

COUNCIL

Monday 1 December 2014

COUNCILLORS PRESENT: Councillors Abbasi (Lord Mayor), Humberstone (Sheriff), Simmons (Deputy Lord Mayor), Altaf-Khan, Anwar, Benjamin, Brandt, Brown, Clack, Clarkson, Cook, Coulter, Darke, Fooks, Fry, Gant, Goddard, Gotch, Haines, Hayes, Henwood, Hollick, Hollingsworth, Kennedy, Lloyd-Shogbesan, Lygo, Malik, Munkonge, Paule, Pressel, Price, Rowley, Sanders, Seamons, Simm, Sinclair, Smith, Tanner, Tarver, Taylor, Thomas, Upton, Van Nooijen, Wade, Wilkinson and Wolff.

57. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Councillors Royce and Turner submitted apologies.

58. MINUTES

Council agreed to approve the minutes of the ordinary meeting held on 29 September 2014 as a true and correct record.

59. DECLARATIONS OF INTERESTS

There were no declarations.

60. APPOINTMENT TO COMMITTEES

Council agreed to appoint:

- Councillor Rowley to the Standards Committee;
- Councillor Smith to the Scrutiny Committee;
- Councillor Henwood to the Licensing and Gambling Acts Committee;

and confirmed the appointment of Councillor Henwood to the Planning Review Committee.

61. ANNOUNCEMENTS

The Lord Mayor welcomed the newly elected councillors, Linda Smith and Sian Taylor, to the Council.

He announced that former councillor Stuart McCready had recently died. Councillor Fooks paid tribute to Mr McCready's service to the Council, and members stood for a minutes' silence in his memory.

The Lord Mayor announced;

- visits from the four twin city mayors or their representatives for the Remembrance Day services;

- he had the honour of meeting HRH Princess Anne when she visited Oxfordshire Youth Offending Service
- a recent multi-faith meeting and service, very well attended by faith and non-faith communities, to show solidarity against extremism.

The Leader of the Council announced:

- the Low Carbon Hub share offer was oversubscribed and the projects would go ahead;
- he would take up the issue of power cuts and their impact on vulnerable people with the energy companies, as there had been several recently;
- awards from Institute of Rating, Revenues and
- Valuation awards: the welfare reform team won the Excellence in Partnership Working award and a silver in the Excellence in Staff Development category;
- it would be helpful to have shadow portfolio holders for the Crime and Communities portfolio;
- he would invite health partners to take forward the initiatives suggested by the parliamentary group, sent to mark World Aids Day, to tackle HIV rates in the city.

62. PUBLIC ADDRESSES AND QUESTIONS THAT RELATE TO MATTERS FOR DECISION AT THIS MEETING

There were no addresses or questions.

63. ASSET MANAGEMENT PLAN REFRESH 2014-15

Councillor Goddard joined the meeting.

Council had before it a report recommending the adoption of the Asset Management Plan Refresh 2014-15, and the relevant minutes of the City Executive Board meeting on 15 October 2014.

Councillor Price moved the report.

Council agreed to adopt the Asset Management Plan Refresh 2014- 2015.

64. WESTGATE AND COMMUNITY INFRASTRUCTURE LEVY

Councillors Brown and Sanders joined the meeting.

Council had before it a report recommending a proposed financial contribution to the Westgate Alliance towards the public realm works associated with the Westgate development, and the relevant minutes of the City Executive Board meeting on 19 November 2014.

Councillor Price moved the report.

Council agreed to apply Community Infrastructure Levy receipts to the value of £1,134,000 in two phases of £567,000 each (50% in Q1 2016/17 and 50% in Q1 2017/18) in order to fund public realm works that fall outside the site covered by the planning application for the Westgate redevelopment scheme.

65. REVIEW OF POLLING DISTRICTS AND POLLING PLACES 2014

Council considered a report setting out the schedule of polling districts and polling places (shown at Appendix B) for the administrative area of the City Council as required by the Electoral Administration Act 2006.

Councillor Simmons moved the report.

Council agreed to:

1. approve the Schedule of polling districts and polling places as in Appendix B, subject to recommendation 2;
2. ask the Returning Officer to investigate the alternative polling stations suggested and notify political groups if suitable alternatives can be found; and
3. authorise the Returning Officer to make changes to polling stations in emergencies in order to ensure the effective conduct of any elections.

66. COUNCILLORS' ALLOWANCES - REPORT OF THE INDEPENDENT REMUNERATION PANEL

Councillor Humberstone joined the meeting.

Council had before it a report presenting the recommendations of the Council's Independent Remuneration Panel (IRP) and the full report of the IRP.

Councillor Price moved the recommendations as set out in the report with an amendment to recommendation 7 to provide for carer's allowances to be reimbursed only when these were paid at or above the Oxford Living Wage. Councillor Fooks seconded this.

Councillor Hollick moved an amendment to recommendation 6 (special responsibility allowances) to give:

- Leader's SRA 2.5 x basic allowance
- Deputy Leader's SRA 0.5 x basic allowance.

This was seconded but lost on being put to the vote.

After debate and on being put to the vote, the recommendations in the report with the amendment proposed by Councillor Price were carried unanimously.

Council agreed the recommendations as set out in the officer's report with an amendment to recommendation 7:

1. Members' Basic Allowances (and therefore Members' Special Responsibility Allowances (SRAs)) from 2015/16 onwards are set at a level which compounds the 1% interest that has been available for the last two financial years, but with no backdating, making the Basic Allowance from April 2015 onwards £4,809;

2. the new Members' Allowances Scheme should allow for indexation of Councillors' Allowances in line with the local staff pay deal for the following four years;
3. the Basic Allowance will now cover subsistence, some travel, broadband and incidental costs which are currently claimed separately and that Councillors will no longer be able to claim for those other costs other than travel outside the City within a scheme of duties as set out in paragraphs 32-35 of the IRP's report;
4. the 'maximum of two special responsibility allowances per councillor' rule be retained, but that SRAs for Civic Office Holders will not be included in this rule;
5. to adjust the positions that attract a Special Responsibility Allowance (SRA) to reflect contemporary demands and to include the Civic Office Holders in line with the recommendations at paragraphs 28 (i) – (x)
6. set levels of SRA :-

Leader	3 x Basic	£14,427
Deputy Leader	1 x Basic	£4,809
Lord Mayor	1 x Basic	£4,809
Deputy Lord Mayor	0.25 x Basic	£1,202
Sheriff	0.25 x Basic	£1,202
Board Members with particular responsibilities	1.5 x Basic	£7,213
Board Members without particular responsibilities	0.5 x Basic	£2,404
Chair of Audit & Governance Committee	0.25 x Basic	£1,202
Chair of Planning Committee	1 x Basic	£4,809
Chair of Scrutiny Committee	1 x Basic	£4,809
Chair of Scrutiny Panel	0.25 x Basic	£1,202

Panel must meet at least 5 times to qualify. A maximum of 2 SRAs will be available (£2,404) to be shared by the Chairs of the qualifying Standing Panels

Opposition Group Leader	1 x Basic	£4,809
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to be shared between the Group Leaders equally

