

COUNCIL

Monday 13 April 2015

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

100. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Councillors Fry, Hayes, Malik and van Nooijen submitted apologies.

101. MINUTES

Council agreed to approve the minutes of the ordinary meeting held on 2 February 2015 and the budget meeting held on 18 February 2015 as a true and correct record.

102. DECLARATIONS OF INTERESTS

There were no declarations of interest made.

103. APPOINTMENT TO COMMITTEES

There were no appointments to committees.

104. ANNOUNCEMENTS

The Lord Mayor announced;

- his charity dinner had raised over £2,000 for the Lord Mayor's charities.
- he would be visiting the city's twin cities of Bonn and Leiden in the first week of May.

The Sheriff reported on his attendance at an Oxford Rugby League event and encouraged members to contact him about promoting opportunities to become involved in the sport.

The Leader of the Council informed members that the Palestine Unlocked celebration of Palestinian life and culture would take place between 4th and 21st June.

The Council's Chief Finance Officer announced:

"£300k was placed into the 2014/15 budget as a corporate policy contingency; it was agreed that the contingency was not required and was to be removed for the 2015/16 budget. This budget removal was unfortunately shown on Appendix

3 (page 65, line 21) to the Budget setting report against Culture rather than Policy due to an administrative error; this then fed through to Appendices 1 (page 24) and 2 (page 26).

This gave the impression that there was a reduction in the Council's Culture which is not actually the case. There is no effect on the Council's overall service budgets from the removal of the £300k. Had the administrative error not occurred, the Culture budget for 2015/16 would have been £456k on Appendices 1 and 2.

An approval will be sought from CEB in 2015/16 to vire £300K from Policy to Culture to correct the budget."

105. COUNCIL MEETING DATES: PROPOSED CHANGE TO SEPTEMBER DATE

Following a proposal from the Leader, Council agreed to change the date of the Council meeting from 21 September 2015 to 23 September 2015.

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

There were no addresses or questions.

107. ADOPTION OF THE CULTURE STRATEGY 2015-18

Council had before it a report, the draft Culture Strategy, and the recommendations of the City Executive Board on 12 March 2015.

Councillor Simm moved and Councillor Price seconded the adoption of the Culture Strategy.

Council resolved to approve the Culture Strategy 2015 – 2018 as set out at Appendix 1 to the report.

108. INTEGRATED PERFORMANCE REPORT 2014/15_ QUARTER 3

Council had before it a report setting out the Council's Finances, Risk and Performance as at the end of Quarter 3, 31 December 2014, and the recommendations of the City Executive Board on 12 March 2015.

Councillor Turner moved the recommendation in the report and these were agreed on being seconded by Councillor Fooks and put to the vote.

Council resolved:

1. to approve a supplementary capital budget of £200,000 for welfare facilities at Cowley Marsh depot as detailed in paragraph 5 (of the report);

2. that all end of year revenue surpluses from 2014/15 be transferred into a property investment reserve (subject to the risks and potential financial penalties relating to Homes and Communities Agency Grant Funding as outlined in paragraphs 6 and 7 of the report) in order that the funds can be invested to provide future income streams or to further policy objectives including the allocation of £550,000 in relation to the purchase of the freehold of St.Aldate's Chambers.

109. ADOPTION OF THE STREET TRADING POLICY 2015

Council had before it a report setting out the draft Street Trading Policy 2015 for adoption following approval by the General Purposes Licensing Committee on 27 January 2015, and the recommendations of that committee.

Councillor Clarkson moved adoption of the Street Trading Policy and this was agreed on being seconded and put to the vote.

Councillor Wolff asked that officers took into account the primary activity being carried out when enforcing this policy; for example in relation to buskers selling their music as a secondary activity.

Council resolved to adopt the Street Trading Policy 2015 as set out in the appendix to the report.

110. CONSTITUTION REVIEW 2015

Council had before it a report recommending changes to the Council's constitution, set out in appendices to the report.

Councillor Price moved adoption of the changes as set out and this was agreed on being seconded and put to the vote.

Council resolved to approve, with immediate effect, the amendments to the Constitution outlined in the report and in:

- Appendix 1 - Finance Rules;
- Appendix 2 - Contract Procedure Rules;
- Appendix 3 - Planning Code of Practice;
- Appendix 4 - Miscellaneous proposed changes.

111. EMPLOYMENT POLICIES

Council had before it a report setting out one new and two revised employment policies for approval, attached as appendices to the report.

Councillor Price moved the recommendations in the report, and this was agreed on being seconded by Councillor Simm and put to the vote.

Councillor Price said it may be possible to show more details of the ratio between highest and lowest earners than that set out in the prescribed format.

Council resolved to:

1. approve the updated annual Pay Policy Statement for publication.
2. approve the following policies with immediate effect:
 - Policy and Procedure for Managing Allegations against Employees and Volunteers Working with Children and Vulnerable Adults
 - Family Leave Policy and Procedure

and authorise the Head of Human Resources to amend the policies and procedures from time to time in order to correct any factual or legal errors.

112. GRANTING OF THE FREEDOM OF OXFORD TO THE RIFLES

Council had before it a report requesting that Council grant the Freedom of the City of Oxford to The Rifles, and allow them to exercise the Honour of the Freedom of Entry to the City of Oxford.

Councillor Price moved the recommendations in the report, and these were agreed on being seconded and put to the vote.

Council resolved:

1. that the Freedom of Oxford, first bestowed on the Oxfordshire and Buckinghamshire Light Infantry in 1945 and subsequently exercised by the Royal Green Jackets, now be granted to The Rifles as a mark of the City's respect and appreciation of their continued service to their Country; and
2. to note that The Rifles will exercise the Freedom of Entry to the City of Oxford, by parading through Oxford City on Sunday 24 May 2015.

113. REGULATION OF INVESTIGATORY POWERS ACT 2000

Council had before it a report detailing the Council's application of its powers under the Regulation of Investigatory Powers Act 2000.

Councillor Price moved the recommendation in the report, and this was agreed on being seconded and put to the vote.

Council resolved to note the Council's use of its powers under the Regulation of Investigatory Powers Act 2000 (RIPA) for the period 1 April 2014 to 31 March 2015.

114. CITY EXECUTIVE BOARD MINUTES

Council had before it the minutes of the City Executive Board meetings of 29 January, 12 February and 12 March 2015.

On Minute 130 bullet point 5, Councillor Wolff asked for clarification of the intent and cost of the commentary that graffiti would be removed from private property free. Councillor Tanner said that it not the policy to remove graffiti from private property for no charge: offensive graffiti would be removed the day it was reported; other graffiti is removed from the Council's property; there would be an officer recruited to work with private owners to establish procedures to remove graffiti; and advice on removal, or removal at a charge, was offered to private owners.

Council noted that the approved Minute130 contained a typographical error in the commentary and that £250,000 (not £250M) was available for youth ambition work.

On Minute 146, Councillor Simmons commented that resolutions 4 and 5 would be challenging to implement but the council was keen to see the Oxford living wage supported by all employers.

On Minute 148 Councillor Fooks asked how many social rented houses would be built this year and how much of the discretionary housing payment grant was returned. Councillor Seamons said that 107 further council homes and other affordable homes would be completed this year; figures for the second part were not to hand.

On Minute 148 Councillor Benjamin asked about the social housing tenure; Councillor Seamons said that six were 'affordable rent' and the majority of proposed houses would be social rents.

115. QUESTIONS ON NOTICE FROM MEMBERS OF COUNCIL

Questions on notice submitted in accordance with Council procedure rule 11.9(b), written responses, and supplementary question and responses asked of the Board members and Leader are set out below.

To the Board member for Educational Attainment and Youth Ambition, Councillor Kennedy

1. From Councillor Gant

In considering recent reports into educational attainment in Oxford, will the leader accept that at KS1 and KS2 Oxford city had the lowest %s of pupils reaching expected attainment in the county in both 2013 and 2014 despite progress being made with only reading not being worst in county, as paragraphs 1 and 2 of the document "School Performance 2013-14" shows; that the aggregate data for the city masks considerable differences and that in fact the spread between best and worst outcomes in progression is far worse than the average would suggest?

