

MINUTES OF THE COUNCIL

Thursday 29 September 2016

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COUNCILLORS PRESENT: Councillors Altaf-Khan (Lord Mayor), Humberstone (Deputy Lord Mayor), Brown (Sheriff), Cook, Abbasi, Azad, Brandt, Chapman, Clarkson, Coulter, Curran, Fooks, Fry, Goddard, Goff, Haines, Henwood, Hollingsworth, Iley-Williamson, Kennedy, Landell Mills, Lloyd-Shogbesan, Lygo, Malik, Munkonge, Paule, Pegg, Pressel, Price, Rowley, Sanders, Simm, Simmons, Sinclair, Smith, Tanner, Tarver, Taylor, Thomas, Turner, Upton, Wilkinson and Wolff.

Tribute to the Council's Monitoring Officer, Jeremy Thomas

The Lord Mayor announced the sudden and unexpected death of Jeremy Thomas, the Council's Monitoring Officer and Head of Law and Governance, on 11 September. The Lord Mayor and Councillors Price, Fooks and Simmons, on behalf of their groups, paid tribute to Mr Thomas and Council observed a minute's silence in his memory.

29. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Councillors Anwar, Gant, Hayes, and Wade submitted apologies.

30. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Minute 39: Councillors Abbasi and Malik declared that this item affected one of their disclosable pecuniary interests and left the chamber for the duration of this item.

31. MINUTES

Council agreed to **approve** the minutes of the ordinary meeting held on 25 July 2016 as a true and correct record and that the Lord Mayor should sign these as such.

32. APPOINTMENT TO COMMITTEES

There were no changes to appointments.

33. ANNOUNCEMENTS

At the invitation of the Lord Mayor, the Deputy Lord Mayor spoke about the award of the Freedom of the City to Lesley Dewhurst at a ceremony on 14 September.

The Sheriff informed Council:

- she had attended the Battle of Britain commemoration ceremony;
- she had attended the match between MK Dons and Oxford City football teams;
- she had taken part in the successful annual round up of cattle on Port Meadow and thanked all who had supported this.

The Leader of the Council asked Councillor Rowley to make a statement.

Councillor Rowley said:

Members will be aware from press reports that I was involved in an incident at the count for the EU referendum held in the Town Hall on the evening of 23rd June 2015. I would like this evening to make a statement of apology to Council and to the wider public in respect of my conduct that night.

My actions on arriving at the count that night fell far short of the conduct which is expected of elected members of Council. I caused a number of members of staff an unnecessary degree of distress while they were simply doing their job.

I am sorry that my actions escalated the situation I have sent a personal apology to the town hall and security staff on duty that evening. However it has to be emphasised that all members of council staff are entitled to respect at work at all times. This statement therefor conveys a similar apology to my fellow councillors, the wider public, and everyone who works for this council

The Lord Mayor thanked Councillor Rowley and stated that this concluded the matter.

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

There were no addresses or questions.

35. SUBMISSION TO ERDF INNOVATION CALL FOR OXFORDSHIRE

Council considered a report to the City Executive Board on 15 September 2016 requesting approval to commit match funding towards the Oxford City Council led element of the ERDF Innovation allocation for Oxfordshire if funds are successfully awarded.

Council resolved to approve the required match funding to deliver the capital (£33,939) and revenue (£45,000) elements of the projects detailed in this report.

36. QUARTERLY INTEGRATED PERFORMANCE 2016/17 - Q1

Council considered a report to the City Executive Board on 15 September updating Members on the Council's Financial Risk and Performance as at 30 June 2016, including requests for changes to the budget.

Council resolved to approve the additional budget of £0.118 million and £0.399 million for Super Connected Cities and Disabled Facilities Grant expenditure (*respectively*) to be financed from external grant funding in accordance with paragraph 12 of the report.

37. REVIEW OF BUILDING CONTROL FEES AND CHARGES 2016

Council considered a report to the City Executive Board on 15 September setting out revised Building Control application fees and introducing one new charge.

The Council's Constitution requires that in-year changes to fees and charges are referred to Council for decision.

Council resolved to approve the proposed Building Control application fees and charges as set out in the report and the appendix to take effect from 30 September 2016.

38. TREASURY MANAGEMENT ANNUAL REPORT 2015/2016

Council considered a report to the City Executive Board on 15 September 2016 setting out the Council's treasury management activity and performance for the financial year 2015/2016. Appendix 1 proposed limits to Money Market Fund investments, AAA rating, of £25m per institution, with a maximum maturity period of 'liquid'.

Council resolved to approve the amendment to the Specified Investments list attached at Appendix 1 and paragraphs 35 – 37 of the report.

39. HACKNEY CARRIAGE & PRIVATE HIRE: PROPOSALS TO AMEND THE CRITERIA AND CONDITIONS APPLICABLE - SAFEGUARDING

Councillors Abbasi and Malik, having declared that this item affected one of their disclosable pecuniary interests, left the chamber for the duration of this item.

Council considered a report to the General Purposes Licensing Committee on 20 September 2016 asking for approval of amendments to the criteria applicable to the Hackney Carriage and Private Hire trades in order to promote safeguarding and awareness of safeguarding.

Council resolved to adopt the amendments to the criteria applicable to the Hackney Carriage and Private Hire trades as set out in the report and appendix.

40. APPOINTMENT OF MONITORING OFFICER AND RETURNING OFFICER

Council considered a report from the Chief Executive recommending changes to the appointments of statutory officers.

Council resolved to

1. with immediate effect, appoint Peter Sloman, Chief Executive, as the Council's Returning Officer and Electoral Registration Officer; and
2. with immediate effect designate Lindsay Cane, Acting Head of Law and Governance, as the Council's Monitoring Officer.

41. ATTENDANCE MANAGEMENT POLICY AND PROCEDURE

Council considered a report of the Head of Business Improvement seeking approval of the implementation of a revised Attendance Management Policy and Procedure.

The Board Member for Customer and Corporate Services reported that the unions (Unison and UNITE) had raised no concerns about the policy.

Council resolved to:

1. approve the Attendance Management Policy and Procedure attached at Appendix 1 to the report with immediate effect; and
2. delegate authority to the Head of Business Improvement to amend the policies to reflect administrative changes and to correct any factual or legal errors.

42. CITY EXECUTIVE BOARD MINUTES

Council had before it the minutes of the City Executive Board meetings of 14 July, 8 August and 15 September 2016.

On Minute 56, Councillor Fooks asked for the breakdown of the £452M invested on the Northern Gateway project.

On Minute 56, Councillor Simons asked about the status of the Scrutiny Committee's comments. The Leader reported that these were included in the council's comments to the Local Enterprise Partnership (LEP) and were likely to be included in the final LEP document.

43. QUESTIONS ON NOTICE FROM MEMBERS OF COUNCIL

Councillor Azad joined the meeting at the start of this item.

Members of Council submitted 29 written questions to members of the City Executive Board. The questions, written answers, and summaries of supplementary questions and answers are in the supplement to the minutes.

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

Council heard addresses and questions to members of the City Executive Board from members of the public submitted in accordance with the Council's procedure rules.

Addresses were heard from:

Fran Ryan, Homes for Oxford – solutions to Oxford's housing need
Dr Ruvi Ziegler - Unaccompanied Refugee Children: Oxford's Role

Questions were heard from:

Mr Artwell - Community Centre Management
Dr Stefan Piechnik - Tower Block refurbishment

Board members responded to the addresses and questions.

The Lord Mayor thanked those speaking.

The supplement to the minutes contains the full text of addresses and questions delivered as submitted; and written responses and summaries of verbal responses from the Board Members.

45. OUTSIDE ORGANISATION/COMMITTEE CHAIR REPORTS AND QUESTIONS

Council had before it a report of the Board member for Clean and Green Oxford on the work of the Oxford Environment Partnership.

Councillor Tanner introduced the report.

In response to questions he said:

- he proposed that the council look at significantly improving standards in new buildings to reduce carbon emissions;
- all councils have and were continuing to make representations about the lack of electricity grid capacity in the county.

Council noted the report.

46. SCRUTINY COMMITTEE ANNUAL REPORT

Council had before it the 2015/16 Annual Report of the Scrutiny Committee.

Councillor Simmons, the Committee's Chair for 2015/16 spoke on the report and thanked the members and Chairs of the Panels and the committee members for their work and the difference this had made to the Council's policies.