7. the carer's allowances for children and adults be on the basis of full cost recovery subject to a maximum of £1000 per councillor per year in line with paragraphs 37 – 39 of the IRP's report. Carer's allowances will not be reimbursed if carers had been paid below the Oxford Living Wage.
8. that a mechanism be put in place for dealing with special circumstances in relation to Dependent Carers' Allowances, namely that it be delegated to the Head of Law and Governance and the Committee and Members' Services Manager;
9. there will be no allowances paid to co-optees other than incidental expenses;
10. where a member of Council is also a member of another Council, that member may not receive allowances from more than one Council in respect of the same duties;

11. where allowances have been paid in advance for a period during which a Councillor is suspended from office or is no longer a Councillor, those allowances will be repaid;
12. remove any reference in the Members' Allowances Scheme to the right for councillors to join the Local Government Pension Scheme;
13. claims must be made on the forms provided and should be accompanied by receipts/invoices;
14. claims will be paid in line with the payment schedule set by the Council's payroll team;
15. a Councillor may elect to forego any part of their entitlement to an allowance under the scheme by providing written notice to the Monitoring Officer;
16. there will be a 15% reduction from future allowances for Councillors who attend less than 2/3rds of the scheduled meetings required within a Special Responsibility;
17. give effect to the recommendations of the IRP in paragraphs 43 and 44 of the IRP Report that there should be a 15% reduction from the payment of future Basic Allowance for non-attendance at Council or the required training by a collective resolution and consequential adjustments to protocols within the constitution;
18. authorise the Head of Law and Governance to draft the new Members' Allowances scheme and to incorporate it into the Council's Constitution before 1 April 2015; and
19. thank the Independent Remuneration Panel for its work.

67. COUNCIL AND COMMITTEE PROGRAMME MAY 2015 TO MAY 2016

Council had before it a report setting out the draft programme of meetings for the 2015/16 council year and an amended programme circulated in the briefing note.

Councillor Price moved the report.

Council agreed to:

1. approve the programme of Council and Committee meetings attached to the briefing note for the council year 2015/16; and
2. delegate the setting of dates for the Standards Committee to the Head of Law and Governance, in consultation with the Chair.

68. CITY EXECUTIVE BOARD MINUTES

Council had before it the minutes of the City Executive Board meetings of 15 October and 19 November.

On Minute 68, Councillor Fooks asked whether any further improvements could be made to cycling and pedestrian spaces at Frideswide Square.

Councillor Price outlined the proposals.

On Minute 83, Councillor Hollick asked that the wider risks of encouraging people to purchase property be discussed and fully considered. Councillor Price responded that a range of investments were available in the treasury management strategy and the wider risks were evaluated.

69. QUESTIONS ON NOTICE FROM MEMBERS OF COUNCIL

Questions were asked of the Board members and Leader and responses given.

Board member for Sports, Events and Parks, Councillor Lygo

1. FROM COUNCILLOR WILKINSON

At Council on 14 July, the Board Member announced there would be a joint event held at the end of September when at least four new flower meadows would be created across the City. Please could the Board Member give a brief progress report on this and outline the action plans and timescales for each of the flower meadows?

Written response

Work undertaken to improve the biodiversity in the city's parks includes:

- The Kidneys planting schemes (undertaken by the Friends Group)
- Cutteslowe Park - we have left large areas of grass to go long this year, next year we will cultivate these areas and add more wild flowers seeds.
- Blackbird Leys – we are introducing wild flower areas.
- Hinksey Park – new wild flower areas are now in place.

We have also introduced wild flower beds at Florence, Bury Knowle and Cutteslowe Parks.

A number of meetings have also been undertaken with partners to look at how we can best use the city's parks to encourage bees; actions from these meetings include bee hotels being constructed in some of the city's parks.

Board member for Leisure Contract and Community Partnership Grants, Councillor Rowley

2. FROM COUNCILLOR WILKINSON

The Council announced recently that the Blackbird Leys pool's wood chip boiler would be fuelled with waste wood from its Parks operations. Can the Board Member please confirm:

(a) the quantity of waste wood generated from its Parks operations per annum over each of the last 3 years

(b) the amount of waste wood it estimates will be needed to fuel the Pool each year?

Written response

(a) We generate approximately 500 tonnes each year; further work is being undertaken to see how much of this is suitable for use in a biomass boiler.

(b) Approximately 151 tonnes per year; this needs to be good quality dried wood chip.

Supplementary question

If there is insufficient good quality wood chip from parks, what is the contingency?

Response

Roughly 75% of wood chip should be useable and the boiler can use a wide range of material qualities. Officers will be asked to respond with more detail.

Board member for Culture and Communities, Councillor Simm**3. FROM COUNCILLOR SIMMONS**

Given the unacceptable levels of food poverty in Oxford, will the portfolio holder join me in helping to support and promote the event being run by the youth volunteering charity vInspired in Oxford on 7 December to both raise awareness of the issue of food poverty and collect non-perishable food items for our local foodbanks?

Written response

I welcome the fact that Councillor Simmons has raised this important issue.

I never thought that I would live to see the day when individuals and families had to rely on charitable handouts from food banks in order to survive. To me this is resonant of the 1930s and soup kitchens. Equally shocking is how readily and apparently easily the notion of food banks has been accepted as part of our national life and part of welfare provision.

Around one million people every year now depend on food banks in order to feed themselves and their children.

This is shocking and unacceptable - cuts to welfare benefits and poverty wages have led to the indignity of people having to go on a weekly basis to receive food donated by their fellow citizens. I have read many accounts of how demeaning and embarrassing this feels.

It is an entirely unnecessary humiliation- we are still a wealthy country, but a country riven with grotesque inequality.

I will gladly assist in this project and look forward to receiving further information regarding it from Councillor Simmons.

Supplementary

Councillor Simmons thanked Councillor Simm and said he would send details of the event on 7 December.

Board member for Housing and Estate Regeneration, Councillor Seamons**4. FROM COUNCILLOR FOOKS**

I see that Ed Balls has said "We believe that protecting the Green Belt is really important in terms of protecting valuable countryside but also allowing communities to keep their integrity, rather than spreading all over the place." Can you assure the citizens of Oxford and surrounding districts that you will be following this policy in targeting areas for housing?

Written response

The Council's strategic land availability assessment identified a large number of sites for housing development within the city's current boundaries including a number of Brownfield sites. This list was expanded somewhat in a recent report by independent consultants commissioned by the City Council – identifying sites

for slightly under 10,500 new homes in the period 2011-31. However this figure is nowhere near the assessed need for that period in the SHMA of around 28000 new homes.

We are clear therefore that needs cannot be met within the current tightly-drawn administrative boundaries and that this is not an issue of prioritisation, but one of the need to have a strategic review of the surrounding greenbelt so total needs can be met. In this regard Mr Balls also said: "We need to make sure that councils like Oxford, where there is a real need for more homes, are not continually blocked by other councils that refuse to pull their weight." To this end we support the Labour Party proposal to give cities like our own the 'Right to Grow', but also reflect that a Greenbelt review opens up the possibility to designate other areas of land within the county for new Greenbelt. However, the Greenbelt we currently have constrains necessary growth which would likely also prove more sustainable, for example by reducing the levels of commuting into Oxford from further away.