Written Response

I should like to thank Councillor Gant for again raising the issue of poor performance of primary schools in the city. However, the schools which we supported made substantial improvements. Between 2012 and 2014, the schools which followed our education attainment programme saw a 10 percentage point increase in the number of children achieving level 2 in reading, writing and maths at age 7, from 65% to 75%. This contrasts with a 4 percentage

point increase across Oxfordshire primaries. And the same schools saw a 4 percentage point increase in level 4 in reading, writing and maths at age 11, from 59 to 63%, as against a single percentage point increase across the county. This indicates that educational attainment in the most disadvantaged schools in the city can be raised by consistent and appropriate teaching methods. We hope that these improvements will provide a sound basis for bringing the performance of these schools closer to the county wide average.

We understand that the County Council is reviewing its role in supporting educational attainment, and we are committed to working with county colleagues and teachers to realise the educational potential of children in city schools.

Supplementary Question

Would you agree that the way forward would be to allow schools greater freedom to spend the money?

Response

While it is important that schools set their own policies, cuts to education budgets have increased the effects of disadvantage and the programme was designed to reduce these.

To the Board member for Housing and Estate Regeneration, Councillor Seamons

2. From Councillor Fooks

I am sure that we all applaud the installation of solar PV (photovoltaics) on Council housing stock, to reduce carbon emissions and reduce tenants' electricity bills. Can the Board member tell Council how the benefits can be shared out among those tenants who do not yet have any such panels or other source of renewable energy for their homes?

Written response

There is no practical way that tenants who do not have PV or other renewables installed directly benefit from those who have. However, as PV's represent an investment by the HRA the resultant income directly received by the Council will benefit the HRA in the longer term and will be used for the benefit of all tenants.

Our approach as outlined in the Housing Asset Strategy and being further developed in the Energy Strategy is that we will be setting a minimum SAP (energy efficiency) level that all council houses will achieve, and setting up works programmes to achieve this with the funding we have available from the council.

While renewables will play an important part in this approach we will also be installing more traditional measures such as roof and wall insulation and the installation of A rated boilers and heating system upgrades to meet the minimum SAP target. This will ensure that we address fuel poverty issue for all our tenants.

This is done in recognition of the fact that not all houses and flats are suitable for the installation of PV or other renewables and allows us to assess the most cost effective way of achieving the minimum SAP target across the council stock.

As part of our approach we will also be maximising the use of external energy funding wherever this is available which will supplement the budgets we already have.

The Energy Strategy currently being drafted from following detailed analysis of our stock will be presented for approval later this year.

Supplementary Question

Is there a way of sharing the benefits with more tenants rather than just individual households as you move towards increasing the numbers of houses with solar PV?

Response

We are looking to improve energy efficient for all tenants and to install as much PV as we can.

3. From Councillor Hollick

Why has the Council not topped up the amount for Discretionary Housing Payments (DHP) after the Government cut funding – even though they are permitted to do so up to a maximum of 2.5x the Government grant level?

Written response

The Council's government contribution for DHP funding has reduced from £515k in 2014/15, to £288k for 2015/16. The Council is increasing the funding available for DHP's by providing an additional amount of £150k from Homelessness Prevention Funding, and £80k from the HRA, which makes a total of £518k. This significantly exceeds the DHP expenditure for 2014/15 of £462k, and so should be more than sufficient.

The Council's policy in respect of awarding DHP's is to ensure that recipients have a long term plan in place, which will mean that DHP's are only required for a short period. The Council's Welfare Reform Team are available to support people to do this, by helping them overcome barriers to employment, to get help with their debts and to find more affordable accommodation. In 2014/15 62 customers were helped into work. The Council's policy in respect of awarding DHP is to ensure that recipients have a long term plan in place so that DHP is only required for as short a period as practicable. The Welfare Reform Team is available to provide support, to help overcome barriers to getting a job, helping with debt issues and finding affordable accommodation. During 2014/15, we helped 62 people to find work.

The current government intend to reduce the government contribution to DHP's further. As such it is important that customers are supported to find long term solutions, as only providing financial support is not sustainable in the long run. Significant promotion of DHP's was undertaken in the last financial year to ensure that expenditure was maximised. We worked closely with a wide range of organisations across the city to ensure those in need of support were able to access it.

In 2014/15 295 applications were turned down out of 1,310 received. The reasons for refusal are summarised in the table below. Even when someone is refused a DHP, other types of support are still available from the Welfare Reform team, and this is always offered.

Supplementary Question

Does the money available meet the need given the recent judgement that we need to provide housing in Oxford not outside the city.

Response

The amount was never sufficient to mitigate all housing need; we need to use this money in a sustainable way, and use the funds we have to meet homelessness need as far as we can.

The summary of refusal reasons is:

| Reason for refusal: | |
|---|----|
| DHP would not sustain tenancy | 12 |
| Expensive rent | 8 |
| Failed to meet conditions of previous award | 16 |
| Failed to supply requested information | 41 |
| Home Choice paying top up | 3 |
| Income exceeds | 73 |
| Ineligible rent costs | 12 |
| Means tested shortfall only | 26 |
| No HB entitlement | 8 |
| No long term plan to reduce DHP reliance | 10 |
| No longer affected by welfare reform | 8 |
| No rent shortfall | 41 |
| Other | 20 |
| Unwilling to accept conditions of award | 17 |

4. From Councillor Thomas

How many sites for residential development does the collegiate University own which have been allocated in the Sites and Housing Plan, and how many homes could these sites approximately deliver.

Written response

There are 12 sites with a potential to deliver in the order of 610 dwellings. See the full break down in the table below:

| Sites and Housing Policy | Site | Owner | Capacity (dwellings) SHLAA Dec 2014 |
|--------------------------|---|---|-------------------------------------|
| SP1 | Avis site | Christ Church College | 12 |
| SP2 | Banbury Road sites | University of Oxford | 42 |
| SP9 | Court Place Gardens | University of Oxford | 46 |
| SP14 | Diamond Place and Ewert House | University of Oxford (part) remainder Oxford City Council | 100 |
| SP17 | Faculty of Music | University of Oxford | 19 (or 100 student rooms) |
| SP22 | Jesus College Sports Ground | Jesus College | 24 |
| SP27 | Land off Manor Place | Merton College | 40 (or 200 student rooms) |
| SP28 | Lincoln College Sports Ground | Lincoln College | 112 |
| SP40 | Oriel College land at Edward St and High St | Oriel College | 7 |
| SP53 | Summertown House | University of Oxford | 5 |
| SP61 | West Wellington Square | University of Oxford | 13 |

| | | | |
|-------------|-----------------------|----------------------|-----|
| SP63 | Wolvercote Paper Mill | University of Oxford | 190 |
| | | Total dwellings | 160 |

Supplementary question

What can we do to accelerate these developments?

Response

A number of sites are subject to ongoing discussions but the university needs to find alternative sites for buildings on some of the sites before new development can proceed.

5. From Councillor Thomas

How many residential homes (broken down as market rate/affordable/social) on sites owned by the collegiate University have been granted permission but have not commenced yet?

Written response

From the initial analysis that officers have made it would appear that there are no such sites which have been granted permission but upon which work has yet to commence.

6. From Councillor Thomas

I am aware that some letting agents are asking students to submit sealed bids on how much rent they are prepared to pay for the 2015/6 academic year?

Written response

The City Council is not aware this practice is happening in the city's network of accredited agents, and officers would welcome any information or intelligence it can use to investigate such matters in collaboration with its partners.

City Council Officers have made proactive enquiries on behalf of the Councillor to some of the City's larger letting agents who deal with students, and they are not aware of students who have come to them having experienced this behaviour.

The housing market in Oxford is such that the high demand for property and accommodation creates a situation where some landlords and agents may seek to take advantage financially of this situation.

Regulation and controls do help to ensure standards are maintained, and although City Council has very limited powers to deal with issues such as this, partners such as Oxfordshire County Council's Trading Standards team do, and may be able to assist in this case. Officers will therefore use the opportunities available to them to raise the matter with their Trading Standards counterparts at the County Council.