The Leader thanked Councillor Simmons and the council's scrutiny officer for their work over the year.

Council noted the report without comment.

47. MOTIONS ON NOTICE

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

Motions adopted

1. Local Government reorganisation
3. Housing Benefit
4. Refugees and Immigration

Motions rejected

2. Banning Glyphosate

Motions not taken

Two motions were not taken because the time allowed in the Council's procedure rules had elapsed.

5. EUchoose: Oxford's future within the EU
6. Re-introduction of Grammar Schools

The full minute and text for each adopted motion is below.

(a) Local Government reorganisation

Councillor Wilkinson, seconded by Councillor Fooks, proposed Councillor Gant's submitted motion:

Council notes that government is still open to practical suggestions for local government reorganisation.

Council notes that the benefits are far more likely to be achieved if council leaders in Oxfordshire are serious about reaching a consensus.

Council also notes that both of the recently-commissioned reports identified strengths and weaknesses in each proposal, and made recommendations for addressing them.

Council believes these recommendations are capable of forming the basis for further discussion.

Council therefore:

- *Calls on all council leaders in the county to resume talks about a workable model of local government reorganisation, with the express intention of reaching a workable consensus, and with the primary objective of achieving the best outcomes for the people of Oxford in terms of service delivery and efficiencies, while ensuring local accountability is retained or enhanced.*
- *Calls on the leader of Oxford City Council to play a full and constructive part in such talks.*

Councillor Price, seconded by Councillor Tanner, proposed an amendment:

- *Sentence 1: replace 'local government reorganisation' with 'devolution of funding and powers to local government'*
- *Sentence 2: replace everything after 'notes that' with 'the government have made it crystal clear that devolution deals will only be agreed with groups of local authorities that make unified and consensual proposals to government' In the section after Council therefore: replace 'local government reorganisation' with 'devolution'.*

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

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

Council resolved to adopt the motion as set out below:

Council notes that government is still open to practical suggestions for devolution of funding and powers to local government. Council notes the government have made it crystal clear that devolution deals will only be agreed with groups of local authorities that make unified and consensual proposals to government.

Council also notes that both of the recently-commissioned reports identified strengths and weaknesses in each proposal, and made recommendations for addressing them.

Council believes these recommendations are capable of forming the basis for further discussion.

Council therefore:

- ***Calls on all council leaders in the county to resume talks about a workable model of devolution, with the express intention of reaching a workable consensus, and with the primary objective of achieving the best outcomes for the people of Oxford in terms of service delivery and efficiencies, while ensuring local accountability is retained or enhanced.***
- ***Calls on the leader of Oxford City Council to play a full and constructive part in such talks.***

(b) Banning Glyphosate

Councillor Brandt, seconded by Councillor Thomas, proposed her submitted motion:

*This Council notes that there is growing evidence that glyphosate is a higher health risk than previously assumed, and that the World Health Organisation has recently upgraded glyphosate to 'probably carcinogenic to humans'**.

It further notes that other local councils in Britain - Hammersmith & Fulham being the most recent - have already decided to ban the use of glyphosate and other chemicals from all their own operations. This is in the wake of large cities all over the world - such as Barcelona, Hamburg and Paris - who have already decided on a ban, and the Netherlands and Denmark, which have banned the use of glyphosate in urban areas.

In light of the known risk to human health, this Council resolves to ask the City Executive Board to follow the precautionary principle and:

- 1. Pledge to cut out the use of glyphosate completely from all its in-house operations (including in Parks, and Streetscene) within one year.*
- 2. Consider the one year period until the ban takes effect as a testing period, during which the council will test non-chemical and mechanical alternatives to glyphosate. Banning glyphosate will not result in increased use of other chemical weed-killers.*
- 3. Use the opportunity of the end of the current weed spraying contract in April 2017 to request the contractor ceases to use glyphosate, or find another local contractor who will abide by a glyphosate ban.*
- 4. Grant an exception to the above ban regarding the control of Japanese knotweed, or other invasive species, where there are currently no effective mechanical techniques available. However, in this case glyphosate will only be stem-injected, rather than sprayed, to reduce its spread in the environment.*

* "The IARC Working Group that conducted the evaluation considered the significant findings from the US EPA report and several more recent positive results in concluding that there is sufficient evidence of carcinogenicity in experimental animals. Glyphosate also caused DNA and chromosomal damage in human cells, although it gave negative results in tests using bacteria." (International Agency for Cancer Research (IACR), WHO, Monograph Volume 112: evaluation of five organophosphate insecticides and herbicides, 20th May 2015. <http://www.iarc.fr/en/media-centre/iarcnews/pdf/MonographVolume112.pdf>

Councillor Landell Mills, seconded by Councillor Goddard, proposed an amendment:

After point 4 add:

- 5. Undertake that the year-long ban on glyphosate is reviewed to assess the cost of using alternative weed controls, their effectiveness and the environmental benefits, and any extra demands placed on staff time.*

This amendment was accepted by the proposer.

After debate and on being put to the vote, the amended motion was declared lost.

Council resolved not to adopt the motion set out above.

(c) Housing Benefit

Councillor Hollingsworth, seconded by Councillor Simmons, proposed his submitted motion:

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

Council resolved to adopt the motion as set out below:

Council notes that the government has made a statement about the future of housing benefit in supported accommodation. Council believes that while the government's proposed delay in the restriction of housing benefit to the level of the Local Housing Allowance until 2019/20 is welcome, this change still runs the risk of jeopardising the future of hostels and other services such as refuges. Council believes that the proposed restriction of rents to the LHA level, with the remainder funded by a "top up" of funds locally, relies upon making an adequate level of funding available locally, and also giving certainty to supported accommodation providers to allow them to plan and invest. Council regrets the decision to insist upon a 1% rent reduction in supported housing for each of the next three years, and believes that, at a time of cuts to other public funding, this will impose unacceptable pressure upon hostel providers in Oxford and elsewhere.

Council resolves to ask the Leader and Chief Executive to make appropriate representations to our local MPs, and also respond robustly to the forthcoming government consultation on this issue.

(d) Refugees and Immigration

Councillor Landell Mills, seconded by Councillor Goddard, proposed his submitted motion, including his amendments submitted subsequent to publication of the agenda.

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

Council resolved to adopt the motion as set out below:

Council notes:

- 1. the refugee crisis over the summer including refugees from Syria but also from other countries; the publication of a House of Lords report on unaccompanied migrant children in July 2016 and the visit by a delegation of senior local government figures to the Calais 'jungle' migrant camp in August 2016.***

2. *that an estimated 88,000 unaccompanied children are believed to be travelling through continental Europe, falling prey to exploitation and abuse.*
3. *and celebrates the generous response of Oxford residents at the 'Refugees Welcome' event last September and the excellent ongoing work of Asylum Welcome and other refugee organisations, and confirms its commitment to build on that spirit of welcome.*
4. *that Coventry City Council initially undertook to accommodate 50 of the most vulnerable Syrian refugees, and now houses around 250 refugees.*
5. *the significant work of council officers in coordinating a county wide group to welcome refugees, and this week's announcement of a further 10 families*

Council believes and agrees:

1. *that the UK must welcome its fair share of refugees to ease this crisis including unaccompanied refugee children.*
2. *that Oxford, as a city of sanctuary, should be at the forefront of the effort to promote safety and inclusion to people seeking refuge and sanctuary.*
3. *that refugees contribute a huge amount to local communities throughout the UK.*
4. *that, the whole process of resettlement - from assessment overseas, through placement with individual councils, to accessing essential services – must be rooted in the best interests of the child and adequately resourced.*
5. *that central Government should make additional funding available to local authorities to help with this and to build capacity, recognising pressures on housing and schools.*
6. *that, working together, local and central government can provide safety, stability and support to children in desperate need.*
7. *with the comments of David Simmons, Chair of the Local Government Association's Asylum, Refugee and Migration task group, that councils require more funding to cope with the resettlement challenges.*

Council therefore:

1. *welcomes the central Government's commitment in the Immigration Act 2016 to create a resettlement scheme to bring unaccompanied refugee children from continental Europe to safety in the UK, but notes the very slow progress that has been made in implementing a scheme to cater for this highly vulnerable group.*
2. *calls council members to sign Liberty's statement of support, pressuring central government to honour its commitment without*

delay (<https://www.liberty-human-rights.org.uk/campaigning/protect-refugee-children>).