When it comes to new housing, the facts of the matter are clear. We simply have not been building nearly enough to ensure that Oxford continues to be a thriving city with strong communities and a growing economy. To meet the unmet housing need for Oxford would require less than 1% of the Oxford Green Belt to be given over to housing. This in practice looks nothing like the sprawling conurbation that is spuriously suggested by some commentators; rather it would provide opportunity to create exemplary, sustainable city suburbs that provide a great living environment and remarkable gateways to the city. When there is so much at stake – our communities' desperate need for housing, the future health of our City's economy and Universities, and the need to prevent further deterioration of our transport networks – this is a very small price to pay.

Supplementary question

Would you say your answer in fact was 'no'?

Response

While the Shadow Chancellor and I may put a slightly different emphasis on the policy, due to local circumstances, Labour's policies will allow the city to grow and that's something our two groups can agree on.

5. FROM COUNCILLOR WILKINSON

Given that the City Council has identified sites for 8,000 new homes, can the Board Member please confirm:

- (a) how many affordable dwellings did Oxford City Council build last year?
- (b) how many affordable dwellings will it build this year?
- (c) how many dwellings in total will it build next year?

Written response

Most of the sites identified for new homes across the city are not owned by the City Council and their development would be carried out by third parties. A protracted downturn has slowed the pace of development. This has consequently led to there not being any new affordable housing completions in 13/14 as confirmed in the Annual Monitoring report.

It continues to be difficult to estimate the precise number of completions but planning permission has been granted to other housing providers for 620 dwellings (excluding Barton outline permission) but progress with these

developments has been slower than anticipated, in part due to delays in the planning process. Consequently, it is anticipated that only 11 affordable units will be delivered by registered social landlords this year and 67 in 15/16.

The City Council however is currently developing 5 sites in order to deliver 113 new Council homes during 14/15 and has committed a further £52m to deliver 354 new Council homes as part of its joint venture with Grosvenor estates over the next 5 years at Barton Park. This represents a level of investment by the council in new council housing not seen for decades.

Further Response

It is not a case of the Council not delivering affordable homes, as we have an extensive programme for new council homes. But many of these are delivered in partnership with other providers and are not therefore under our direct control.

Board member for Cleaner, Greener Oxford, Climate Change and Transport, Councillor Tanner

6. FROM COUNCILLOR WOLFF

Of the £367,000 allocated for cycling provision until 31 March 2016, I see that 27% has been allocated to the creation of cycle parking at the Redbridge and Seacourt Park & Rides. Whilst I can see that this might be of some benefit to a few commuters from the County who prefer to leave their bike here overnight and cycle in (rather than taking the bus) I cannot see that it will encourage a single City resident on to a bicycle.

Could Cllr Tanner explain the thinking behind this >£100k investment (given the many useful, quickly implementable and far cheaper suggestions he says he has received) and the reason why it was not more appropriate to fund it from parking revenues? Would he say that the choice of projects to fund reflects, rather, the lack of suitably-qualified staff time to properly assess Oxford's cycling infrastructure needs?

Written response

Every extra cycle journey in Oxford and every fewer car journey is to be welcomed. Providing a Park & Cycle option at Park and Rides in Oxford is an excellent use of taxpayer's money. Some of the alternative possibilities are being held up by the County Council's consultation on a new cycling strategy. But of course the City Council is also making significant financial contributions to cycling improvements at both The Plain and Frideswide Square.

Supplementary question

How many car journeys in Oxford, which would otherwise be undertaken by city residents, will be saved? It is unclear how this will benefit the city?

Response

The number is unknown, but this will improve the P&R network by giving the option to cycle rather than use the bus. Spending the budget allocated on schemes which are deliverable, and the County Council are currently unable to progress their strategy. There are many schemes which could be brought forward with the County, however there are a sensible range of schemes we can deliver now.

7. FROM COUNCILLOR THOMAS

I'm sure Councillor Tanner welcomes the recent increase in public debate and scrutiny around the Western Conveyance, so when will he admit that there are genuine concerns that the scheme will fail to meet the Treasury's value for money criteria?

Written response

Oxford residents have experienced regular flooding over recent years notably in 2000, 2003, 2007, 2009, 2011, 2012 and 2013/14. The City Council is keen to see improved flooding protection especially in the longer term as it is acutely aware of the impact upon major arterial roads, the railway line, schools and 4,300 homes and businesses which are at risk in a 1 in a hundred flooding event.

The Oxford & Abingdon Flood Alleviation Scheme does not yet have an approved design. At present there is a strategic outline case advanced as part of a partnership project fully supported by the City Council and led by the Environment Agency. The sponsoring group includes the Environment Agency, Oxfordshire County Council, Vale of White Horse District Council, University of Oxford, the Oxfordshire Local Enterprise Partnership, Oxford Flood Alliance, Thames Water Utilities, Thames Regional Flood and Coastal Committee and the City Council.

The "Western conveyance" option arose earlier from the Oxford Flood Risk Management Strategy but this was not economically viable in 2010, when assessed against the criteria used for flooding protection schemes. However, following the development of the updated flood model for Oxford and further updating to the climate change projections as they are likely to affect the City, a major scheme now appears to be economically viable, subject to the funding being secured once all approvals are in place.

Once the approved design is finalised it will be possible to cost the project and at this point assess it against the Treasury's value for money criteria.

Of course the Western Conveyance is only part of the solution to flooding in Oxford. We are also working with the Environment Agency and land-owners to get streams and ditches cleared and we would like the Government to improve farming practices to avoid water run-off.

Supplementary question

There are questions over affordability. Will the Board Member exercise caution to avoid exposing the Council to the full costs of the scheme given uncertainty over government funding?

Response

There is no risk to the Council as bulk of the money is coming from Treasury and from Network Rail. We are thankful for support from MPs and from the strategic partnership on funding, and expect there to be significant central funding for this. The scheme is not in itself the answer: we need to reduce carbon emissions, encourage landowners to clear ditches and improve drainage. But we presented a convincing case that the economic benefits to the city are clear. Work will start at Abingdon and work upriver, so the funds we have will be put to good use and at no risk.

8. FROM COUNCILLOR BRANDT

How is the Council prepared for any winter flooding?

Written response

Oxfordshire County Council became the lead local flood authority (LLFA) under the Flood Risk Regulations and it is the LLFA in conjunction with the Environment Agency that holds the primary responsibility for addressing flooding issues. The City Council has a duty to co-operate with the LLFA and it is also a major land owner in the area with riparian responsibilities.

Whilst the Council does not have a primary duty to address flooding it does take this matter very seriously as it is well aware of the impact of flooding upon local communities. It therefore invests significant resources into operational plans to improve flood protection, combat flood events and aid recovery. The Council chairs the Oxford Area Flood Partnership (OAFP) which includes the Environment Agency, Oxfordshire County Council, Vale of White District Council, Thames Water Utilities, Network Rail and the City Council. It recognised the need for local leadership ahead of even the Pitt Review published in 2008 and the need for all involved organisations to work together closely to optimise response and make the most of existing budgets.

The Partnership has produced integrated operational plans which set out the actions for each organisation including the City Council. These plans have been tested by flooding events and improvements have been made progressively based upon lessons that have been learnt. A key part of the preparedness required is that this response may need to be delivered at any time in the year not just during the winter.

The City Council has a well proven alert system via weather warnings from the Meteorological Office and the Environment Agency which allows us to make necessary preparations in advance of a flood.