The City Council would encourage all members of the Oxford's community to engage with accredited letting agents when seeking accommodation in the City.

7. From Councillor Thomas

I am aware that some letting agents advertise family homes for sale in Oxford as investment properties only? What does he suggest can be done to end this despicable practice?

Written response

The City Council has limited powers to deal this type of issue, although partners such as the Trading Standards unit at Oxfordshire County Council do.

As previously mentioned, the housing market in Oxford is such that the high demand for property and accommodation creates a situation where some landlords and agents may seek to take financial advantage of this situation.

Officers at the City Council would therefore welcome any information or intelligence from any resident, or Councillor, that it can present to the County Council to investigate.

Officers will be raising the matter with counterparts in the Trading Standards team in the County Council at the next available opportunity,

The City Council would encourage all members of the Oxford's community to engage with bona fide estate agents when looking to buy property in the City.

8. From Councillor Thomas

What are the implications for Oxford City Council of the Supreme Court's decision to overturn a decision by Westminster Council to house residents out of the borough, particularly that Labour have just cut the discretionary housing benefit budget?

Written response

The full judgement of the Supreme Court case (Nzolameso v The City of Westminster) was only released on 2 April 2015 and officers are considering this and any local implications now. Should any of the Council's policies and procedures, in relation to discharging homeless duties into out-of-Oxford private rented accommodation, and the way this is communicated, need to be changed in light of this judgement, then these changes will be brought forward expeditiously.

Supplementary Question

Are you content with the amount that has been cut from the discretionary housing benefit budget given the risk to that budget?

Response

No, hence the decision to make the shortfall up elsewhere.

9. From Councillor Hollick

How many families in housing need has the City Council relocated outside of the City and outside of the County?

Written response

The Council does not record 'relocations outside of the City or outside of Oxford' but does seek to assist a considerable number of households in housing need and either homeless or at risk of homelessness in a number of ways – often very focused on preventing or relieving their homelessness. In relation to assisting families to access private rented accommodation through the provision of a deposit or bond, through the Council's Home Choice scheme – in 14/15, of the 95 new households assisted to find homes, 52 of these were in Oxford; 24 in other parts of Oxfordshire; and 19 elsewhere in the country. Most such moves are mutually agreed with the customer, but 12 of these moves were undertaken with the Council formally discharging its homeless duty through a Private Rented Sector Offer (PRSO). Of these 12, 2 were for offers in Oxfordshire districts and

10 were beyond Oxfordshire, in the next rental markets with suitable available homes at LHA rates.

Supplementary Question

Can the board member explain the meaning of 'formally discharging' our statutory duty?

Response

It means that the council has made an offer of a home that meets the family's needs. However, if this offer is not taken up officers do continue to assist the family to find accommodation where it is reasonable and practicable to do so.

10. From Councillor Thomas

What is the net financial cost or benefit to the Oxford City Council of selling a property under right to buy and building a replacement home?

Written response

A brief financial analysis of the "costs" associated of losing a property from the Council's housing stock via right to buy and replacing it over a 30 year period shows a potential loss to the Council of half a million pounds. Thirty years is the period we are advised to strategically monitor decisions and impacts in our Housing Revenue Account (HRA) via our Business Plan. The calculation does not account for in-year management and maintenance costs.

Supplementary Question

Should we be protecting ourselves from the 'right to buy'?

Response

Yes, as there is a major financial loss and there are difficulties in actually replacing houses sold, but we need a change in policy from central government in order to do so.

11. From Councillor Benjamin

At the time of the Westgate planning discussions, members were reassured that, although there would be no affordable housing on the Westgate site, the developer contributions would be used to increase the level of social housing elsewhere. Is it therefore acceptable, and in the light of Oxford's housing crisis, for the Council Leader (quoted in the Oxford Mail) to state that 40% social housing on the nearby Oxpens site is acceptable?

Written response (as for Q28)

The City Council's Sites and Housing Plan Policy HP3 is clear that a minimum of 50% of dwellings on larger sites should be provided as affordable housing, (40% at social rent and 10% as intermediate housing) although exceptions will be made if it can be robustly demonstrated that this makes a site unviable. This policy will apply to the Oxpen's site as to other housing sites in the city. The statement quoted in the Oxford Mail does not depart from this policy.

The commitment made to the West Area Planning Committee, when it was considering the Westgate application, remains that the off-site contribution to affordable housing to be paid to the City Council by the Westgate Developer through the signed S106 agreement will be used to increase the level of social housing elsewhere in the city. The Oxpens site was described as the most likely opportunity. Whilst this remains the position no commitment was made by officers that this would be the only location considered.

To the Board member for Crime and Community response, Councillor Sinclair

12. From Councillor Brandt

The plan to place gates around the Covered Market feels very similar to the recent anti-homeless spikes that were placed in London and created a massive outcry. As the council is now looking to clamp down on substance abusers rough sleepers, which is the main problem these gates are meant to address, surely this is overkill? Does the portfolio holder agree that what little covered public spaces we have in the city centre should be left accessible for people such as those waiting out a sudden deluge or the growing numbers finding themselves on the streets for the first time, with nowhere to go?

Written response

The plans for the gates to the Covered Market were recently discussed by officers with Councillor Hollick.

The Council is funding major programmes of support for rough sleepers, at a cost of over £1m, including the No Second Night Out programme, hostels and shelters. It also supports a range of specialist organisations such as Crisis to provide advice, help and support to homeless persons. The Council's work in the area of homelessness has been recognised by Central Government and there are other options for homeless persons.

Regular use of the Covered Market by rough sleepers has led to significant concerns. Because of the rough sleepers aggressive behaviour the Police are required to remove them when the Covered Market opens early in the morning. The rough sleepers leave rubbish and mess behind associated with substance abuse, including needles. This is unacceptable to the public and market traders and their staff, and also for Council staff who often have to deal with the rough sleepers and clear up each morning.

The Covered Market is a retail centre and an important element of the city centre economy. The Council has committed to improve and strengthen the Covered Market, and in response to the market traders has agreed to fund the new gates.

Supplementary Question

Will the rough sleepers just cause problems elsewhere if they cannot sleep at the market, and does it send the wrong message that we are intolerant rather than trying to help rough sleepers?

Response

The Council takes its responsibility seriously but it is better to provide focussed targeted services to help people off the street rather than an unsuitable area which creates nuisance for workers in the covered market.

13. From Councillor Brandt

If the council decides to go ahead with a PSPO for the city centre, will the council also make all the associated checks and balances explicit and transparent in the relevant documentation?

Written response

Public Space Protection Orders were introduced by the Anti-social Behaviour, Crime and Policing Act 2014, and should be seen as an additional tool for Councils to use against anti-social behaviour in public spaces, whilst increasing the quality of life of those in the locality.

The City Executive Board will be considering a report on the proposed PSPO for city centre ASB issues on 14th May.

The proposal to establish the City Centre PSPO has involved extensive public consultation, and has included the establishment of a members group involving all ward members of affected wards. The group has been extensively involved in the process leading up to, and throughout, the public consultation period.

If the PSPO is adopted, it is important to note that partnership working will be a strong theme in its implementation, and a multi-agency support panel involving major partners and outreach teams, chaired by the City Council, will be established. The panel will have an oversight role, and also be responsible for determining appropriate and proactive strategies that help and improve the lives, and life chances of, for example beggars or rough sleepers. We seek in all our policies to ensure that causes are treated not symptoms.

High standards of training are already given to officers, and in future this would include a component on the implementation of the PSPO.

When deciding whether to implement a PSPO the Council must have particular regard to the rights of freedom of expression and freedom of assembly set out in the European Convention on Human Rights.

If adopted by CEB in May, the City Council's Scrutiny Panel have committed to review the implementation of the City Centre PSPO within 6 months

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

14. From Councillor Upton

Getting people out of cars and on to bicycles, buses, trains and their own two feet would reduce congestion, reduce pollution, be a switch to low carbon forms of transport, help reduce inequality and improve health by getting people active. Given the huge importance of changing the way people move around our city would the portfolio holder agree with me that the County's Council's latest Oxford Transport Strategy falls far short of providing the dramatic changes we need to see in Oxford to give pedestrians, cyclists and buses the priority they need?