3. *recognises the important role that the City Council and residents of Oxford have been playing in caring for children and their families seeking sanctuary, and the excellent liaison with the County Council that has been developed over the past 18 months in caring for unaccompanied minors.*
4. *urges central Government, by writing to appropriate Ministers, to work closely with local government to ensure that councils have the funding and support to build the essential regional infrastructure necessary to secure the placement and support of children across the country, especially in relation to housing provision, educational needs, and English language provision, and help us build them a brighter, safer future.*
5. *endorses the proposal to accommodate a further ten families under the SVPRS in 2017, that has been lodged with the Home Office and the Regional Partnership.*

The meeting started at 5.00 pm and ended at 8.45 pm

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To: Council

Date: 29 September 2016

Title of Report: Questions on Notice from members of Council and responses from the Board Members and Leader, republished after the meeting to include supplementary questions and responses.

Introduction

1. Questions submitted by members of Council to the Board members, Leader of the Council, by the deadline in the Constitution are listed below in the order they were taken at the meeting.
2. Responses are included.
3. Questioners can ask one supplementary question of the councillor answering the original question.
4. This report is republished as part of the minutes pack after the Council meeting and includes supplementary questions and responses asked and given at the meeting.
5. Unfamiliar terms not explained in the text are briefly explained in footnotes.

Questions and responses

Board member for a Clean and Green Oxford

1. From Councillor Wolf to Councillor Tanner – electric car charging

What progress is being made on the introduction of electric car charging infrastructure in Oxford?

Response

The Go Ultra Low Oxford project has been funded by the Office for Low Emission Vehicles and aims to provide a solution to the issue of electric vehicle charging for residents who are unable to install a home charger due to a lack of private off-street parking. We will trial a range of solutions which provide residents with a means to charge their car at or near to their home.

During the trial up to 6 different solutions will be trialled at total of 30 locations over 12 months. The project has had a very strong response from the public with 20

participants signed up to the trial of which 12 already own an ultra-low emissions vehicle (a 100% electric car, a plug-in hybrid or extended-range electric vehicle).

To help us ensure we collect data from all 30 installed charging points, car clubs will also act as 'trial users' to provide extra quantitative data for our study. We have been in discussion with local car clubs – two of which have expressed a strong interest in being involved. We are developing our selection criteria in order to select a partner.

We have received interest in the procurement stage from a range of companies – from multinationals to British and European SMEs. We are completing the design of our procurement process and are in the final stage of market feedback on our chosen approach.

Supplementary question

Does the scheme provide any incentives for people to buy electric cars and are there any points available in the public realm for general use?

Response

A number of residents have expressed interest in purchasing an electric car. There are a few charging points available in public spaces and we are considering introducing more.

2. From Councillor Brandt to Councillor Tanner – Low Carbon Hub

Will the portfolio holder join me in congratulating the Low Carbon Hub for successfully raising the funds from their solar PV share offer? The systems funded by this offer will benefit 18 schools and businesses across the county of Oxfordshire generating renewable energy equivalent to that necessary to power 1,321 homes and save 46,880 tonnes of CO2.

Response

The Low Carbon Hub and the communities that they support are national leaders in community energy and Oxford City Council is pleased to have worked in partnership with them through the EU-funded OxFutures programme over the last four years.

In addition to the Low Carbon Hub's recent successful share offer raise, our partnership with the Hub and the County Council has given rise to investments in projects in the city and county totalling over £9m and resulting in around 2800 tonnes of carbon emissions avoided every year.

3. From Councillor Brandt to Councillor Tanner –Road side emissions

Will the portfolio holder be supportive of a study of road side emissions (as Lancaster Council has done) in Oxford City Centre which looks specially for the presence of the toxic particles implicated by this new evidence in the formation of Alzheimer's? (study reference: <http://www.pnas.org/content/early/2016/08/31/1605941113>)

Response

We have been monitoring levels of fine particles in Oxford through monitoring of particulate matter for several years in the City Centre. Automatic monitoring station data for Particulate Matter (PM10) shows that the measured annual means were 21µg/m3 on the High Street and 13µg/m3 at St Ebbe's. These are well within the

objective of 40µg/m3. Automatic monitoring station data for Particulate Matter (PM2.5) shows that the measured annual mean was 10µg/m3. This compares to an annual mean of 14µg/m3 measured in 2010.

The strong scientific evidence is clear about the impact of air pollution on health and reinforces the need for collective action to address the issue and improve air quality. However, it is worth noting that the NHS has urged caution in the interpretation of the study referred to, as it feels it does not finally prove a link between Alzheimer's and air pollution (<http://www.nhs.uk/news/2016/09September/Pages/Pollution-particles-in-the-brain-linked-to-Alzheimers-disease.aspx>).

4. From Councillor Goddard to Councillor Tanner – Swift City

Can the councillor give details of the City Council's involvement in Oxford's role as England's first 'Swift city'?

Response

The Oxford Swift City project has been led by the RSPB with support from Oxford City Council, Oxford University, the Oxford University Museum of Natural History, Thames Valley Environmental Records Centre (TVERC), Environment Resources Management and the local Wildlife Trust to develop the successful grant application to the Heritage Lottery Fund which has seen an award made of £83,700 to the project.

The City Council has hosted all meetings of the partnership and will continue to play a key role in the delivery of the project which will see a 'Swift Tower' erected and swift boxes installed across the city to support this threatened bird, to ensure they continue to make Oxford their home.

Supplementary question

Could the project be furthered via development control requiring swift friendly building and installation of swift boxes?

Response

This can be put forward as a policy in the new Local Plan.

5. From Councillor Brandt to Councillor Tanner – Air Quality

Will the portfolio holder be revisiting Oxford's air quality strategy in the light of shocking new evidence of the link between traffic pollution and Alzheimer's?

Response

As previously mentioned, the evidence which links Alzheimer's and air pollution is inconclusive at this stage. It is however clear that air pollution has a very serious impact on health and leads to many early deaths each year, which is why the City Council takes air pollution very seriously. The City Council's Air Quality Action Plan is up to date and delivery of action is progressing well.

6. From Councillor Fooks to Councillor Tanner – Air Quality 2

I am sure I do not need to remind you that air pollution is held responsible for more than 50 premature deaths in Oxford each and every year, as well as the exacerbation

of respiratory problems for many more. Some time ago I asked about the steps the City Council were taking to reduce air pollution in the city and in particular that caused by diesel freight vehicles. I was told that there were plans to reduce the parking of delivery vans outside the Town hall, even the number of such deliveries. Can you please tell Council when we shall see a reduction in the congestion and pollution caused by vehicles stationary outside the Town Hall, where the traffic is regularly held up for some time by this parking? As this ought to be within our control, why is it still happening?

Response

You are quite right that traffic outside the Town Hall is a complete disgrace. The City Council has significantly reduced deliveries to both the Town Hall and St Aldates Chambers. But the numbers of buses at certain times and delivery vehicles parked to deliver to the High Street create unacceptable problems.

Cllr Alex Hollingsworth and I will continue to work with the County Council to improve the situation outside the Town Hall for pedestrians and bus passengers. Although levels of pollution have fallen in St Aldates, they have not fallen sufficiently.

Supplementary question

Should this Council set a good example in this and reduce the congestion our operations create?

Response

We do restrict staff parking, and restrict deliveries to the Town Hall and St Aldates as far as possible. To make a real difference we need co-operation with the highways authority.

Board member for Community Safety

7. From Councillor Thomas to Councillor Sinclair– Waterways PSPO

Given that last month the Manifesto Club branded PSPOs a "busybodies' charter" and singled out Oxford's proposed Waterway's PSPO as one the worst in the country, will Councillor Sinclair give assurances to Oxford's boating community that she remains open minded as to whether or not a PSPO should be applied to Oxford's waterways?

Response

The Council are currently consulting with stakeholders on a draft Order. Over 30 responses have been received containing views and ideas on the problems faced by a wide range of waterways users. Detailed conversations have taken place with some interested parties to further explore the concerns raised.

Supplementary question

I welcome the greater public engagement but as the situation changes so often will you keep the conversations going and keep talking to the boating community?

Response

Yes, we are continuing the dialogue with the boating community and waterways users.