The City Council works closely with the Local Resilience Forum and the Regional Flood and Coastal Committee. It has also been key in the drive for greater long term protection and welcomes the Oxford & Abingdon Scheme which should greatly enhance protection in the long term.

More information is available here:

http://www.oxford.gov.uk/PageRender/decC/Flooding_occw.htm

Deputy Leader of the Council, Councillor Turner

9. FROM COUNCILLOR FOOKS

It is very welcome news that the Covered Market trialled an extension into Market Street, as was recommended by the Scrutiny Review panel as well as the independent Retail Group review. Can Council be assured that this will be repeated following its success, and that the other recommendations agreed by CEB such as providing more cycle parking nearby and funding, from the now agreed increased rent income, serious improvements to the Market Avenues from the High Street will be actioned in the very near future?

Written response

The independent Retail Group review recommended the extension of the Covered Market into Market Street, and this was endorsed by the Scrutiny Panel

and CEB. The purpose is to strengthen trading by improving the connection between the Cornmarket and the market.

The extension into Market Street follows joint working between the Covered Market Manager and the market traders. It is a pilot and we will need to review the success of this initiative and any lessons, because Market Street is used by many people. In particular, we are very grateful to the wide range of organisations involved who have assisted, including the County Council, the police, retailers, colleges and the public.

There is already a significant programme of investment in the Covered Market, including maintenance and renewal of services, redecoration and proposed further improvements, such as new security gates. The increase in income from the rent reviews is less than inflation and the Council has already assisted tenants by waiving the back rent from the increase. Other improvements will be developed in partnership with the traders and come forward in due course.

Supplementary question

We hope we would see a repeat of the temporary extension of the market into Cornmarket.

Response

We would like to repeat the extension into Cornmarket fairly soon as this was very successful.

10. FROM COUNCILLOR FOOKS

Please would you circulate to all members the detailed, costed Action Plan and Programme for improvements to the Covered Market that City Executive Board in February agreed should be produced?

Written response

The draft Action Plan and Programme will be available within the next month. Actions have already been progressed:

- The Market Manager is in post
- The extension of the Covered Market into Market Street has been piloted
- The Market has been deep-cleaned
- Regular trader communications have been set up and a newsletter will be issued shortly
- A draft events and promotion programme is being developed with traders
- A draft proposed signage strategy is pending with the consultants
- The draft leasing strategy has been shared with the traders for comment – remove
- The draft tenants' handbook is to be issued shortly.

In addition drainage works have been completed and improvements to the roof and new security gates commissioned.

Supplementary question

When will the full plan be available?

Response

The date will be confirmed.

To the Leader of the Council, Corporate Strategy, Economic Development and Planning, Councillor Price

11. FROM COUNCILLOR FOOKS

Local Government employers have just agreed with trade unions a new pay deal for council workers. They are offering much higher percentage rises for the lower paid staff, ranging from an 8.56% rise for those on Spinal Column point 5 to 2.2% for those on Spinal Column points 11 and above. Would you agree with me that this is a much fairer way to increase pay without just extending the gap between high and low earners, and would you consider using the same approach to City Council staff pay rises?

Written response

The Council is committed to a 5 year pay deal (2013 – 2018). This addressed the scandal of low pay by deleting the lowest spinal column points in the national agreement. This means that no Council employee earns less than £8.98 per hour. The pay deal also provides for incremental progression for those on the bottom of each grade and a Partnership Payment based on the achievement of the Council's agreed annual budget savings. These Partnership Payments are lump sums paid equally to all qualifying employees, thus giving much higher percentage increases to the lower paid. The pay ratio between top and bottom earners is less than 1:8. The Council will enter discussions with trade unions in 2017 for a new pay deal which will of course take full account of the agreements made at national level in the recent period. I should add that I am very pleased that a national pay deal has at last been agreed, following the transfer of control of the LGA/LGE to Labour after the May 2014 elections.

Supplementary question

Is it fairer to give the lowest paid a higher percentage than the higher paid as giving a uniform percentage just elongates the gap between top and bottom?

Response

Yes

12. FROM COUNCILLOR WILKINSON

Given that Oxford City Council is keen to assist local retailers and small businesses, what plans does the Board Member have to help promote their use (as local retailers) both in the city centre and in district centres over the festive period?

Written response

The City Council is keen to support local retailers and small businesses and is supporting them in a wide range of ways, for example:

- The City Council is supporting Small Business Saturday on Saturday 6th December to encourage shoppers to shop in the city-both locally and in the city centre. The City Council will provide free parking in our Park and Ride sites to support this initiative.
- Oxford Bus Company and Stagecoach have been asked to advertise Small Business Saturday on their buses and use social media in conjunction with the City Council's support of the campaign.
- The open air market in Gloucester Green goes from strength to strength and the Council has supported the new Saturday food and craft market.

- In the Covered Market the Council is actively working with traders on improving trading and the market environment, and we have seen the recent pilot to extend trading into Market Street to link with the shopping in Cornmarket
- Our City Centre Manager and the City Centre Ambassadors are working successfully with retailers across the city centre.
- The Council is also promoting the annual Christmas market in Broad Street and the Christmas Light Festival brought a large number of visitors and families into the city centre.

Supplementary question

Is there anything we can do to encourage Oxfordshire County Council to support this?

Response

I raised this at the Local Enterprise Partnership and Oxfordshire County Council agreed to look at this for next year.

13. FROM COUNCILLOR RUTH WILKINSON

Can the Board Member please indicate what proportion of existing commercial property within the city boundaries is occupied?

Written response

The Council does not monitor as a matter of course general commercial property occupancy in the city. It may review occupancy in the context of planning policy from time to time. There are no unlet properties in the City Council's city centre commercial property portfolio, with the vacant shop in Broad Street let and shopfitting to start shortly. Outside the city centre the Council has one vacant shop at Blackbird Leys.

14. FROM COUNCILLOR FOOKS

The Oxford Mail carried a story recently about the amounts of money spent on settlement payments. Oxford City Council was said to be spending almost £500k every year over a 5-year period, far more than any other local council. Can you explain to Council how this was good value for taxpayers' money?

Written response

The figure quoted is an annual average over the period 2009-13 of £449k. Two-thirds of the aggregate figure was paid in the period 2009-11 when the City Council adapted to the cuts in government grant and restructured by reducing tiers of management. This achieved huge ongoing efficiency savings and helped in the process of improving our services and delivering excellent customer services, leading to this year's accolade as the nationally recognised Best Achieving Council. Where staff have left the Council's employment through voluntary redundancy during this process, a Settlement Agreement is frequently used to ensure that the Council is protected subsequently against future tribunal actions. These agreements end the employment relationship with the staff member on a mutually agreed basis. There is a rigorous process of sign off for each case, with the relevant Director or the Chief Executive granting final approval. The terms for voluntary severance are agreed with the recognised unions. The Council has continued to drive forward with efficiency savings and is proposing a further 4-year balanced budget perspective over the 2015-18 period.

15. FROM COUNCILLOR FOOKS

Next year will mark the 800th anniversary of the sealing of Magna Carta. As the foundation for the basic principles of freedom we now enjoy, this resonates with the calls from the Local Government Association, which I believe we all support, to devolve powers from a centralised government to local government. Can you assure Council that Oxford will be celebrating this anniversary in an appropriate and very inclusive way?