Written response

The County Council's latest Oxford Transport Strategy contains some good ideas but certainly falls far short of what is needed. In particular:

- 1) Tunnelling under the centre of Oxford is a costly nonsense which will damage the beautiful heart of Oxford and destroy archaeology.
- 2) The County are right about the increase in journeys in future but the Rapid Transit Buses (RTB) they propose will not provide the number of extra buses and seats that are needed. It is too early to rule out trams in the future.
- 3) The new Oxford Transport Strategy (OTS) does not make it clear which modes of transport should have most priority. We want to give priority to pedestrians, cyclists and buses especially during rush hours.
- 4) The City Council wants a speedy end to the effective moratorium on urgently needed improvements for cyclists on Oxford's roads.
- 5) The City Council supports the same balanced transport policy for the Headington hospitals and the Cowley business park that has operated successfully for the city centre for many years. At present very many people who work in the eastern arc have little choice but to drive.

- 6) The County's latest OTS has failed to indicate sensible routes for the RTBs. Using crowded roads like the Cowley Road and London Road, or driving a bus lane across a golf course and nature reserve in Lye Valley, are unworkable.
- 7) The City Council will continue to keep open its Park & Rides (P & R) in the city. Indeed we want to expand Seacourt P & R. But we also support more P & Rs beyond Oxford.
- 8) We support some ideas in the OTS such as more electric vehicles, cleaner air, a passenger rail link to Cowley and consulting about a work-place parking levy. We are opposed to road pricing as an unworkable burden on car drivers and businesses.

Supplementary Question

The OTS is about planning for future increases but would you agree that we need safe cycle routes now and the OTS does not show sufficient urgency?

Response

Yes, we need to encourage development of cycle route, put practical solutions in place as soon as possible, and campaign against the more impractical ideas in the OTS.

15. From Councillor Fooks

Following the extraordinary story in the press about the City Council agreeing to remove solar panels on Council housing due to aesthetic concerns, can you assure Council that all future such installations will be adequately discussed with neighbours to meet any possible concerns and that the houses concerned in the story will be getting their solar panels back, with all the benefits that will accrue to them as a result?

Written response

The solar panels on the ten new Council homes at Bury Knowle will remain in place and will enable the new tenants to enjoy cheaper energy bills. I understand solar panels are permitted development except in conservation areas and for new developments. A technicality meant that planning permission for the solar panels at Bury Knowle might not apply but this was speedily corrected.

Supplementary Question

Would you agree the publicity was very unfortunate as it took so long to sort out?

Response

Correcting the matter happened very quickly once it was realised there was a problem, in part once the Mail ran the story.

16. From Cllr Simmons

Will the portfolio holder reverse the decision to remove the solar panels from the roofs of 10 new affordable houses built by the City Council on a former depot site off North Place, next to Bury Knowle Park on the basis that they breached no planning policies, are consistent with the City Council's carbon reduction policies and help those on low incomes to save money on energy bills.

Written response (as for Q15)

The solar panels on the ten new Council homes at Bury Knowle will remain in place and will enable the new tenants to enjoy cheaper energy bills. I understand solar panels are permitted development except in conservation areas and for

new developments. A technicality meant that planning permission for the solar panels at Bury Knowle might not apply but this was speedily corrected.

Supplementary Question

What was the issue?

Response

Planning permission was granted for panels generating electricity for the development, but these were configured to feed the National Grid. Removing this option meant the panels complied with the permission and could stay.

17. From Cllr Gant

At its meeting on December 1, 2014, council voted unanimously to adopt a range of safety measures on lorries to improve safety for cyclists. At its subsequent meeting, council was promised an update on progress "within two weeks". No such update has been received. Will the leader please inform council:

Has the council's own fleet of lorries been fitted with the safety measures described?

Has the city council contacted the county council to urge the adoption of the traffic order referred to in the motion of December 1, and will he circulate that letter and any response to members?

Has the city council adopted the requirement for its own contractors to have these measures on its lorries?

Written response

A letter was not sent to the County Council straight away. For this I apologise. Members have now received a copy of the e-mail that was sent to the County last week.

With regards to the Council's fleet, all new purchase vehicles, where it is possible, now have side bars and side mirrors installed as standard. Of our current fleet, the Council now as a result of the motion has 31 of its 50 vehicles fitted with sidebars, and the retrofit process continues.

Regarding contractors, the most practical approach to achieve the aim is to have the issue in the scoring matrix for award, and this has been actioned. In the case of Buildbase, a major supplier to the Council, this requirement has already been put on them and they are complying with the requirements.

The Council has looked into introducing cycle safety into the planning process, however cycle safety in this context is not a material planning consideration. We cannot, therefore successfully require this as a condition.

Supplementary Question

Can the response from the County Council be circulated to members; and having put this into the scoring matrix for contractors is there a way of assessing the effect?

Response

I will ask officers to circulate the response to all members once it is received, and ask if the effect can be assessed.

18. From Councillor Simmons

What assurances can the portfolio holder give that the small electrical items now collected by the City Council each week are actually recycled?

Written response

The kerbside Waste Electrical and Electronic Equipment (WEEE) tonnage for the 2014/15 year, excluding March, (we're yet to receive the figures) is 23.27 tonnes.

All WEEE collected is treated as end of life and is processed by our specialist contractors, Computer Salvage Specialists (CSS) who are an Oxford based company.. All of the items are broken down during the process into their component parts. Once completed, all the various grades are sent to refiners for use in re-manufacturing. Our contractors' recovery rates are among the highest in the industry, with less than 1% losses during the recycling process.

Supplementary Question

Can you provide assurance all processed in this country or properly audited if sent overseas?

Response

As far as I am aware, these are all recycled locally within the county and then the components sent for reuse.

19. From Councillor Simmons

Will the Portfolio Holder be requiring Fusion to deliver additional carbon savings - on top of the 2% a year they have proposed on the basis that the Council's own target (which would have been applied had the leisure premises remained within City control) is 5% per annum.

Written response

The City Council's 5% minimum target for reduced emissions each year overall still allows some services to vary the percentage by which they reduce (or even increase) their carbon footprint.

We have incorporated a wide range of low carbon technology within the leisure centres, most recently the biomass boiler, PV array and combined heat and power unit at the new pool and made good progress reducing energy usage in our leisure centres.

It is important to note that as usage in the centres has increased by 40% over the past five years that there is also an increase in the amount of energy used. We have now started reporting carbon on a usage per visit basis which will provide a more accurate picture.

It is proposed to use the 2% target for the year ahead and review this once the new pool has been in operation for a full year.

Supplementary Question

Will you reconsider the target and set this to 5% for Fusion?

Response

This year we have set Fusion a minimum 2% target; in future years we will be pushing for a 5% target in line with the rest of the council as we think this is achievable. The 5% target is for the reduction in the council's overall emissions and parts of the organisation may do relatively better or worse.

To the Deputy Leader of the Council, Councillor Turner

20. From Councillor Fooks

Can you tell Council how many teachers have now been helped by the Council's mortgage support scheme?

Written response

No loans have yet been agreed. The promotion by the partner housing association Catalyst has only just begun with a view to having the first loans agreed before the summer recess; all headteachers are now aware of the scheme. We are currently also revising the scheme rules on the advice of schools to include existing staff at schools taking on positions of leadership who may otherwise leave teaching in the city. It is regrettable that the scheme has been slow to start – unfortunately there were significant delays in having it signed off by government, which is the reason for the delay. It is worth noting that the Council's contribution to the scheme is matched by Catalyst, and we are hopeful, after the government's unfortunate delay, that it will be useful in the recruitment and retention of leadership staff in Oxford's schools.

Supplementary Question

Why are we only now being told that there was a delay and would you agree that it has not been progressing as you hoped it would?

Response

The delay was reported in answer to a question at a previous meeting.

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

21. From Councillor Wilkinson

Would the Leader please update Council on action he and officers have taken following the motion supported by all parties to introduce a code of practice on the erection and removal of sales and letting boards in the City, and indicate whether in his view such a code should be mandatory or voluntary?