8. From Councillor Wade to Councillor Sinclair– Waterways PSPO 2

Would the Board Member provide a progress report on the PSPO consultation and confirm whether a final deadline for comments has been agreed.

Response

The deadline was announced at the last Council. Phase one of the consultation will now finish at the end of March 2017, as detailed on the Council's website.

9. From Councillor Gant to Councillor Sinclair– City Centre PSPO

When the city centre PSPO was introduced in February 2016, the view was expressed that its geographical reach was too wide, and that it included land and properties owned and managed by the University and colleges which should have been excluded. A question at last full council asked specifically how many times the order had been used within certain defined areas. Detailed answers were not forthcoming. However, Councillor Sinclair did refer to an "arrangement agreed with the university and colleges". Could Cllr Sinclair provide details of this arrangement, and written confirmation that the University has changed the view expressed when the order was introduced, that it should not cover its own property? Could the board member also confirm if records are kept of where advice sheets and fixed penalties are issued, and if so how many have been issued north of St Giles Church?

Response

There are working arrangements in place with the University Security Services. Council officers regularly attend joint information sharing meetings and will attend University land if requested to do so by the University. The advice sheets are collated and the majority are given out as you would expect in Cornmarket Street, Queen Street or logged as the city centre. It is therefore not possible to highlight the streets north of St Giles.

Board member for Culture and Communities

10. From Councillor Wade to Councillor Simm– Events policy

Would the Board Member agree that a policy needs to be consulted on urgently for the number, size and type of events taking place within the city? Currently each event appears to be agreed or refused on an ad hoc basis by the Events Team, with the input of County Highways. There appears to be no overall strategy.

Would the Board Member join me in agreeing that the policy should include consideration of the sponsors of these events, when their values are not those which our city seeks to promote?

Response

Events in the city are approved in accordance with the broad guidelines set out in the Culture Strategy 2015-18. Peter McQuitty (Corporate Lead: Culture and Events) is currently reviewing city events management with the aims of streamlining processes and making approval criteria clearer. The review will also state ethical criteria that we expect events organisers to abide by.

11. From Councillor Wade to Councillor Simm– Half Marathon

The Half Marathon is set to happen again this year on 9 October, despite the concerns that Councillors have been expressing since August of last year. Yet again Old Marston will be shut off for several hours, as will Thackley End and Cunliffe Close. This year Councillors were advised by the City Events Team and the race organisers that all households, colleges and businesses along the route would be leafleted twice with details of road closures. It was accepted that 8,500 leaflets would need to be sent out in each batch. The first batch has now gone out but, to my certain knowledge, Kingston, Hayfield, Polstead, Fyfield, Norham and Rawlinson Roads, Benson Place, Lady Margaret Hall and the Aristotle Lane Estate have not received leaflets. I suspect other roads may also have been omitted.

Can Councillor Simm confirm that every effort will be made to ensure that the second tranche of leaflets go out to all the roads affected i.e. east and west of Banbury, Woodstock, Kingston Roads, Walton Street and the City centre.

Response

The event organisers have committed to distributing the leaflets and the City Events Team is liaising with them to make sure that they do as they said they would do. The City Council is not the organiser of this event. The City Events Team is attempting to negotiate an appropriate balance between an event enjoyed by thousands that promotes healthy lifestyles and the interests of residents and businesses. We can make representations but the route approval rests with the highways authority.

Board Member for Customer and Corporate Services

12. From Councillor Goff to Councillor Brown– City Centre Switchboard

On Thursday 8th September the city council switchboard was closed for an hour for staff training causing considerable inconvenience to residents of my ward and others. I understand it was similarly closed about a week earlier. Does the Board Member think this is acceptable and is it a regular occurrence?

Response

It's a shame that Cllr Jean Fooks didn't share with Cllr Goff the answer I gave to her for the same question at Council on 7 December 2015. Cllr Goff was not a member of this council then so I will reproduce the answer below.

The question and response – Q1 on the 7 December 2015 – were (*from the supplement to the minutes*)

Board Member for Customer Services and Corporate Services

1. From Councillor Fooks to Councillor Brown

Can you tell Council why on ringing the Council main number of 01865 249811 at 1040 on Thursday November 26th, my call was not answered but the voicemail said 'the centre is closed for training between 1030 and 11; you can look online for information'? Do you think this is a satisfactory response to a phone call from someone who may or may not have access to the internet, wanting to speak to a Council officer?

Response

The contact centre has very high levels of customer satisfaction which are measured all the time. In order to maintain this, staff training is a vital part of the picture. The half an hour every Thursday morning is an invaluable way for staff to be jointly trained and updated on key messages. Managers in the contact centre instigated this after feedback from staff. Up until this point, no negative feedback from customers has been received about this training period. Online and face to face services remain open to customers and the message customers hear makes it clear the exact period that the centre is unable to take calls. The message is as follows: We are sorry but the Contact Centre is closed for training this morning between 10.30 and 11 o'clock. You can visit our website at www.oxford.gov.uk where you may find an answer to your query. Alternatively please call again later to speak to a member of our team. Please accept our apologies for any inconvenience caused.

Supplementary question

Why is the training not staggered to maintain cover?

Response

There have been no complaints apart from this one and whole-team training was instigated to improve the overall service.

We have checked our records from Thursday 8th September and the week prior and can confirm that the contact centre lines reopened promptly at 11 o'clock on both weeks as is normal. To date we have not received any negative feedback from customers apart from that from Cllrs Fooks and Goff.

Supplementary question

This was raised with me by a distressed constituent who said the closure was in fact for an hour.

Response

The response from December still stands and this is still considered the most effective way to deliver training and works well for staff and the public. There have been no other complaints to my knowledge.

13. From Councillor Wilkinson to Councillor Brown– ICT initiatives

A recent research study by Brunel University has found that public sector digital transformation initiatives have been mostly 'cosmetic' and have not delivered in terms of outcomes or return on investment. Could the Lead Member please give her comments on these findings with reference to the ICT initiatives introduced by Oxford City Council over the past two years?

Response

Oxford City Council is proud of putting customers at the heart of everything it does. In 2016 we achieved full corporate accreditation in Customer Service Excellence, with all services being able to demonstrate how we listen and respond to our customers' needs. Our satisfaction levels with telephone and face-to-face are very high based on Govmetric results with our telephony satisfaction rate consistently achieving more than 99% month on month (Govmetric score 'great' at 93%+) and face-to-face achieving

between 85% and 95% (Govmetric score 'great' at 65%+) putting us into the top 10 nationally in 2016.

We have also made great strides in recent years in improving online services for our customers;

- We launched a new website for the Council, completely re-writing all its content, improving search results for customers and applying a new design to encourage mobile device use and improve accessibility. This receives over 120,000 visits per month and facilitates 102,000 online transactions across 184 separate online services
- We introduced a new design for many of our forms based on user feedback and advice from national experts to improve the customer experience and have worked to improve accessibility for our online services through improved design, easier to read content and tools that assist people e.g. Browsealoud that provides translation of text into other languages, provides a readaloud facility and offers alternative font/format options for those that are visually impaired or dyslexic.
- We have launched new websites for Oxford Town Hall, Direct Services and the District Data service using the approach as our main website, and are working on three new sites to launch this year (Oxford Strategic Partnership, Oxford West End, Low Carbon Oxford)
- We are working with Smart Oxford to launch an Open Data portal to improve our transparency and give customers better access to data and information they need.
- More people are contacting us using online channels; our year to date performance in August 2016 was 30.6% of all contact we received representing a 5% increase over the same time last year.
- More visitors now using mobile devices than desktop visitors to view our website (42% in December 2015 increasing to 52% in August 2016)
- There has been a 4% increase in the number of customers completing our online forms rather than abandoning them midway through
- Innovations such as the automated Garden Waste management system, the online Pest Control appointment booking system, Netcall Missed Bin reporting, eClaim and eBilling have all contributed to our award by Kana (Lagan) of the Best Customer Web Experience 2015 and has resulted in significant increase in customer self-serve (e.g. garden waste online transactions now at 50%+ of all garden waste transactions, and use of eClaim has increased from 13% in the first quarter of implementation to 60% after 18months)
- The more recently introduced Tenants Portal for booking repairs online has resulted in a higher success rate for repairs closed at first visit and further phases of development are now nearing completion that should significantly reduce calls into the contact centre.