Written response

The Museum of Oxford is planning events around the Magna Carta anniversary that will be of particular interest for young people and I expect that other county wide events will also be taking place. The Bodleian Library, as the repository for a number of copies of the Magna Carta, will also be marking the anniversary in their new premises.

Further Response

There will also be a school project including the origins of local government and a series of lectures at Brookes University.

16. FROM COUNCILLOR HOLLICK

Will the leader condemn the Labour shadow work and pensions secretary's proposal that social security benefits should be withdrawn from EU migrants?

Written response

Our social security system was established by the post World War 2 Labour Government on the principle that people should work and contribute before drawing on the system in periods of illness, disability or unemployment. The integration of Europe within the European Union is based on the free movement of goods and labour, and a future Labour Government, unlike the Tory elements in the Coalition Government, has no wish to change that basic principle. It means however that our social security system has to be adapted to a very different labour market and demographic context to that which prevailed in 1945. A recent ruling by the European Court of Justice, concerning a Romanian migrant worker in Germany, has confirmed that the freedom to move to another EU country does not automatically confer the right to access the same social security benefits as a worker who has either lived or worked gainfully in that country for a period of time. In the UK, the current regulations require workers moving to this country from elsewhere in the EU to observe a waiting period of 3 months before they are eligible for out of work benefits. The Shadow Secretary of State has proposed that this waiting period should be extended to 24 months, reflecting the underlying principle of work and contribution giving an entitlement to support from the social security system. The Shadow Secretary of State also pointed out that the evidence shows that the vast majority of EU migrants are young and in employment, and therefore make comparatively little call on the social security system. However, a proportion of these workers are recruited to low paid jobs by employers that are seeking to undercut wages and working conditions, in the knowledge that the tax credit and social security provisions will top up low incomes. A future Labour Government will raise the NMW, establish a stronger enforcement regime, and will ban recruitment agencies that only hire from outside the UK. Our social security system should not be subsidising low paid and insecure work. A further issue on which the Labour Government will work with EU partners are the regulations which provide for child benefit and

child tax credits to be claimed for children who live in other countries. There are currently 24,000 people receiving these in respect of children living in other countries.

Supplementary question

Is it logical for council leaders to support reduced welfare support for migrants in a city dependant on migrant workers?

Response

Our approach needs to change to reflect economics, the changing nature of the workforce and EU rules

17. FROM COUNCILLOR SIMMONS

Will the Leader join me, and rest of the Green Group, in celebrating the decision of the House of Commons to agree a second reading for the National Health Service (Amended Duties and Powers) Bill which seeks to reverse the creeping privatisation of the NHS?

In doing so, will he write to those local MPs who opposed it (Ed Vaizey, Tony Baldry) and those others who did not vote or were unable to attend, to express our support for the Bill in the hope that they might yet have the opportunity to vote in favour, and/or lobby for the Bill, in the future?

Written response

Yes. It was encouraging to see that most Tories didn't have the courage of their privatisation convictions to actually turn up and vote against a Bill which commands almost universal support across the country. I hope that they continue to sit on their hands and provide tacit support for the Bill as it progresses through the Parliamentary process. I am happy to write to all the county's MPs and seek their support for this important amendment to the current legislation governing the NHS.

Supplementary question

Will you watch the progress of this bill?

Response

Yes, and please can I ask other members for their support.

18. FROM COUNCILLOR HOLICK

Will the Leader support or reject calls from the Castle Mill boatyard developer to scrap this council's affordable homes target?

Written response

A planning application for the Jericho Boatyard site, 14/01441/FUL, has been received. It proposes a mixed use development with 22 residential units, a community centre, a boatyard, a bridge and a public square. The applicant is offering 32% affordable housing. Officers in City Development are continuing to discuss aspects of the application with the developer, including the proportion of affordable housing. The applicant has been reminded of the Council's policy in this respect. The application will come before the West Area Planning Committee for determination in due course with an officer recommendation. The circumstances in which a positive recommendation could be made for an

application that does not meet the affordable homes requirement are set out in our planning regulations.

Supplementary question

Is the 50% affordable homes policy negotiable?

Response

There is no question of not keeping to the policy but this allows for some flexibility in delivering affordable homes and there are different ways of achieving the desired outcome.

19. FROM COUNCILLOR HOLLICK

Can the portfolio holder confirm whether any financial contribution from the Westgate developers towards affordable housing will contribute to providing more affordable housing, than our policy of 50%, on another site in the city?

Written response

A s.106 agreement was completed with the applicant prior to the grant of Outline Planning Permission. This requires the developer to pay the City Council 15% of the sales value of the 59 flats as an off-site contribution to affordable housing. The value of the contribution will depend on sale prices in 2017/18, so the estimate of a £3 million figure should probably be taken as a minimum if, as seems probable, house prices continue to increase at above the rate of general price inflation.

It follows that we cannot know at this stage how many additional units of affordable housing will be acquired with the commuted sum. It will be included in the Housing Account Capital and used in conjunction with other resources to fulfil our capital programme priorities. With the Barton West/Park development starting to deliver homes in 2015/16, it is highly likely that we will seek to negotiate a higher social housing element in the scheme as it is built out.

Supplementary question

Is there currently a definitive plan for the use of these funds?

Response

I refer to the written answer.

20. FROM COUNCILLOR BRANDT

What is the total percentage of affordable housing that have actually been approved in developments which include 10 or more homes across the city in the past two years?

Written response

This information is published annually in the Monitoring Report. The data for these two years show that there were 114 net affordable dwellings approved, compared to 253 dwellings overall; this gives 45% affordable housing provision overall. The data exclude the Council's own Affordable Housing Programme sites as they would skew the results.

Supplementary question

Does the Leader have any comments on how the 50% target may be achieved?

Response

The affordable housing element of the Barton scheme has been discussed, and it is hoped this can extend to other schemes. Deliverability of schemes involves striking a balance between private housing and the rest of the infrastructure and affordable housing, so each scheme is looked at individually. It is feasible to negotiate a percentage higher than 50%.

21. FROM COUNCILLOR SIMMONS

Now that the Roger Dudman Way environmental impact statement has finally been published, what process will the Council be following to determine which of the mitigation options set out in the EIA to pursue?

Written response

The scheme of mitigation, as indicated by Option 1, is the University of Oxford's response to the City Council's request in April 2013 to bring forward measures to ameliorate the size and visual impact of the development.

Following the close of the public consultation on 19th December 2014 the West Area Planning Committee in the New Year and will be invited to consider whether it accepts the Option 1 scheme of mitigation proposed by the University.

22. FROM COUNCILLOR SIMMONS

Will the Leader agree with me that, had the Roger Dudman Way EIA been available at the time of the planning application, the nature of the development would have most likely been different?

Written response

It is, of course, impossible to say what difference the Environmental Statement (ES) would have made to either the officer recommendation or the decision of the Planning Committee. The officer report discussed the issue of the height of the proposed buildings at great length, supported by a large number of view cone perspectives and photographs. The Committee's discussion was also very lengthy and focussed almost entirely on the height issue. Both officers and members were aware that this was an 'on balance' decision, in which the impact on the views had to be weighed against the benefits provided by the development to the University and the city's housing stock. The ES covers the same ground but in much greater detail; whether the detail would have led to a different recommendation or outcome can only be a matter of conjecture or speculation.