Written response

I can confirm that the Development Control Manager has prepared a draft paper on this matter. Work has been undertaken to understand the scale of the issue in the City, to understand what other Councils have done and with what success and to explore a number of options and their likely effectiveness. This includes a comparison of the mandatory and voluntary approaches. The draft has raised a number of issues, particularly relating to financial and staff resources, that will need further consideration before a report can be presented to CEB.

Supplementary Question

What is the likely timescale?

Response

A revised draft is likely to be available within a month.

22. From Councillor Wilkinson

Noting that Headington and Summertown were placed by the Sunday Times in the top 6 urban places to live in the SE, would the Leader ascribe this accolade at least partly to the consultative nature and hard work of the local councillors in those areas?

Written response

Since the criteria used by the Sunday Times did not include any reference to local political representation, it would be irrational to draw this inference. The criteria did, however, include reference to the quality of the streetscene, crime and green spaces, all of which have benefitted from seven years of consistently high quality management by the City Council and its partners.

23. From Councillor Hollick

Oxford Living Wage – why do City Council salary increases for those on the Oxford Living Wage lag six months behind changes in the London Living Wage to which it is indexed?

Written response

All Council staff, with the exception of some apprentices, earn above the Oxford Living Wage rate (£8.69 per hour); the minimum hourly rate for our staff is £9.12 per hour. Our current 5-year pay agreement with UNISON and Unite operates on a financial year basis with the 1.5% guaranteed increase being implemented from April 1st each year.

Supplementary Question

Why do we not pay apprentices the Oxford living wage and can we commit to this?

Response

The assumption (possibly not always true) is that apprentices are not living in an independent household so do not incur the same expenses, and their pay reflects the substantial training required. Also paying our apprentices well above the normal rate biases the market.

24. From Councillor Fooks

At the recent Examination into the Northern Gateway Area Action plan, it became clear that there was a wide range of possible figures on the number of jobs to be created. As this will determine the scale of transport infrastructure improvements needed to meet the Core Strategy Inspector's criterion of 'Development is dependent upon the securing of measures designed to mitigate the impact on the local and strategic road networks, acceptable to both the Highways Agency and Highways Authority', it is a very important figure which needs to be agreed before any approval can be given for development on the site. Estimates range between 3,500 and 'over 8,000' as said by you at the recent Oxford Strategic Partnership event in the Town Hall. Which is the figure to which the highways authority and the Highways Agency should be working in developing the necessary infrastructure?

Written response

During the evolution of the planning process for the Northern gateway site, a range of different authors have produced forecasts for the likely number of jobs that would be generated by the development. These forecasts have used different methodologies, for example some include construction jobs, and others include supporting service jobs to estimate the aggregate impact of the development. It is impossible to be precise about the exact number of direct jobs at this point because this will depend on the mix of knowledge based employers that move into the site. The final split between lab based environments and office based environments will have a significant effect on the total job numbers.

Transport analysis is based upon floorspace not worker numbers. While there is clearly a link, the TRICS data which goes into the transport model comes from assessment of different use types based upon a national database of transport surveys covering a wide variety of actual developments. The County Council (as Highways Authority) have looked at the maximum floorspace proposed in the AAP and used this in the North Oxford Transport Strategy (NOTS) work; this means that they have tested the worst case scenario. In practice, the more lab space provided, the lower the number of people that will be employed on the site.

Both the County Council and the Highways Agency are confident about the transport analysis that has been carried out and they supported the AAP in the examination.

25. From Councillor Fooks

The Forward Plan documents usually have a number of Delegated Officer Key Decisions listed. Some involve the approval of unspecified very large sums of Council funds and there seems to be no mechanism by which the exact figures are reported to members or the public. Where will these figures be reported and available? The Homelessness Grants Allocation, ID 1008005, seems to be saying that over £500,000 will be allocated by discussion between the Board Member and the Head of Housing; should this not be subject to public scrutiny?

Written response

The report to City Executive Board on 12th March 2015 on the 'Allocation of Homelessness Prevention Funds in 2015' set out the proposed spending plans for the coming year. This was approved by the Board. Delegated authority was granted to the Head of Housing and Property Services in consultation with the Board member for Housing and Estate Regeneration to allocate any balance in the Preventing Homelessness Funds. This is unlikely to apply in this year, as the report shows that expenditure will broadly equate to the funding available in-year. Any spending of accrued balances from this year or previous years will follow the financial delegations as set out in the Council's Constitution, with any spend over £500,000 requiring the approval of the City Executive Board.

Supplementary Question

Could we have a report back on these delegated decisions in each case?

Response

These are already included in the budget reporting to the Executive Board and variations will be reported in the normal way.

26. From Councillor Gant

Will the leader agree that the poor results from the KRM program demonstrate that it was the wrong choice for Oxford, and that the optimistic assessment of its impact was based only on its own evaluation; and that, given the range of ideas in the Next Steps section of the report, will he now accept that the proposal in the Liberal Democrat alternative budget, to make funding available to schools for headteachers to use as they see fit in order to achieve specified targets, was the correct one, rather than imposing the prescriptive, inflexible KRM program, which schools largely did not want?

Written response

The evidence from the analysis of the KRM programme shows clearly that, in the two schools which stuck to the programme throughout the period, more rapid

progress was recorded than in the rest of the city and elsewhere. There is no proposal to continue the KRM programme in schools which do not wish to adopt it.

27. From Councillor Gant

In assessing progress in schools, why is there no mention of the considerable benefits of the Pupil Premium?

Written response

The City Council has no evidence on the impact of the Pupil Premium funding. All schools are required to report the usage of this funding annually, so Cllr Gant will be able to investigate the many uses to which it has been put by trawling the DfE and Ofsted websites.

28. From Councillor Gant

In the Oxford Mail of April 1, Councillor Price said of the recent deal regarding Oxpens "we also want to plan for between 40 and 50 per cent of housing to be affordable". Council's own policy is for a minimum of 50% affordable. In addition, the percentage of affordable housing provided in the residential part of the new Westgate development is zero. The west area planning committee was clearly led to understand that this shortfall would be made up on other sites, and Oxpens was specifically mentioned as a possible site. Why, therefore, is the leader of the council flagging up to potential developers in advance that the council will not even meet its own policy at Oxpens, as well as apparently abandoning the commitment to make up the shortfall from the Westgate?

Written response (as for Q10)

The City Council's Sites and Housing Plan Policy HP3 is clear that a minimum of 50% of dwellings on larger sites should be provided as affordable housing, (40% at social rent and 10% as intermediate housing) although exceptions will be made if it can be robustly demonstrated that this makes a site unviable. This policy will apply to the Oxpens site as to other housing sites in the city.

The commitment made to the West Area Planning Committee, when it was considering the Westgate application, remains that the off-site contribution to affordable housing to be paid to the City Council by the Westgate Alliance through the S106 agreement will be used to increase the level of social housing elsewhere in the city. The Oxpens site was identified as the most likely opportunity. Whilst this remains the position, no commitment was made by officers that this would be the only location considered.

Supplementary Question

Is it unwise to flag up to developers that Oxpens may be developed with less than the required amount of affordable housing?

Response

There is a long way to go with plan for this site, and affordable housing is one factor. I will be very happy if we can achieve 50% or even more: I will not be minimising what we can achieve but we have to be realistic about the deliverability of specific sites.

29. From Councillor Simmons

Will the Council be reviewing its processes with respect to gender equality after someone was initially turned away from a housing interview because they no

longer identified as the gender listed on their birth certificate (and did not possess a passport) and were thus unable to provide the requested proof of identity? (Note: In the end, housing accepted a National Insurance number but apparently this is not normal procedure).

Written response

The Housing Service provides advice and options to all who request support, without requiring evidence of identity. If a formal request for assistance is lodged under the Council's homeless duty, officers are required, under the statutory provisions, to identify the applicant as part of the assessment of eligibility. This requires formal evidence of identity, which is typically a driving licence or a passport. Whilst officers may use discretion, they may not always feel able to accept an application without further evidence of identity being provided, as appears to have occurred in this case.

If the details of this case are given to the Housing Service they will review it.