However, we recognise that there is more we can do, which is why CEB on 17 November will be considering a Digital Strategy for the Council to adopt. This will seek to build on our successes and implement the best practice approach spearheaded by the Government Digital Service (GDS), as being adopted by leading councils across the country.

Supplementary question

Have these initiatives given a good return on the investment and are they value for money?

Response

I would consider they have as self-service, online and phone options save everyone time and money. We will be bringing further proposals to the Executive Board to increase digital services but will keep a balance so that people are not disadvantaged by their preferred method of accessing services.

14. From Councillor Thomas to Councillor Brown – Housing Benefit

In how many instances is Oxford City Council paying housing benefit on properties owned by educational institutions, in particular Oxford University and its associated colleges, and Brookes, and what is the annual total of these benefits.

Response

I'm not entirely clear what it is that Councillor Thomas is asking.

If his question refers to students' entitlement to housing benefit, then the majority of students are not eligible to claim housing benefit. The Government expects students to use other money, like student loan (or other source of student finance for postgraduates) to pay their rent.

Full time students

Example of full time students who can claim housing benefit are:

- lone parents
- students whose partner is also a student and one or both of them are responsible for a child
- those in receipt of income support, income-based jobseeker's allowance, or income-related employment and support allowance
- students who live in supported accommodation and receive universal credit
- students who have a disability and qualify for a disability premium or severe disability premium
- those who get a disabled student's allowance because of a hearing disability

Part-time students claiming housing benefit

Part-time students can usually claim housing benefit if they rent privately. But if they are studying part-time and stay in university-owned housing or halls of residence, they can only claim housing benefit if they fall into certain categories.

Examples of part time students who can claim housing benefit are those who:

- are disabled
- have dependent children
- receive income-related benefits.

Last year we made no such housing benefit payments to students.

Should the question be the payment of housing benefit paid specifically in relation to properties owned by educational institutions then regrettably this is not information that can be easily obtained since in many cases the payment of housing benefit is made to an individual not the landlord and in any case the landlord may not necessarily be the owner.

Supplementary question

Are the universities renting their property in the private sector and if they are, are they receiving subsidies in the form of housing benefit paid to their tenants?

Response

It's an interesting question and may be worth investigating, but as it is difficult to establish the ownership of properties we don't have the data.

15. From Councillor Wilkinson to Councillor Brown– Inaccessible Planning website

Members have been contacted on a number of occasions by residents who claim that the Oxford City Council planning website has been inaccessible. Can the Board Member please state on which dates during the past 12 months to August that the planning website has been affected by downtime or technical faults which have taken it out of action for any period of time?

Response

It became apparent following the ICT outage in Sept 2015 that County were not able to provide any stats on application or server availability so we implemented our own solution from December 2015 hence we do not have any data from August to December 2015.

A summary of all the dates from December 2015 onwards when the Planning portal was inactive together with the duration of the outage in minutes is shown below. The full detail by date is included in the attached spreadsheet.

Date	Number of outages	Duration (minutes)	Availability (%)
2015			
Dec	11	1679	96.24%
2016			
Jan	300	717	98.39%
Feb	174	1828	95.62%
Mar	27	4392	90.16%
Apr	1	4	99.99%
May	8	19	99.96%
Jun	0	0	100.00%
Aug	3	1505	96.63%
Sep	1	1	100.00%

Grand Total	525	10145	97.37%
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The outages in December 2015 and August 2016 were due to major incidents from our infrastructure provider (County in December and SCC in August). They were not related to any specific issue with the IDOX Public Access solution (the planning portal). The outages in February and March 2016 were related to transition and the migration of the network connectivity.

Following the lessons learnt from the outage in September 2015, we responded swiftly to subsequent outages with messages advising customers of the issues with the planning portal and extended consultation deadlines where appropriate. Regular communications were maintained with affected customers and senior stakeholders.

We have resolved the underlying connectivity issues that caused the problems in Feb/March and implemented more sophisticated monitoring of the relevant websites so we are able to act more promptly if issues do occur.

We have worked with the application provider (IDOX) to review and update the application so that we are using the most recent supported version and it is implemented according to their best practice.

Supplementary question

Are consultation deadlines extended when the online system is down?

Response

Yes they are.

Board member for Housing

16.From Councillor Thomas to Councillor Rowley– Council owned Boats

Is Councillor Rowley aware that in Leiden - one of Oxford's twin cities - council-owned boats make up part of the social rented sector and does he think Oxford should follow suit?

Response

Yes, I am aware that Leiden Council owns a small number of houseboats. Leiden has more canals than any City in Europe except Amsterdam, and has a thriving private houseboat rental market, so makes sense for the Council to intervene. In Oxford such a project would be of very marginal benefit, and given that some houseboat owners struggle to find legal moorings, it would be impractical. I do not therefore propose to invest public resources in this.

Supplementary question

Is this option worth pursuing as a solution?

Response

While it's an innovative option, it isn't worth the council pursuing given the impracticality.

17. From Councillor Simmons to Councillor Smith– London 2017

Given the excellent engagement that the Council had with the London 2012 Olympic and Paralympic Games, has the portfolio holder made approaches regarding the role that Oxford might play in London 2017?

(London 2017 refers to the IAAF and IPC 2017 World Championships, London's biggest sport event since the 2012 Olympics where 200 countries and 3,300 athletes will be competing in 245 events).

Response

Yes the Sports and Leisure teams are busy planning how we can best use the 2017 World Championships to inspire our residents. We have already secured the final of the prestigious National Schools Athletics Championships to be held at Horspath at the beginning of July. We will be also working with our local schools to maximise the opportunity and also Oxford City Athletics club. Last year we resurfaced our athletics track at Horspath and we are also continuing to work on the creation of a new Sports Park in Horspath.

Supplementary question

I am glad to hear we are looking at this. Could we look at hosting teams for the games?

Response

I will speak to the sports development team about this suggestion.

18. From Councillor Wolff to Councillor Smith – signs in Florence Park

Would the board member support the installation of signs in Florence Park asking cyclists to cycle, slowly and safely?

Response

The safety of pedestrians in our parks is something we would want to take all appropriate steps to ensure, especially in the vicinity of our children's play areas. However, we try to avoid having lots of signs telling people what they can't do. We do not believe that such signs are always effective. I have asked our parks officers to increase their patrols in the park for a period of time so we can address this concern.

19. From Councillor Goddard to Councillor Smith– Pavilions

Would the board member join me in welcoming the recent opening of the lower pavilion at Cutteslowe Park, and congratulating the Summertown Stars football team on leveraging the vast majority of the cost, so that a substantially reduced figure fell on the council? And could the board member provide an update on progress of the proposed pavilion for Five Mile Drive?

Response

It was a great honour to officially open the lower Pavillion at Cutteslowe Park and I hope the Summertown stars go from strength to strength in their new base. I know the club worked hard in order to achieve the national recognition which enabled them to

work with our Sports Development team to bid for external funding from Sport England and the Football Foundation and on behalf of the council I offer my congratulations and thanks to all the volunteers involved. Discussions with the club on the provision of changing room facilities at Five Mile Drive are ongoing.

Supplementary question

Would you agree that it would do no harm to provide more facilities, make more use of the existing ones, and to keep the community involved?

Response

Yes. If we can provide first class facilities for the football club and also allow others to use these that would be good.

20. From Councillor Wilkinson to Councillor Smith– Community Provisions

Given that the planning review meeting was advised that the main occupants of the new Quarry pavilion will be users of the football pitches, can the Board Member explain what other provision is being made for other local community users and how far she is satisfied that this is good value for money given that the total reported cost is £1.2 million

Response

The new pavilion not only provides a great facility for the club who have a large number of teams of all ages. It does also include a community room and kitchen. While it is to be expected that local football teams will make frequent use of the Pavillion, it will be available for hire to the whole community and I hope it becomes a much loved community asset.

Board member for Planning and Regulatory Services

21. From Councillor Wolff to Councillor Hollingsworth– City owned Park & Rides

Under what conditions might the portfolio holder re-consider the Council's decision not to allow the space above City owned Park & Rides to be used for affordable housing?

