed to vote in Parliamentary elections. They can register to vote [online](#) via the gov.uk website or visit our [website](#) for more information about the changes.

Community Ownership Fund - Reminder

The government is providing £150 million funding over four years to support community groups in England, Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland to take ownership of assets and amenities at risk of being lost, such as community centres, parks, pubs and post office buildings.

[The next application window for DLUHC's Community Ownership Fund \(round three window three\) will close on 31 January 2024.](#)

Prospectus:<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/community-ownership-fund-prospectus/community-ownership-fund-prospectus--3>

Banbury 2050

We have had a brilliant response to the survey which closed on 15 January. Over 2,700 questionnaires were returned and are now being analysed. This will give us valuable insights into what people think about the town centre and its future needs.

Thank you for helping us make this happen. It was so important to gather the views of villagers who use the town, as well as Banbury residents. We look forward to sharing the findings with you later this year. Please get in touch if you want to find out more.

You can get in touch with the Banbury 2050 team via Banbury2050@cherwell-dc.gov.uk

Big Garden Birdwatch

What better way to start the new year than by enjoying time with nature. Discover the birds on your doorstep by taking part in the Big Garden Birdwatch. It's fun and free to do. Just spend one hour at any time between Friday 26 and Sunday 28 January counting the birds you see in your garden, from your balcony or in your local park. And to increase your chances of seeing lots of birds, find out how you can attract birds into your space. Go here to sign up and for more information - <https://www.cherwell.gov.uk/connect-with-nature>

CDC Council and Committee Meetings

Meetings currently scheduled for the coming month are:

- Budget Planning Committee at 6.30pm on Tuesday 23 January
- Overview & Scrutiny Committee at 6.30pm on Tuesday 30 January
- The Standards Committee at 6.30pm on Wednesday 31 January
- Executive Committee at 6.30pm on Monday 5 February
- Personnel Committee at 6.30pm on Wednesday 7 February
- Planning Committee at 4.00pm on Thursday 15 February
- Full Council at 6.30pm on Monday 26 February

To view a CDC council meeting— go to the [Browse Meetings Page](#) of our website, select the relevant committee and the meeting date. Click on “View the webcast” on the agenda webpage.

Staying Up To Date

Get the latest news direct to your inbox

[Sign up for Cherwell Link](#)

This is a briefing emailed to all Cherwell Parishes