Supplementary Question

Will you support the results of any review?

Response

Yes

30. From Councillor Benjamin

The Council's current 5 year housing land supply plan expired at the end of March 2015. Without it, it is more difficult to manage through the planning process the type and location of new and replacement housing. When will the Council be publishing a new 5 year plan?

Written response

The question is based on a misapprehension. The Council has an adopted Core Strategy which runs to 2026, and a Sites and Housing Plan which covers the same period. We also have a number of Area Action Plans and the saved policies of the adopted Oxford Local Plan 2001-16. The OLP will apply after 2016. We produce an Annual Monitoring Report and a Strategic Housing Land Availability Assessment, which set out the supply of housing for 5 years and where it will come from. The current land supply plan does not therefore expire this year.

31. From Councillor Benjamin

Do we really need more office space at Oxpens when we don't have enough affordable housing for existing Oxford employees? (especially since the Westgate Development will have no affordable housing).

Written response

The supply of office space in Oxford has been reducing for several years, limiting the choice on offer for businesses of all sizes. The availability of offices to let fell by 11% in Oxford over the 12 months to 2014. In Autumn 2014 a number of market locations, including the city centre, were identified as having a severe shortage of Grade A provision at a time of increasing demand for such space. The most recent figures suggest that a total of only 55,000 sq. ft. of space is available in the city centre (with 20,000 under offer). This is an insignificant level of supply compared to other city locations, constraining the city's offer to local businesses especially those for which proximity to Oxford University is important.

Oxpens is the largest site left available for development in the City Centre and it is proposed to make provision for a range of important uses on this site, including affordable housing. On such major central sites, a mix of development uses is often the most sustainable option, balancing housing, amenity and employment space and helping to create a vibrant city offer. There is evidence that many employees prefer to work in city centres for reasons of access, amenity and job satisfaction.

32. From Councillor Benjamin

Do we really need another large hotel on the Oxpens site that will take yet more trade away from smaller, locally owned guest houses?

Written response

There is a significant undersupply of hotel accommodation in the city centre and a significant increase in demand. Assessment of occupancy rates shows that Oxford's rates are extremely high, well above national averages and not far behind London. Development of new hotel stock is further limited by the scarcity of sites and infrastructure issues. It is appropriate that City centre sites such as Oxpens should be the focus for a mix of uses, including hotels, in terms of creating a vibrant city offer and promoting more sustainable travel patterns.

The scale of demand is such that there is more than enough need for extra bed spaces of all types so that any new large hotel on the Oxpens site will be highly unlikely to take trade away from the city's excellent range of guest houses and bed and breakfast accommodation.

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

Jane Alexander addressed Council. The text of her address is attached to the minutes.

Nigel Gibson addressed Council. The text of his address is attached to the minutes.

Chaka Artwell addressed Council. The text of his address is attached to the minutes.

Councillor Rowley responded to the three speakers and in summary said

With any change it's inevitable that some people will be inconvenienced, and while we've tried to minimise the inconvenience, of course we're genuinely very sorry for that.

However, the success of the Leys Pools and Leisure Centre has proved this Council right in the decisions it has taken. In its first three months it has had over 160,000 visitors - almost as many as Temple Cowley, Blackbird Leys and the old Blackbird Leys Pool together had in six.

So I don't apologise for doubling the number of leisure visits in East Oxford. I'm sure most people will share my pleasure that so many thousands more people have been able to enjoy world-class public leisure facilities.

Nor should our officers apologise for achieving a number of awards that recognise their hard work, intelligence and dedication in very difficult times. Seven years ago this Council was failing. It was in no shape to face the challenges ahead. Now it is a beacon of first-rate, publicly owned, publicly accountable service provision, and that is due above all to our workforce. I am grateful to the speakers for giving me another opportunity to thank them.

Sarah Lasenby put her question to the Leader of the Council.

The text of the question and written response supplied before the meeting is attached to the minutes.

117. OUTSIDE ORGANISATION/COMMITTEE CHAIR REPORTS AND QUESTIONS

Council had before it a report on the work of the Environment Partnership.

Councillor Tanner moved the report.

Council noted the report without comment.

118. SCRUTINY COMMITTEE BRIEFING

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

Councillor Simmons moved the report, highlighted the work of the scrutiny panels, and thanked all the councillors and officers who had attended meetings during the past year.

Council noted the report without comment.

119. MOTIONS ON NOTICE

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

1. Using your Vote

Councillor Tanner proposed his submitted motion, seconded by Councillor Clack.

This City Council urges every resident who can to use their vote in the General Election on May 7th. We call on each of the candidates in the Oxford East and Oxford West & Abingdon constituencies:

- a) to speak up for local government*
- b) to pledge to build the homes Oxford desperately needs*
- c) to support our schools and universities*
- d) to back a vibrant low carbon economy*
- e) to commit to a Living Wage and*
- f) to promote an international, safe and tolerant city.*

We expect those elected to represent Oxford in the House of Commons to fight for a fairer, greener and even more beautiful city for all.

Prior to the meeting, Councillor Hollick proposed amendments, seconded by Councillor Benjamin.

- amend (b) to read *'to pledge to build the affordable homes that are desperately needed in Oxford and the surrounding area'*
- amend (e) to read *'to commit to a national Living Wage and the Oxford Living Wage'*

Prior to the meeting, Councillor Fooks proposed amendments

- replace (a) with *'to stand up for local government, campaigning for proper funding and devolution of both powers and budgets to a local level'*
- insert 'colleges' in line (c), so that it reads *'to support our schools, colleges and universities'*.

Councillor Tanner accepted both amendments and Council debated the motion as amended.

After debate and on being put to the vote, the motion was declared carried:

Council agreed to adopt the motion as set out below:

This City Council urges every resident who can to use their vote in the General Election on May 7th. We call on each of the candidates in the Oxford East and Oxford West & Abingdon constituencies:

- a) to stand up for local government, campaigning for proper funding and devolution of both powers and budgets to a local level*
- b) to pledge to build the affordable homes that are desperately needed in Oxford and the surrounding area*
- c) to support our schools, colleges and universities*
- d) to back a vibrant low carbon economy*
- e) to commit to a national Living Wage and the Oxford Living Wage*
- f) to promote an international, safe and tolerant city.*

We expect those elected to represent Oxford in the House of Commons to fight for a fairer, greener and even more beautiful city for all.

2. Housing

Councillor Fooks proposed her submitted motion, seconded by Councillor Wade.

Council notes the increasing disparity in housing costs between the social housing sector and the private sector. This risks Oxford becoming a city of only the very well-off and the not-at-all well-off, with no housing within reach of middle income households. Key workers such as teachers and nurses can no longer afford to live in Oxford, and communities become unbalanced.

Council asks the Executive Board to ask officers to investigate new models of housing provision which would include starter homes, key worker housing and self-build in any new developments.

This is likely to require the setting up of a separate housing company.

Council recognises the concerns of neighbouring districts over proposals to build on green belt land outside the City and asks the Oxfordshire Growth Board to

ensure that the current Green Belt Review is thorough, transparent and involves proper public consultation.

Dialogue with the county and the districts must continue.

Council recognises that the current jobs/homes imbalance – 46,000 people commuting in every day – will get worse with the thousands of new jobs expected in the City. Council asks the Administration to work with the County Council as the Highway Authority to ensure that the provision of excellent public transport links is fully recognised in LTP4.

Councillor Seamons proposed amendments prior to the meeting, seconded by Councillor Price:

- delete text from 'self-build in any new developments' in the original motion and replace with
Oxford also believes that more social housing has a substantial role to play in meeting this housing need, and rejects the Governments movement to unaffordable 'affordable rent'.

Council repeats its call for an urgent Green Belt review which represents Oxford's only realistic way of meeting its housing needs. Of course council recognises the concerns of neighbouring authorities and the need to continue open dialogue but the results of the abandonment of regional planning through the former LEAs has been the halting of an urban extension desperately needed for Oxford's extreme housing need. The Council implores an incoming government to return to strategic regional planning and to abandon the failed 'duty to co-operate'.