Response

As the Councillor is aware, any proposal for major development of this sort has to be in compliance with the Local Plan, and the policies contained within it. Each of the three city-owned Park and Ride sites also have important role to play in the city's current public transport provision, and there are significant policy constraints on them in the current Local Plan: none of them are allocated for housing; one rests within a flood plain area that is unsuitable for residential development; another sits on contaminated land; and so on. While the Council is duty bound to consider all serious, and otherwise, proposals for allocations of new sites for housing as part of the Local Plan review we are currently carrying out, I am personally doubtful that some of these sites will be suitable for allocation as housing sites.

Supplementary question

How many hectares of land in the city are dedicated to stationary vehicles?

Response

If you could define what you would include and exclude for me, I can find out – for instance does this include just formal car parks.

22. From Councillor Wade to Councillor Hollingsworth– Consultation during Holiday periods

Would the Board Member agree that the time for comments for planning applications by members of the public should be extended by two weeks when the application comes in at the start of Christmas, Easter and Summer holiday periods. The current deadline, which doesn't recognize holiday periods, exacerbates the problem that residents have in finding out about planning applications quickly or at all. A return to the practice of sending out hard copy letters to neighbouring properties would also be extremely welcome. Would the Board Member undertake to explore this?

Response

The period for notification/consultation on planning applications is set out in national planning regulations but is also related to the target periods the government has set for deciding planning applications. The failure of the local planning authority to reach a decision within the appropriate timescale can be a reason for appeal by an applicant on the grounds of non-determination so a balance has to be struck between the period for public notification and efficient processing of planning applications. Holiday periods such as Christmas and Easter are taken into account in the end to end period allowed for public notification on planning applications being considered at these times. Arbitrarily adding two additional working weeks to the overall period for neighbour notification when there are bank and public holidays cannot be justified particularly where we already adjust our notification period to take account of these days and when the planning on-line system is available to view the entire time. In addition, our on-line planning system allows for bespoke email alerts to be set up that anyone can subscribe to and this service is completely automated in advising of planning applications being received in a particular area. The 'summer holidays' covers an extended period if related to the school holidays but most business, including the council as a service provider have to operate on a 'business as usual' basis over this period. The vast majority of people do not take holidays covering the entire period of school summer holidays.

As the Councillor will be aware, the 'practice of sending out hard copy letters' is one that comes with considerable costs, and has been explored and rejected as a poor use of limited funds on many occasions. There is no evidence that there has been a reduction in comments on planning applications since the ending of this practice; indeed, the evidence is that there has been an increase in response rates. I remain of the view that in a time of drastically reducing budgets across the public sector there are better ways of investing scarce resources.

23. From Councillor Wilkinson to Councillor Hollingsworth– Planning Policies

Given that the officer report on the hospitals' energy pipe application indicated that "the Core Strategy, Local Plan and Site and Housing Plan provide relatively limited planning policy that relates specifically to the installation of an energy link", what action is the Lead Member taking to address this issue?

Response

The Local Plan review has begun, and officers will consider whether or not there is a need for new policy on this – rather unusual – type of development. It is not apparent that the lack of a specific policy in the current local plan put the council at any disadvantage in dealing with the energy pipeline on its particular merits.

24. From Councillor Wilkinson to Councillor Hollingsworth– Local Plan

Concerns have been expressed by residents that the wording of the paper questionnaire and the online questionnaire about issues and options for the Local Plan were different – please can the Board member explain the reasons for this?

Response

The two version were deliberately different, because the online questionnaire had greater capacity to include more background information and more detail than could be fitted comfortably on the paper questionnaire. The former was intended to be used by those with time to look at background documents if they so chose, and the latter was handed out at events for completion on the spot, and was thus of necessity somewhat shorter. The purpose of the consultation process at this stage was to generate ideas, and it was important to use best practice for the different media being used. The response to the consultation, which is still be assessed by officers, suggests that having a range of methods worked well and that no particular method caused problems for respondents.

Supplementary question

Can we highlight more clearly on the leaflet that a fuller consultation is available on the website as some respondents to the paper survey did not realise the online option was different?

Response

I think the website link was obvious on the paper survey and staff at the events did mention the online survey but we will see what can be done to emphasise the difference between the two consultations.

25. From Councillor Wilkinson to Councillor Hollingsworth–Consultant costs

In February I asked how much had been paid out by OCC over the past 12 months in acquiring reports done by individuals external to the planning department e.g. agency staff, ftc, casual etc. The figures at that time were as follows:

Planners/Planning consultants £214,138

Interim Head of Service (Planning & Regulatory) £80,250

Heritage/Listed Buildings £67,682

Biodiversity Advice £20,744

Total £382,814

Please can the Lead Member give members an update for the 12 months leading up to the end of August 2016?

Response

Planners/Planning consultants £395,007

Interim Head of Service (Planning & Regulatory) £49,781

Heritage/Listed Buildings £71,456

Biodiversity Advice £9,738

Total £544,407

Supplementary question

What can be done to reduce the spending on agency staff and can the service support the proposed 4 apprentice planners?

Response

The apprentices will be junior planning officers undertaking their professional training and will quickly be an asset to the service. There are challenges in recruiting the right staff but new people are now appointed or in post and agency costs should start to reduce.

Deputy Leader of the Council, Board Member for Finance, Asset Management and Public Health

26.From Councillor Simmons to Councillor Turner– Council Borrowings

Given the record low levels of fixed short and medium term interest rates, will the portfolio holder consider increasing the City's borrowing to help support the development of desperately needed affordable housing and low carbon infrastructure in the City?

Response

The Council has recently set up a wholly owned Housing Company which will purchase and build new affordable homes in the City. In March 2016 the Council approved the first loan to the Housing Company of £12.25 million in March 2016, to purchase the first phase of the Barton Development funded from prudential borrowing through the Council's capital programme. The Housing Company's Business Plan going forward will include purchasing the second phase of properties at Barton bringing its total portfolio to around 350 dwellings, together with other commercial activity all funded from borrowing. The Housing Company Business Plan if approved will seek to fund around £90 million of housing related activity through borrowing. At the same time the Council has authorised loans to the Low Carbon Hub in the order of £2.3 million to undertake activity which reduces carbon emissions such as the Sandford Hydro project. Elsewhere in the Council's Capital Programme the Council estimates that it will incur £34 million of prudential borrowing to fund investment property and other housing related regeneration.

The decision to externally borrow for funding these schemes is separate to that of the decision to spend. Such decisions are taken in the light of the availability of 'internal borrowing' making use of its reserves and balances pending their use. Whilst the PWLB rates are at an all-time low, 50 year PWLB will currently cost around 2.20%, this charge is nonetheless higher than investment interest rates currently earned by the Council in banks and building societies of around 0.70%. To this extent there is a 'cost of carry' to the authority in taking out external borrowing now, since the rate earned is

less than the rate paid. With base rates however predicted to fall still further to say 0.1% it may be that borrowing rates will also fall and the Council will continue to monitor the situation and if it is considered financially beneficial to enter the borrowing market, it will do so.

Leader of the Council, Board Member for Corporate Strategy and Economic Development

27. From Councillor Thomas to Councillor Price– Refugees

Does the Leader share my frustration at the Government's abject failure to allow unaccompanied children languishing in the French refugee camps in Calais and Dunkirk to enter the UK, and can he please share what steps Oxford City Council is taking to pressure the Government and assist the County Council to move matters forward?

Response

Yes. It is probably reflective of a further hardening of the Government's policy stance that only 30 children have so far been admitted as a result of the Dubs amendment. We have been working very closely and successfully with the County Council and Asylum Welcome over the past year in both the Syrian Vulnerable Persons Resettlement Scheme and the resettlement of unaccompanied children. Ten families (45 people) have been successfully resettled under the SVPRS; the County Council has dealt with in excess of 50 children, but has had to resettle some of them with families living outside Oxfordshire. We recently responded to a letter from the new Home Office Minister indicating our willingness to resettle a further ten families in 2017 which could include children identified as vulnerable, and to continue our joint work with the County on resettling children under any of the schemes, including the Dubs amendment group. The imminent dismantling of the Calais camp implies that this is an urgent issue.

Supplementary question

Where are the bottlenecks in resettling unaccompanied children? Is it with the recruitment of foster families or is there a funding shortfall?

Response

There is a more general problem in recruiting foster careers. The county has over 60 refugee children placed in care and there is not much more that can be for directly. The rate for support and questions about what happens at the end of the fifth year when support ends has been raised with government but we have not had a reply. We can take and fund 10 families in 2017 but the long term situation is uncertain.