Supplementary question

On the matter of having an environmental impact assessment in place before making a decision, are there any particular lessons or insights, or improvements we can take from this?

Response

Yes, there are; although while there are aspects of a EIA we need before making a decision, in this particular case it is harder to see how best to proceed.

23. FROM COUNCILLOR SIMMONS

Will the Roger Dudman Way EIA be referred to the newly established Design Panel for consideration?

Written response

The purpose of the Oxford Design Review Panel is to assess planning applications that are still being developed, and to provide professional feedback and advice to the applicants. This ideally should take place at the pre-application stage. The Design Panel is not equipped to review a technical Environmental Statement (ES).

The Council has commissioned qualified independent consultants to review the ES and to provide members with a report on its soundness in terms of the relevant regulations and whether it is robust and reliable.

Supplementary question

Was this not an appropriate matter for the design review panel?

Response

The panel advised on schemes before construction where they were free to make unconstrained recommendations and were unlikely to want to review a built scheme.

70. PUBLIC ADDRESSES AND QUESTIONS THAT DO NOT RELATE TO MATTERS FOR DECISION AT THIS COUNCIL MEETING

Richard Carpenter, Club Secretary, Oxford City Stars Ice Hockey Club, addressed Council. The text of his address is attached to the minutes.

Nigel Gibson representing Save Temple Cowley Pools - A successful social enterprise in East Oxford, addressed Council. The text of his address is attached to the minutes.

Jane Alexander addressed Council. The text of her address (The Community Interest Company Bid Proposal offers best value to Oxford people) is attached to the minutes.

Councillor Rowley responded to Nigel Gibson and Jane Alexander. He assured members that all of the applications for the Temple Cowley Pools site had been impartially assessed by council officers and external consultants on the same basis to secure best value on quality and price for the people of Oxford. He wanted the commercial and community interest company submission to be assessed on a par with the commercial submissions without its suffering avoidable by comparison due to lack of preparation. To further this goal officers provided additional support to the group and extended the deadline for the community interest company submission beyond the six months provided in law and the group is invited to put their case to the Executive Board to make sure the decision made is based on the fullest possible information and appreciation of all the bids that will be before us.

Sistke Boeles submitted a question to the Leader of the Council but did not attend to ask this.

James Rowland submitted a question to the Leader of the Council but did not attend to ask this.

The text of the questions and written responses supplied after the meeting is attached to the minutes.

71. OUTSIDE ORGANISATION/COMMITTEE CHAIR REPORTS AND QUESTIONS

Councillor Price moved the report.

Council noted the Annual Report on Oxfordshire Partnerships produced for the Oxford Strategic Partnership by the County Council in October 2014 without comment.

72. SCRUTINY COMMITTEE BRIEFING

Council had before it the report of the Scrutiny Committee Chair.

Councillor Simmons moved the report; thanked Councillor Hayes for chairing the last committee meeting, Councillor Hollick for chairing the Housing Panel, and Councillor Coulter for chairing the Inequalities Panel; and encouraged members to get involved in the committee's work.

Council noted the report without comment.

73. MOTIONS ON NOTICE

Council had before it four motions on notice and amendments submitted in accordance with Council procedure rule 11.16, and reached decisions as set out below.

(1) Making Oxford a Social Enterprise City

Councillor Wolff proposed his submitted motion, accepting the amendment proposed by Councillor Price in writing.

This Council welcomes the announcement that Oxfordshire has become the UK's first Social Enterprise County and congratulates the Oxfordshire Social Enterprise Partnership (OSEP), an innovative new partnership set up by Oxford Brookes University, the University of Oxford and Student Hubs to foster and support social enterprise locally.

This Council recognises the value of Social Enterprises to the Council and the local economy and aspires to join other cities in becoming one of the UK's first Social Enterprise Cities.

Council notes with pleasure the support that the Economic Development team and the OSP Economic Development Steering group have already given to OSEP, and the close working relationship that has been developed. To take the relationship further, and to support the aspirations of the Partnership, Council recommends that the following areas of work should be pursued;

- *The creation of Social Enterprise Zones*

- *The purchasing by the Council and its contractor of goods and services in such a way as to maximise social value under the Social Value Act*
- *Funding opportunities for social enterprises*
- *Methods of stimulating and supporting social enterprise initiatives in the city region*

Council would welcome a policy review paper on social enterprise in the city for OSP and Scrutiny discussion.

Council accepted this amended motion. Councillor Price seconded this.

On being put to the vote, Council agreed to adopt the amended motion as set out above.

(2) Personalised tax summaries

Councillor Paule proposed her submitted motion and Councillor Clack seconded this.

This council believes that Chancellor George Osborne's tax summary offering a personalised breakdown of where taxpayers' money is going is deliberately misleading and aims to support punitive Conservative economic policy. In particular, the items included under welfare - such as pensions, including MP's pensions - aim to create unfounded anxieties about welfare spending (in fact, JSA spending is less than 0.6% of tax revenues). This data is sent out by HMRC which should be a politically neutral body. This is not only a waste of public funds but a blatant abuse of government powers. We condemn this policy and ask the council leader to write to the Treasury expressing our concerns.

Following debate and voting, Council agreed to adopt the motion as set out above.

(3) Improving safety for cyclists

Councillor Gant proposed his submitted motion as set out in the Council agenda, accepting the amendment proposed by Councillor Price in writing.

Council notes with great concern the recent accidents involving cyclists and lorries in Oxford.

Council believes that accidents could be reduced by requiring lorries to have safety equipment, to the industry-led standard supported by the Mayor of London in December 2013.

Council notes that it adopted a motion some two years ago which endorsed the need for goods vehicles to incorporate safety equipment of the type referred to.

It now asks the City Executive Board to amend Council policy to

- *require all contractors working on council contracts in the city to have every vehicle over 3.5 tonnes fitted with sideguards to protect cyclists from being dragged under the wheels, and with mirrors giving the driver a better view of cyclists and pedestrians around their vehicles;*

- *urge the County Council to make a Traffic Regulation Order imposing similar conditions on all similar vehicles in Oxford, as proposed by TfL in London.*

Council accepted this amended motion. Councillor Goddard seconded this.

Following debate and voting, Council agreed to adopt the motion as set out above.

(4) Allocating space for council housing

Councillor Hollick proposed his submitted motion and Councillor Thomas seconded this.

Council notes:

- *that Oxford is the least affordable city in the UK for housing.*
- *that the right to housing is a human right.*
- *that Local Development Orders can be made by local planning authorities to grant planning permission to specific types of development.*

Council believes:

- *that a significant increase in the supply of genuinely affordable housing is needed to meet the housing needs of people in our city.*
- *that council housing is the best option of all types of 'affordable' housing because of the low rents and security for tenants to stay in their home.*
- *that brownfield sites (previously built upon) are a limited resource in the city and should be used to supply much needed council homes.*

Council calls for:

- *a report to be considered by CEB that considers brownfield sites for allocation towards developments of council housing. This report would recommend how the use of Local Development Orders, or other tools, could be used to increase the supply of planning permission for quality council housing in the city.*

Following debate and voting, Council did NOT agree to adopt the motion.