Council is delighted by the thousands of new jobs expected in the City including those as a consequence of the City Deal, the coming new Westgate Centre and proposed Northern Gateway development. However the Council recognises the current jobs/homes imbalance – 46,000 people commuting in every day and the twin demands this makes for more homes, and the encouragement of sustainable transport. Council asks the Administration to work with the County Council as the Highway Authority to ensure that the provision of excellent public transport links is fully recognised in LTP4.

After debate and on being put to the vote, the amendment was declared carried.

On being put to the vote, the motion as amended was declared carried.

Council agreed to adopt the motion as set out below:

Council notes the increasing disparity in housing costs between the social housing sector and the private sector. This risks Oxford becoming a city of only the very well-off and the not-at-all well-off, with no housing within reach of middle income households. Key workers such as teachers and nurses can no longer afford to live in Oxford, and communities become unbalanced. Council asks the Executive Board to ask officers to investigate new models of housing provision which would include starter homes, key worker housing and self-build in any new developments.

Oxford also believes that more social housing has a substantial role to play in meeting this housing need, and rejects the Government's movement to unaffordable 'affordable rent'.

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Council is delighted by the thousands of new jobs expected in the City including those as a consequence of the City Deal, the coming new Westgate Centre and proposed Northern Gateway development. However the Council recognises the current jobs/homes imbalance – 46,000 people commuting in every day and the twin demands this makes for more homes, and the encouragement of sustainable transport. Council asks the Administration to work with the County Council as the Highway Authority to ensure that the provision of excellent public transport links is fully recognised in LTP4.

3. Controlling the Housing Investment Market

Councillor Hollick proposed his submitted motion, seconded by Councillor Brandt.

This Council notes that housing rents in Oxford are some of the highest in the Country. That increasing numbers of new and converted properties are being purchased by buy-to-let landlords and overseas investors who are being attracted to Oxford because of the high returns.

With high housing demand, this is leading to a spiral of rent increases as these property owners seek to maximise returns. In addition, the rising number of investment properties is increasing the price, and reducing the number, of properties for private sale.

This Council therefore calls on the incoming Government to act decisively and quickly to better control the housing investment market for example, through reductions in the tax relief given to buy-to-let landlords, the introduction of local rent controls and more flexibility on how Council Tax is levied.

Councillor Seamons proposed amendments prior to the meeting, seconded by Councillor Price:

delete text after 'returns' and replace with:

It is not only high rents that lead to dissatisfaction with the rental market but the instability felt by Oxford's private renting citizens, many of whom are families. Short-assured tenancies of 6 or 12 months mean tenants unable to put down roots, decorate their homes or have stability in school or work. There is also a need to raise standards across the private rented sector, where because of high demand poor quality housing has been let for too long. In addition, the rising number of investment properties is increasing the price, and reducing the number, of properties for private sale.

This Council therefore calls on the incoming Government to act decisively in introducing and normalising longer term tenancies of 3 years, with restricted rent rises in that term. The council also backs plans to ban expensive letting agent fees which limit access to the rented sector. The council also calls on an incoming government to do more to support council's looking to set up local licensing schemes to drive up standards, such as the HMO licensing scheme in Oxford. Councils are capable of enforcing improved standards in the sector but are held back from introducing schemes by unnecessary bureaucratic barriers. The incoming Government should also carefully consider further measures, including the tax relief given to buy-to-let landlords and the introduction of rent controls, weighing up the pressures of increasing rents and prices, while supporting those who are vulnerable or in most acute housing need.

To improve access to home ownership for local people, the council's planning officers have been directed to seek agreement with developers to market properties solely to local people/organisations for the first few months of a sale. Finally, the Council backs plans for a Mansion Tax so that those who benefit most from housing wealth pay a greater share in society, but an incoming government could go further in this regard by giving local authorities more flexibility on how council tax is levied.

On being put to the vote, the amendment was declared carried.

On being put to the vote, the motion as amended was declared carried.

Council agreed to adopt the motion as set out below:

This Council notes that housing rents in Oxford are some of the highest in the Country. That increasing numbers of new and converted properties are being purchased by buy-to-let landlords and overseas investors who are being attracted to Oxford because of the high returns.

It is not only high rents that lead to dissatisfaction with the rental market but the instability felt by Oxford's private renting citizens, many of whom are families. Short-assured tenancies of 6 or 12 months mean tenants unable to put down roots, decorate their homes or have stability in school or work. There is also a need to raise standards across the private rented sector, where because of high demand poor quality housing has been let for too long. In addition, the rising number of investment properties is increasing the price, and reducing the number, of properties for private sale.

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Motions not taken

The remaining motions (set out in the agenda papers for this meeting) were not considered as the time allowed by the constitution for motions on notice had elapsed:

1. Encouraging collaboration for action on cancer
2. Trident
3. Oxfordshire Transport Strategy.

The meeting started at 5.00 pm and ended at 8.30 pm

OXFORD CITY FULL COUNCIL MEETING 13 APRIL 2015

AGENDA ITEM 17: PUBLIC ADDRESSES AND QUESTIONS THAT DO NOT RELATE TO MATTERS FOR DECISION AT THIS COUNCIL MEETING.

Addresses

(1) Address by Jane Alexander

(2) Address by Nigel Gibson, www.savetemplecowleypools.web.com
Openness and transparency in Oxford City Council

(3) Address by Chaka Artwell, resident of Oxford, OX3 8BW (redacted until after the election)

Questions

Question from Sarah Lasenby

(1) Address by Jane Alexander

Today I would like to draw your attention to the experience of just a few people and how they have been affected by the closure of Temple Cowley Pools.

From a parent with a young daughter:

I learnt to swim at Temple Cowley pool 35 years ago and my daughter started to learn to swim there when she was 4 months old, we used to go to lessons every Friday at TCP. We live walking distance from Temple Cowley pool; the new pool at Blackbird Leys is miles from us so we have to drive and there is often not enough parking at the new centre.

The Ducklings swimming session at the Leys pool is the same price for half as long (30 minutes instead of 60) as it was at TCP.

There are not enough swimming lessons and public/general swim sessions since 2 pools (the old Blackbird Leys pool and Temple Cowley) were closed, to be replaced with only one. It's right that BL pool is to public for school swimming sessions, it's vital that children learn to swim, but that's why we need two pools in East Oxford, so that there are still enough public sessions. Exercise classes at the Leys leisure centre are now hugely overbooked, as there are two centres' worth of people being forced against their will to fit into one.

I'm worried about a woman with a chronic neurological illness who used to swim at Temple Cowley. She didn't have a car so wouldn't be able to get to BBL as her condition wouldn't allow her to walk as far as the (two buses each way) journey would require, also it would be too expensive for her.

In this day and age when illness and obesity is such a problem, removing an exercise facility in walking distance for so many people is extremely illadvised.

There is still massive public support for Temple Cowley pool and gym, as the recent poll in the Oxford Mail showed, with 92% in favour of re-opening the centre.

From someone in your 'elderly' target group:

I am so grateful that you are continuing the fight against the closure of Temple Cowley Pool. On a personal note, since being unable to do my weekly swim at Temple Cowley (the other pools on offer are too far from my home to enable me to use them), my physical health has deteriorated considerably. This is what was expected; swimming is the only form of exercise that a partially disabled person can do. I am now deprived of it by Councillors who have little idea of the health benefits. They should also realise that they have completely lost my vote. I will be contributing to your fighting fund and again thank you so much for your attempts at helping.

My own experience is that I could not swim and use pool exercise classes as I had before TCP closure. I used to exercise/swim 3 times a week. After TCP closed I found BL not open at similar times, my class was now held in the evening and not in the swimming pool but the shallow learner pool! We who choose to water based exercise do it because we need the buoyancy of the water to support us, not have half our bodies out of the water! It did not work for any of us. We are being sold short.

Swimming time for public severely is reduced by schools occupying half the pool and the other half being 'ALL DEEP END'. Nowhere to stand and rest when necessary at the end of a length. Makes swimming impossible for many, especially those with health issues.

The opening times to public severely reduced. No steps were available into the pool, even though we were told it was all ready for the public weeks earlier.

In the first 5 weeks post TCP closure, I had only managed to swim 7 times total using Ferry, BL and Barton.