28. From Councillor Simmons to Councillor Price– Junior Doctors

At the time of writing, a group of junior doctors (Justice for Health) are in court to oppose the imposition of a new 'unsafe and unsustainable' NHS contract on Junior Doctors by the Secretary of State for Health, Jeremy Hunt. Will the Leader join me in sending a message of support to Justice for Health and encourage local people, who are able to afford to do so, to make a donation to their campaign at www.justiceforhealth.co.uk

Response

Yes; I would be very happy to do so. It is clear that the case put forward by the Secretary of State has been based on a misinterpretation of data relating to mortality rates for weekend admissions, and that there is grossly inadequate funding available to support the level of service demanded. The net effect will be to increase risk to patients, burn out rates for doctors and levels of out migration for trained medical staff.

Supplementary question

Will you join us in writing to the Secretary of State, the NHS Trust and junior doctors to support the case we make?

Response

Yes.

29. From Councillor Wade to Councillor Price– Housing provisions for Refugees

Could the Leader please confirm how many Syrian families have been accommodated in unfurnished privately rented accommodation in Oxford to date, and is he satisfied that the provision of furniture and equipment for these families that has been made through donations from individuals and community groups is sufficient without the need for additional financial provision by the City Council?

Response

Ten families have been accommodated in private rented accommodation under the SVPRS. In some cases, our Housing Needs teams have used funding from the Home Office allocations to supplement or improve the existing furniture and household equipment. Donations from the public via Emmaus, City of Sanctuary and Asylum Welcome have been very generous, and continue to be offered.

To: Council

Date: 29 September 2016

Title of Report: Part 2 - Public addresses and questions that do not relate to matters for decision

This document was updated following the meeting.

Introduction

1. Addresses made by members of the public to the Council, and questions put to the Board members or Leader, registered by the deadline in the Constitution, are below. Any written responses available are also below.
2. Addresses as submitted by the speakers and written responses where available were published with the briefing note in advance of the meeting.
3. This report was republished after the Council meeting as part of the minutes pack and replaces that published with the briefing note.
4. This lists:
 - the submitted text of speeches where delivered broadly as submitted, deleting parts not read out;
 - noteworthy amendments to reflect the spoken address in italics.
 - summaries of speeches delivered where these differed significantly from those submitted;
 - written responses published in the briefing note before the meeting; and
 - summaries of verbal responses by the Board Members given at the meeting.

Addresses and questions taken in Part 2 of the agenda.

Addresses in part 2

1. Address by Fran Ryan, Homes for Oxford, www.homesforoxford.org
2. Address by Dr Ruvi Ziegler - Unaccompanied Refugee Children: Oxford's Role

Questions in part 2

1. Question from Mr Artwell – Community Centre Management
2. Question from Dr Stefan Piechnik: OCC Tower Block refurbishment

Addresses in part 2

1. Address by Fran Ryan, Homes for Oxford, www.homesforoxford.org



Homes for Oxford (HfO) is a new umbrella organisation for community groups who want to create genuinely and permanently affordable homes in the city either as new-build or through refurbishment. Thus far it includes Oxfordshire Community Land Trust Ltd, Oxford Cohousing Ltd, Kindling Co-op, and four smaller housing co-ops.

We are seeking sites to create at least 80 homes. We have a business plan and a funding model to support this. We recently submitted a bid for £16m for the Wolvercote Paper Mill site. Had we been successful we would have sought full planning permission to build 260 homes, two thirds of which were to remain permanently affordable via the land trust and co-op lease mechanisms. The homes would have been almost passivhaus standard and the total number of cars would have been 240 or less. Full details of the bid can be seen here:

https://www.dropbox.com/sh/kdjto3xgikklh/AADBQ0Ps0sD7gbRVfpyCJ_Tka?dl=0

We are now turning our attention to the few remaining sites within the city, and aim to increase the political support we have gained for this difficult challenge. I am speaking to you today to seek in-principle all-party support for our work.

1. ENSURE ALL-PARTY SUPPORT FOR CUSTOM BUILD AND GROUP BUILD IN NEW LOCAL PLAN

First we would like to ask for all-party councillor support for the Local Plan to be drafted so as to promote custom-build and group custom-build. I have sent examples of possible policies to the planners.

Examples of possible wording can be found in the SPDs used in East Cambs and Teignbridge. The East Cambs model is for community-led development including housing, and could be used.¹ However, Teignbridge has been more specific and introduced an SPD on Self Build². HfO would particularly welcome a policy that requires a percentage of community-led housing on large sites (say 10% to 20%), to include affordable self-build.

There is a significant need for self-build in Oxford. Homes for Oxford itself would count for about 80 and we're currently completing the forms to demonstrate that.

This is not yet reflected in the City's self-build register largely because those interested have only just become aware (August 2016) that this register has become available. There was no register in the city a year ago and as a consequence people have been using the on-line register hosted by Ecomotive (some of the initiators of the Ashley Vale Self Build in Bristol) at <http://www.ecomotive.org/>. In February 2016 there were over 190 people on this register who want to build inside the Oxford city boundary.)

¹

<http://www.eastcambs.gov.uk/sites/default/files/Com%20Led%20Dev%20SPD%20as%20adopted%2025%20Feb%202016.pdf>.

² <https://www.teignbridge.gov.uk/selfbuild>

2. USE COMMUNITY-LED HOUSING INITIATIVES TO AVOID RTB

Second we would like the City Council to use community-led initiatives to protect homes from Right to Buy (RTB). A recent Demos report <http://www.demos.co.uk/project/community-builders-report/> suggests this is perhaps the only way to avoid RTB in current climate.

‘With the Government’s right to buy scheme due to be extended to housing associations, community-led developments may become one of the last ways to ensure the provision of new homes that will stay available for rent in the long term’. HfO actively supports OCC’s current affordable housing policy and would wish to have it secured and strengthened. We’d welcome more explicit support from OCC towards Land Trusts and Coops as mechanisms not just for delivering genuinely affordable homes, but also for protecting the affordability in perpetuity.

Avoiding RTB as you all know is key to permanent affordability. In connection with that, we suggest that particular attention is focused on ensuring permanent affordability for self-build. This is always a problem with self-builds once they are sold on (as in Ashley Vale in Bristol: they are no longer affordable).

Overall we’d like to ask all councillors to do all they can to ensure that the new Local Plan actively endorses and privileges community-led development in all its forms. We would suggest that at the very least there are no policies that stand in the way of future collaboration between the city and the various community-led housing organisations.

3. OFFER FLEXIBILITY FOR AFFORDABLE MIX TO COMMUNITY-LED GROUPS

Third we would also ask that flexibility is given to community-led groups about the mix of affordable homes. This is particularly important when such groups are ensuring permanent affordability with no RTB. In HfO’s recent Wolvercote Paper Mill bid, two thirds would have been permanently affordable. To make this viable there were 35% social rented homes – slightly less than the current 40% policy requirement. The reality is that there are many, including key workers, in housing need in the intermediate (shared ownership) market: we believe it is important to make provision for them.

A further point on the subject of affordable homes is that we ask that the Council is more robust in defending your own policy for affordable homes when developers seek to avoid policy requirements on viability grounds. For example had Homes for Oxford’s bid for the Wolvercote Paper Mill been made on the assumptions that national policy would apply (starter homes and affordable rents) we could have pushed our offer up to £20m but our offer was made, on the assumption that all bids would be compliant with local policy. We will be watching closely if and when this site comes back for planning


4. OFFER BEST VALUE TO COMMUNITY-LED HOUSING GROUPS WHEN DISPOSING OF PUBLICLY OWNED LAND AND BUILDINGS

Fourth and final point, there are a few publicly owned sites in the city. We ask that you use the powers you have to consider disposal to community-led housing groups at best value. And in particular to take social value into account. We would like a specific policy to ensure that longer term social value is taken into account not merely the highest price that can be achieved.

This would enable community groups to compete more effectively with commercial developers who bid very highly for a site and then use viability arguments to reduce the quota of affordable homes.

Summary of the verbal response given by Councillor Hollingsworth at the meeting

Thank you for the address. My personal view is that we should be more open to such options as self-build and co-op housing to deliver permanently affordable housing rather than only one option, especially as government policy is shifting. The policy on starter homes for instance is changing. From 1919 onwards the only time we built enough houses in this country was when all sectors worked together at maximum effectiveness. We should look at all opportunities to provide housing. I will work with officers to include as many options as possible in the Local Plan. On specific sites it isn't this council's place to make preferential offers based simply on the classification of the developer.