74. MATTERS EXEMPT FROM PUBLICATION

None.

The meeting started at 5.00 pm and ended at 8.25 pm

QUESTIONS AND ADDRESSES TO COUNCIL FROM MEMBERS OF THE PUBLIC UNDER COUNCIL PROCEDURE RULE 11.11 TAKEN UNDER AGENDA ITEM 14 (NOT RELATING TO MATTERS FOR DECISION)

Addresses

1. Richard Carpenter, Club Secretary, Oxford City Stars Ice Hockey Club (text attached)
2. Nigel Gibson representing Save Temple Cowley Pools - A successful social enterprise in East Oxford (text attached)
3. Jane Alexander - The Community Interest Company Bid Proposal offers BEST VALUE TO OXFORD PEOPLE! (text attached)

Questions (responses will be given at the meeting)

4. Question to the Leader of the Council (Councillor Bob Price) from Sistke Boeles

Per Nov 1 2014, how many properties were exempt from paying council tax due to being occupied by full time students (N properties), in addition how many students qualified for single person council tax exemption.

Response (given in writing after the meeting)

There are 1972 properties exempt from paying council tax due to being occupied by full time students (N properties)

We do not readily keep information on the number of students claiming for single person council tax discounts since generally a student would apply for the full reduction of council tax through a student exemption as referred to above. The council have currently granted 17,306 single person discounts which the council does review on a regular basis.

5. Question to the Leader of the Council (Councillor Bob Price) from James Rowland

Annual Monitoring Report housing trajectory figures indicate that over the last five years Oxford City Council has failed to build sufficient houses to meet the Oxford Core Strategy targets of an average of 400 new houses per year. As a result, the house building programme for market and affordable housing has been falling substantially behind required levels.

Can the Leader of the Council explain why house building in Oxford has been falling behind, for both market and affordable housing and how can the City Council justify requesting a strategic Green Belt review in order to meet Oxford's excess housing needs outside its administrative boundaries, whilst it cannot deliver the Oxford Core Strategy target of building 8000 houses by 2026 .

Response (given in writing after the meeting)

Since the start of Core Strategy period (2006) Oxford City has seen 2,983 dwellings completed. This provides an annual average of 372 dwellings per year which is only slightly under the 400 per year required to meet the Core Strategy target. There has over the last five years been a dip in the rate of housing delivery, thought to be due to the effect of the subdued economic climate. As elsewhere across the country, this has had a severe impact on the ability of the housebuilding industry to deliver new homes.

However the City Council is confident that the improving market will see delivery of housing picking up again. This is illustrated by the fact that planning permission was granted in the 2013/14 financial year for 1,350 dwellings in Oxford. This has been achieved because the City Council is proactively seeking to maximise the sustainable delivery of housing in Oxford to meet identified needs.

Even with the rate of housebuilding increasing in Oxford, there is nowhere near enough suitable land in Oxford for providing new homes to meet the objectively assessed need set out in the Oxfordshire SHMA 2014 of 1,400 homes per year over a 20 year period. This is why a review of the Oxford Green Belt is now urgently required.

Address by Richard Carpenter

Thank you, my name is Richard Carpenter and I am the Club Secretary of the Oxford City Stars. I'd like to thank you for allowing me to speak this evening and to Cllr Jean Fooks in particular for her kind invitation to allow me to tell the story of our club, our successes and our current issues.

Oxford has had University Ice Hockey since the 19th century and with the building of the Oxpens Road Ice Rink in 1984 the City Ice Hockey has taken off and the Stars are now in their 30th Anniversary season. We've had our ups and downs over the years including the senior team folding on New Years Day 2012 however I am delighted to report to you that we have rebuilt our club successfully, winning three major competitions in two years and have this season taken promotion to the semi-professional National Ice Hockey League Division 1.

Furthermore, we were awarded the title of Oxfordshire Sports Team of the Year at the 2013 Oxfordshire Sports Awards and last Friday night at the 2014 awards we were nominated in the Team of the Year Category and Head Coach Darren Elliott received a Coach of the Year nomination as well. With all the exposure that this gives us, we have been able to further grow the club, attracting supporters, and new commercial and media partnerships.

Oxford City Stars are the most 'Oxford' team in the City. In our title-winning season last year, 20 of the 22 players lived in Oxfordshire, and 16 of those were born and bred here. We believe in our ice hockey talent in the County, a decision that has paid off again and again. None of this would of course be possible without a thriving junior system providing us with more talent for the future. Our Junior Club consists of both boys and girls with players as young as six years of age competing against teams from across the South.

I'm here today to talk about Parking. We understand and agree with the Transport policy of the City, however the practical realities on the ground mean that it simply doesn't work for us for two main reasons.

The first is equipment. For a senior ice hockey game between the two teams, we use heavy, bulky equipment, from the players kit to all of the ancillary equipment such as tool boxes, water bottles, skate grinders, etc. etc. This comes to over half a metric ton of weight per game. Oxford Ice Rink, does not offer us any storage space. All of this equipment must be carted to and from the rink, for every single training session and every single game.

I'm also sad to report that there have been incidences where players coming to training on public transport from around the city were refused travel, due to their equipment.

Despite the equipment issues we still looked at Park and Ride as an option. We train between ten and half eleven on a Wednesday evening. The last Park and Ride bus is at eleven thirty seven. Even for our supporters, park and ride is not an option on Gameday, as our games finish after eight pm on a Sunday night, with the last park and ride bus at seven seventeen.

Wednesday night also sees our junior training. Junior Ice Hockey parents already have to pay substantial amounts for equipment and fees just to put their children on the ice. With the current parking situation, Parents are no longer able to escort their children into and out of the rink or to attend training with them, without incurring substantial further expense.

This tax on the Junior Parents, means that the children and a club official has to stand outside, usually in the cold and the wet to wait for their parents to collect them. Furthermore, many are having to pull on the opposite side of the road due to congestion, meaning that children have to cross Oxpens Road, a busy A road, to go to their cars in the dark. It is an accident waiting to happen. Oxford Ice Rink has been provided with two 10 minute bays for a Junior system of eighty ice hockey players. Councillors, we are an amateur club trying to compete in a semi-professional league, and in addition to all of the other disadvantages that we face, the Senior team alone has a estimated parking bill of £6k a year parking in the City Council car parks. We do not receive a single penny from Oxford City Council and today we are not asking for any. What the Ice Rink needs, is a dedicated parking area within the Ice Rink Car Park that is not subject the same fees that apply to the normal traffic, based around the times of ice hockey games and training for pre-approved vehicles the vast majority will be at off-peak times. We also believe that we should be exploring all options for all rink users, including our supporters who currently have to pay over £6 for a game on a Sunday, £12 for a game an early evening Saturday start. Without this measure, the Stars will never, grow and I cannot guarantee that the Stars can stay in this current division, or be viable as an organisation regardless of our results this season. We are not asking for massive changes to policy, just a few small changes that you can make that would make a huge difference to all of us that use the ice rink.

Thank you for your time.

Address by Nigel Gibson
A successful social enterprise in East Oxford

My name is Nigel Gibson, and I am Director of the SaveTCP community interest company, the organisation set up to develop a community proposal for a social enterprise to take over and run Temple Cowley Pools and Fitness Centre. To do this, of course, we need not only your permission but also your active support.