My body had become stiffer than before. When I lost my balance whilst crossing the Cowley Rd on 4 Feb I was not agile enough to regain my balance. I smashed into the kerb and suffered 5 fractures. This is not only painful but has limited my ability to exercise even further. Had TCP been open I would be there as often as I could, doing exercise and trying to proactively look after myself. I realise of course that health and fitness facilities are not in a particular location for just one person, but my experience is typical of the emails the Campaign to Save Temple Cowley Pools has been receiving.

At the CEB meeting last week there was a lot of self-praise between officers and councillors for the numbers of people using Blackbird Leys Leisure Centre, and the waiting lists for classes. This surely shows the need for more, not fewer pools and gyms especially when you haven't even asked the people what WE want! Oxford Mail has asked, and this week sees 92% voting to want to keep TCP. With this from our local press, isn't it time the council allow the people in the form of SaveTCPcic, to take over and run Temple Cowley Pools and Fitness Centre for the good of all?

(4) Address by Nigel Gibson, www.savetemplecowleypools.web.com

Openness and transparency in Oxford City Council

My address this evening is about openness and responsiveness within Oxford City Council, and the way you try and portray yourself, in a way that is so different from how the public views you. Operating in your own insulated bubble is not the way an organisation should behave, as you become more and more detached from the people you are here to serve. I've spoken about this before at Council, pointing out your self-aggrandisement. In response then, a councillor misinterpreted what I was talking about and defended the aims of individual councillors. That wasn't my point.

The self-aggrandisement I was referring to was the Council's usual approach of spinning everything to show itself in the best light, not any particular individual councillor – it would take far more than my five minutes this evening to cover those I could mention.

You have recently approved another version of your Corporate Strategy – a fine tome no doubt for what is, after all, a district council. Within it, you talk proudly of the MJ Award for Highest Achieving Council of 2014, describing it as a “crowning achievement of the year”. You go on to say:

“Referencing the awards that we have received should not be mistaken for self-congratulation or complacency. We hope that the external recognition that the Council is receiving will give the people of Oxford confidence that the Council's high aspirations for the city in difficult times are matched by its capacity and capability to deliver high quality results.”

The impression given in the plan, and indeed from all the publicity put out by the Council, is that it is a very prestigious award, implicitly independently judged from third party recommendations.

Indeed. But how many of you actually know anything of the award process itself. Did you know that the judges are all senior executives from other local authorities; no members of the public, or anyone not associated in some way with a local authority.

The candidates for the awards are self-selecting, making their own submissions. Given the way in which the Council has been challenged over recent times, particularly about not listening to the public you are here to serve on so many issues – Temple Cowley Pools is the most obvious one, but there are many others – Northern Gateway, Westgate redevelopment, the Barns Road community centre, Barton West, I don't believe that you would find many members of the public suggesting you should get an award for “High Achieving”.

So I was very interested in what was in the submission that presented such a compelling and rose-tinted view that elevated the Council's performance above all others. I keep being told that you operate with openness and transparency, so I naturally searched the website. No sign of anything there. I had to look (and dig a bit) on the Municipal Journal website itself, to get this 9 page document, apparently prepared by Peter Sloman and Bob Price. I have to say that reading it was a revelation, I hadn't realised what a wonderful job the Council has done for the people you are here to serve. No balance, no mention of any controversy, no mention of the thousands of people feeling abandoned in the Cowley area who protested long and hard that they wanted to keep their health and fitness facilities, or how the community of users at Temple Cowley Pools is no longer – they have written to

the Campaign, expressing their sadness at the loss of their social network. I recall the phrase the Campaign to Save Temple Cowley Pools adopted regarding all the Council's pronouncements on why Temple Cowley Pools should be closed - Inaccurate, Incomplete, Misleading and Untrue. Having said all that, you manage to let yourselves down from the start – the front page repeats your oft-repeated but never substantiated mantra of “World Class City for Everyone” – but manage to mis-spell “World” – such lack of attention to detail is simply embarrassing, not high achieving. And of course the award is for “Best Achieving”, not “Highest Achieving”.

So, this is what I call self-aggrandisement – using an award that you put yourselves forward for, in your Corporate Plan, to try and improve your reputation. And then you simply can't be bothered to check spelling or get the award's description correct.

Another really good example of self-aggrandisement was on show recently, at the City Executive Board. Now, the vast majority of people will never see a CEB meeting; held at one of the most inconvenient times of the day, 5pm, and having changed the constitution several times to reduce the public input to handing out answers to questions before the meetings, there really is no incentive for anyone to come and watch. But now everyone has the opportunity – cameras are allowed in, albeit grudgingly and only with the force of law. Everyone now has the opportunity to see the CEB in inaction – no debate, no criticism (constructive or otherwise), no challenge – you have to wonder why they bother having them at all, and that is certainly the way they seem to be conducted. You can see an example for yourself, at this web address <http://bit.ly/1aeM8uP>

The particular event on camera in the meeting was the approval of the Fusion Lifestyle Annual Service Plan, a glossy leaflet put out each year to tell us all how wonderfully the partnership with Fusion is running our remaining leisure centres. There were a couple of causes for particular ‘celebration’ during the discussion – overall, a council officer felt it had been a “good year” – no reference to Temple Cowley Pools, or the adverse feedback over the closure – and there seems to be a pride taken in announcing the approval ratings of over 95%, when at Scrutiny last year, and in the answers to CEB questions, it was admitted that the way these ratings are produced are not clearly and fully explained to readers of the document. – there are many, many people who would disagree with that council officer. The other celebration moment came from the Fusion manager, who announced that there were waiting lists for classes, so that was a very good thing and showed how popular everything was – there were signs at this point that the whole CEB was going to erupt in a standing ovation.

Ignored, of course, was the fact that you, clearly against the wishes of the people, have closed down two facilities – so it's not really surprising that you have waiting lists, and if you are on a waiting list that is certainly not a cause for celebration. And those waiting lists include children waiting to learn to swim. The demand is there for more facilities – keeping Temple Cowley Pools open would address that demand.

So, in conclusion, I stand by what I have said previously, that this council, a mere district council, continues to be guilty of self-aggrandisement. I, and most of the public, are keen to celebrate what you do right – but it's what you do right in the eyes of the people you are here to serve that matters, not what you think makes you look better. Listen to what the public are telling you, and act on that in their best interests, not yours.

(3) Address by Chaka Artwell, resident of Oxford, OX3 8BW

This address is redacted until after the election on 7 May.

Questions

Question from Sarah Lasenby

I have been told from various sources that the Oxford Swimming Club is using both Ferry and Barton pools for training and that people have been turning up only to find they can't swim. Why is this? Was it not the plan that the Leys Pool would be the pool for the club to use to replace Temple Cowley Pool? What can you do to prevent people making pointless journeys to Ferry and Barton for their swimming? Can the Club be asked to use the Leys Pool? but in any case can some effective time tabling be put in place to show at least a week in advance when the pools are available to the public?

To leave things as they are is to penalise the poorer people who can't afford to waste money on useless bus journeys. How many people have stopped swimming because they can't afford the time or the money to get to the Leys Pool? It should be possible to get this figure by deducting those who are not attending the new pool from those who were passed over to the Leys from Temple Cowley.

Response from Councillor Rowley, Board Member for Leisure contract and community partnership grants

The City of Oxford Swimming Club formerly used Ferry, Barton and Temple Cowley pools for their training and it now uses Ferry, Barton and the Leys Pools and Leisure Centre; in fact, the pool replacement has allowed them to reduce their hours at Ferry. The timetable for all our pools and exercise classes is published in advance and users can find a live timetable on the website for each facility; but in any case there would only be a change if an exceptional circumstance made it necessary.

The Leys Pools and Leisure Centre has had 161,571 visitors in its first three months, almost as many as Temple Cowley Pools did in the whole of the last year. I am sorry if anyone has been put off visiting our leisure facilities by the necessary replacement of the pool, but it has enabled many thousands more people to enjoy leisure and keep fit. All Oxford's people now have first-rate, affordable public facilities which are financially and environmentally sustainable and will remain so into the long-term future.

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