2. Address by Dr Ruvi Ziegler - Unaccompanied Refugee Children: Oxford's Role

My name is Dr. Ruvi Ziegler, and I am a lecturer in law at the University of Reading and a Research Fellow of the Refugee Studies Centre here at Oxford. I have asked to address you regarding the global refugee crisis and Oxford's role.

The world is in the grip of a growing global refugee crisis, with 65.3 million forcibly displaced persons worldwide, 21.3 million of whom outside their countries. A key reason for the worsening situation is too many countries – often the richest – refusing to share responsibility. Last week, the Prime Minister spoke at the UN summit in New York City, encouraging countries to control their borders and arguing that 'we must help ensure that refugees claim asylum in the first safe country they reach'. The Prime Minister's approach reeks of NIMBYism, and we should not stand for it. The reality is that the vast majority of the world's refugees already only get as far as the country neighbouring their own, one is that often anything but safe: the UN's Refugee Agency estimates 86% of the world's refugees live in developing countries.

Meanwhile, the EU's Dublin Regulations, which the UK is all too happy to follow, mean that EU member states such as Greece and Italy, face a disproportionate responsibility for processing and protecting refugees who arrive on the continent. In September 2015, in acknowledgement that such a system was unfair and unsustainable, the EU agreed a relocation scheme of 160,000 refugees away from Italy and Greece to other member states. However, implementation has been painfully slow; in the last year, only around 4,000 refugees have been relocated, and Hungary is holding a referendum on 2nd October to reify Viktor Orbán's defiance. The UK, to our shame, has refused to take any part in the relocation scheme.

But I believe that people in this country, and certainly the people of Oxford, are more generous than the Tory government that speaks for them. May's predecessor committed to the Syrian Vulnerable Persons Relocation Scheme (insufficient as it is) as a result of public pressure following the horrific photo of three-year-old Aylan Kurdi lying dead on a Turkish beach last September; and it took Lord Alfred Dubs, a *Kindertransport* survivor, to force the UK government to amend the Immigration Act 2016 and commit to resettle 3,000 unaccompanied refugee children,

I urge you to support the Liberal Democrats' motion, which insists that the UK must welcome its fair share of refugees to ease this crisis and act swiftly to implement the Dubs amendment; and which calls on all councillors to sign **Liberty's statement of support**, available on their website, pressuring central government to honour its commitment. As and when central government implements the resettlement scheme, our city, as a city of sanctuary should commit to offer resettlement places to unaccompanied refugee children, alongside its existing support for the Syrian Vulnerable Persons Relocation Scheme. I recognise that this requires additional resources, especially in relation to housing provision, educational needs, and English language provision, which central government should be pressured to provide. It can hardly be denied that the resettlement of unaccompanied children poses challenges, but the opportunities which successful resettlement offers are great, too; and our city should be leading by example.

Summary of the verbal response given by Councillor Price at the meeting

The Council is taking this seriously: it has taken part in the Syrian refugee resettlement programme this year and is taking part in the second year of the programme. Liberty's statement of support has been signed by a good number of councillors and I am sure that it is something we are all supportive of.

Questions in part 2

1. Question from Mr Artwell – Community Centre Management

Question to the Board Member, Councillor Simm

Summary of question as delivered to Council

Elected Councillors, Lord Mayor and officers, many of the City's Community Centres are no longer managed by committed and representative community minded local residents.

For example, Green Square now manage the Cowley Venue and will also manage Northway's "community centre".

You have lots of plans going but I don't see your commitment to include community minded people in the running of the community centres. Community centres need community minded people,

I want you to cease throwing out the people who have managed these for years

Please, I urge you, include local minded people in the operation and governance of community centres, with council guidance and support as required.

Written Response from Councillor Simm

Following a period of in-depth consultation the Council's Community Centres Strategy was agreed at September's CEB, the strategy fully explains our approach.

We received just under 200 responses in the consultation and the development of the strategy was supported by a steering group made up of representatives from the voluntary sector, the Federation of Community Associations, councillors and senior council officers.

In relation to the management of Community Centres it states "The Council's preferred option is that robust, sustainable community organisations should manage the community centres."

Where this is not in place the Council will do its utmost to support the Association, or directly manage the centres to ensure they effectively deliver the broad range of community benefits in an inclusive way.

Summary of the verbal response given by Councillor Simm at the meeting

Green Square is a not for profit organisation. Northway will be managed by an existing community association in partnership with the council and Green Square. Cowley venue is managed by Green Square but they are in the process of developing a local community association to operate this. I want to challenge the underlying premise that the operation by the council of community assets it owns is undesirable – it is not. We are committed to developing the community associations in these venues and the use of these buildings is increasing year on year. Where there are stable and robust and able community associations (the majority of centres) we will support them. Where there is not it is our responsibility to manage the centres for the benefit of the community they serve.

2. Question from Dr Stefan Piechnik: OCC Tower Block refurbishment

Question to the Board Member, Councillor Rowley

QUESTION: Use of wood with masonry in high rise buildings.

The major works in the tower blocks in Blackbirds have started, which allows residents for the first time to inspect the quality of planning. In this question I refer to the appearance of new aluminium windows, installed with the burden of additional scaffolding, unlike the prior PVC windows installed in the past only using internal access. It is now more than obvious that the new windows are much smaller. The balcony doors are much narrower at only 50cm width (i.e. less than my shoulder width!) while the old ones were 70cm wide. This is WORSE not an IMPROVEMENT.

However, most worryingly, the resulting gaps are padded by large wooden beams, a solution that resembles heritage timber-framed dwellings. As this appears so wrong, Can I ask the Councillors to provide, on record, the names of the architects and engineers who signed off this design?

In particular how did the designers assure the Council that the thermal, ice or moisture driven expansion of the wood will not affect the function of the aluminium windows or doors.

Most seriously perhaps, what are the guarantees that the possible wood expansion will not affect the structural soundness of the walls, as far as to threaten a collapse of the buildings?

Who will pay and how any potential damage to or from the underlying wooden structures will be monitored when they are hidden under the new cladding?

Written Response from Councillor Rowley

Thank you for your enquiry. To provide a full technical response will require input from both our contractor and their architectural advisors which I am afraid cannot be provided in time for the meeting. A written response will be provided to you and copied to all members of the Council within 10 working days of the Council meeting ‘

Summary of the verbal response given by Councillor Rowley at the meeting

The design of the updates to the tower blocks is very high quality and is a solution implemented successfully in many other towns and cities in the UK by the same contractor. Of course it's been designed in full consultation with local residents.

On the technical questions we will consult with the architects and get a full response to you and published in the record .

After the meeting the following response and correction were circulated to the speaker and councillors

Written Response from the Head of Housing on behalf of Councillor Rowley

Dear Dr Piechnik,

Thank you for your recent enquiry regarding the tower blocks improvement works. I will deal with each of your points in turn. First with regards the use of timber, a section of pressure impregnated wood has been used solely above the heads of windows to provide a fixing for traditional curtain rails. This timber is not structural and is fully

weather proofed and insulated by the application of the external wall insulation (EWI) and cladding being applied to the external face of the building.

Second you imply that it wasn't necessary to use a scaffold to replace the windows. As you have been made aware the works entail the application of the EWI, cladding and repairs of the external concrete and brick sections. These works could obviously only be carried out using external access and the windows have been replaced as an integral part of that whole process. Access has been by mast climbers not traditional scaffold which is a more efficient and effective means of access and reduces inconvenience for residents.

Third, it is correct that external door and window opening dimensions have changed. This has been necessary to make provision for insulation on the balcony section in order to minimise condensation within flats, which has known to be a problem, and improve the overall thermal efficiency of the building one of the key outcomes we will be delivering for residents. The design has been approved by building control officers and meets current building regulation standards. Outline designs were prepared by EC Harris (now Arcadis) with BM3 architects with detail designs being undertaken by the contractor Willmott Dixon Energy Services; designs which included this detail were reviewed at the tender stage by OCC officers and resident groups and further scrutinised by OCC officers and external consultants at detailed design stage.

I trust this clarifies your enquiry.