Many of you here this evening have taken the time to hear more about what the community is trying to do, to discuss our proposal in detail, and to better understand exactly how it could work to the massive benefit of the community, not just in Cowley or East Oxford, but across the whole of the city.

And there are indeed many benefits that can be delivered at no financial risk to the Council. You of course need no reminding that the new swimming pool in Blackbird Leys is not seen by anyone as a proper replacement for either the existing community pool in Blackbird Leys, which with its constant high temperature addresses specialised needs, or the health and fitness centre (not just a swimming pool) that is Temple Cowley Pools. People often think of Temple Cowley Pools as just a swimming pool that can be replaced with one the same size just outside the ring road. Eight petitions, and over 25,000 signatures, should make everyone wonder why we don't all see things the same way.

Our proposal directly addresses the needs of the community you have decided to ignore; we can provide and continue to deliver services that support health, fitness and independence, enabling most people to walk or cycle to their preferred place of exercise. They simply cannot and will not do that if they have to travel for more than 15 minutes to get there.

It's easy to rely on your experts when they provide you with information you want to hear; and perhaps more challenging when the opposite point of view is also supported by experts who you have also employed. This is the case here; and I would ask you to think whose interests you are in the position to serve – surely it is to ensure the wellbeing of Oxford in the most financially expedient manner.

Risk is ever present, and as a Council you have a remit and a duty to minimise risks, including financial ones. As a council tax payer, I fully support you in your aims; and in addressing risks you must balance the short term, which may be in the interests of a current administration, with those of the longer term that provide for the city as a whole over several, and indeed many, generations. It was this balance that led to those previously occupying this chamber to proceed to build the swimming baths at Temple Cowley in 1938, and again to support a complete rebuild in 1986. There is every reason for you to act again in the interest of the people you are here to serve.

The biggest risk is surely that of the effect of closure, something that has never been alluded to, let alone directly addressed by, any Council discussion over the last five years. You have the evidence yourself in the drop in crime rate from putting play facilities in at Littlemore; independent research clearly shows that you can expect the reverse effect in closing Temple Cowley Pools. Taking facilities away from an area results in an increase in crime, as well as a fall in health and fitness.

There are concerns that keeping Temple Cowley Pools open will seriously affect the viability of the new pool; there is no evidence of this risk – as most people will walk to either centre, they will attract people from different and independent communities. Much independent research backs this up, that even when health and fitness centres are a mile or less from each other they can increase the overall level of exercise. We fervently want this to happen; we are not in competition with council leisure facilities, but want to complement them by successfully operating Temple Cowley Pools when you feel you cannot.

Our proposal has full support from the community, as we have incorporated ideas from the public, and listened to what people want. As the social enterprise that can take this forward, we are merely asking you to do the same.

The housing aspect is interesting; there is much new housing becoming available very close to Temple Cowley, with the conversion of the Macmillan offices, the Barns Road development and the plans for the redevelopment of the Conservative Club in Between Towns Road. Your DPD mandates a maximum of 26 dwellings on the Temple Cowley site if it is redeveloped; we don't think our proposal, for at least 17 and possibly many more, falls too short of that maximum, particularly as these will be in addition to the health and fitness centre.

Finances are always a concern. Our plans are already considerably detailed, developed with professionals in the leisure industry, experienced at taking over and operating facilities like Temple Cowley Pools. We would very much like to provide more detail than we have, but we still don't have the information we've asked for from you. In particular, we have no idea if there is a minimum value that is acceptable. We are suggesting a community asset transfer, as this offers long-term benefit – we successfully operate a facility you feel you cannot, it provides a long-term source of income for you (as we are a not-for-profit organisation any surplus would come back to the Council), delivers much needed social housing, and remains an asset in Council ownership. This is surely far more preferable to selling it off to a private venture. However, if you feel you need to generate revenue for some purpose, then work with us and give us the opportunity to find that money rather than simply dismissing our proposal as unworkable.

So in conclusion, I would ask you all to take the time to consider what the communities across the city of Oxford want, the communities who elected you and expect you to work on their behalf to deliver the services they want and need, where they want and need them.

We need you all to engage with us and those making the decision at the City Executive Board next week; tell us if you can see any reason why this social enterprise should not succeed; work with us as we address any concerns, so that the outcome can be seen by everyone as delivering the outcome we all surely want – the ability for people to improve their fitness, and maintain their health and independence in the heart of a thriving community.

Address by Jane Alexander

The Community Interest Company Bid Proposal offers BEST VALUE TO OXFORD PEOPLE!

'Best Value' is the National legal requirement for a sale of a public asset, not the financial amount!

The following might also be useful to people still uncertain about how to vote at CEB and those other councillors who would like to support public need for facilities in Oxford.

1. Council do not need the money from the sale of Temple Cowley Pools and Fitness Centre – According to a press release from the City Council, 'the new BL pool is now fully funded' so the previous requirement for selling the site no longer stands since the money was returned from the Iceland bank. There is now NO justification for selling the Temple Cowley Pools and Fitness centre site. Some councillors have stated that there must be a constant stream of money coming in to pay for outgoings. I believe there is a constant stream in the form of council tax and government funding. This should suffice so long as it is used wisely and no huge amount of money is spent on projects without full business cases.

2. Finance Officer, Nigel Kennedy, said at meeting to decide how to use/invest public funds, that there is excess revenue of £28m needing better investment than low-interest cash accounts, so selling the site can't be the first port of call as there is NO shortfall in the Council coffers. Some councillors seem to think that because some money is in one account rather than another account that they cannot use this money! The council itself writes (and rewrites) its Constitution so if it wants to use our money to support peoples requirements then it can do this. It is all OUR money after all.

3. The SaveTCP plans do not involve the Council in any financial risk beyond the remote possibility that on the plans not working out and the site therefore reverting to the Council. If the SaveTCP venture were to fail, which it won't, the council could then sell it, probably for higher than it's current value.

4. The SaveTCP plans will house nearly as many people (17 dwellings+ as opposed to 26 dwellings) as the Council have permitted for the commercial developers, so would not amount to a loss of planned housing

5. Circumstances have changed and new information is available and it is to be hoped that the Councillors will, acknowledge this, review the situation and listen to what those who elect them are asking for and suggesting 'their vote will be a critical test of whether they listen to the community'

6. The public are asking "What are the criteria for evaluating the Community Asset Bid Proposal?" as opposed to the very clear ones for the commercial developer's bid. It was initially to be decided by the Council employed Property Team but they then realised that they did not have a process by which they could evaluate the 'peoples' Bid Proposal and decided to let the City Executive Board make the decision. This does seem rather strange to most people as it was CEB who voted to close it in the

first place. Now, however, you have the benefit of this Community Bid Proposal and as a totally Labour member CEB will be able to revert to your own socialist policy of listening to and working for the good of the people.

7. Many are concerned that Andrew Smith has been very quiet about this issue. He has been quoted on numerous occasions as saying "It's a City matter and none of his business" unlike the big noise he made about keeping the Speedway Stadium for the wellbeing of the people of Oxford fighting tooth and nail for it, though of course that was not council owned!!

People have said they will remember this at the next elections.

In summary I would like to ask to all councillors to accept the community proposal as offering best Value for the whole of Oxford into the future.