

COUNCIL

Monday 23 April 2012

COUNCILLORS PRESENT: Councillors Benjamin (Lord Mayor), Armitage (Deputy Lord Mayor), Fooks (Sheriff), Abbasi, Altaf-Khan, Bance, Baxter, Brett, Brown, Brundin, Campbell, Clarkson, Cook, Coulter, Darke, Goddard, Gotch, Hazell, Jones, Keen, Khan, Lloyd-Shogbesan, Lygo, Malik, McCready, McManners, Mills, Morton, Pressel, Price, Rowley, Rundle, Sanders, Seamons, Sinclair, Smith, Tanner, Timbs, Turner, Van Nooijen, Wilkinson, Williams, Wolff and Young.

109. MINUTES

Council resolved to approve the minutes of the ordinary meeting held on 20th February 2012.

110. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Councillors declared interests as follows:

- (a) Councillor Beverley Hazell declared a personal interest in agenda item 13 (Allocation of preventing homeless grant and Oxford City grant for Homeless Services) as she was an Oxford City Council appointed representative on Oxford Homeless Pathways. (Minute 121 refers).
- (b) Councillor Gill Sanders declared a personal interest in agenda item 13 (Allocation of preventing homeless grant and Oxford City grant for Homeless Services) as she was a City Council appointed Member on the Management Committee of the Gatehouse. (Minute 121 refers).
- (c) Councillor Val Smith declared a personal interest in agenda item 13 (Allocation of preventing homeless grant and Oxford City grant for Homeless Services) as she was an Oxford City Council appointed observer for O'Hanlon House and 'Steppin Stones'. (Minute 121 refers).
- (d) Councillor Nuala Young declared a personal interest in agenda item 15 (Corporate Plan 2012-2016 – Targets) as she derived a small income from the Tourist trade via the Tourist Information Centre. (Minute 123 refers).

111. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies were received from Councillors Rae Humberstone and Gwynneth Royce.

112. APPOINTMENTS TO COMMITTEES

None.

113. LORD MAYOR'S ANNOUNCEMENTS

The Lord Mayor made the following announcements:

- (a) The Lord Mayor informed Council of the recent death of Peter Nixon who was the former City Secretary and Solicitor to the Council from 1974 until his retirement in 1983.

Council stood for a minutes silence as a mark of respect.

- (b) The Lord Mayor informed Council that Fred Ingram, a former Lord Mayor of the Oxford had recently celebrated his 100th birthday and on behalf of Council would pass on the Council's congratulations and best wishes.
- (c) The Lord Mayor informed Council that the Standards regime that had existed in Local Government since 2000 would come to an end shortly, and wished on behalf of Council to thank all of the Parish and independent Standards Committee Members for their hours of selfless and enthusiastic service to standards and conduct matters on the Council.
- (d) The Lord Mayor invited all of the Councillors who were not seeking re-election in the forthcoming May local elections to stand and for Council to thank them for their services and general good humour over the years at this and other meetings of the Council.

Beverley Hazell
Clark Brundin
Bryan Keen
Bob Timbs
Stuart Craft
Nuala Young
Matt Morton
Nathan Pyle
Stephen Brown

114. SHERIFF'S ANNOUNCEMENTS

The Sheriff wished to thank Council Officers who had contacted Network Rail which had started to clear land next to Port Meadow, but had cleared more than they should have and had not informed the right people that they intended to carryout this work. Network Rail subsequently halted their work.

115. ANNOUNCEMENTS BY THE LEADER

The Leader of the Council (Councillor Bob Price) made the following announcements:

- (a) The Employers Association for Local Government had refused to make an offer as part of a National Pay Claim. He said that he had written to the Unions expressing his dislike of this action.

- (b) The City Council had always supported the Sustainable Communities Act, but the Government was delaying the second phase. He had written to the Secretary of State requesting that the regulations were placed in Statute as soon as possible.

116. ANNOUNCEMENTS BY THE CHIEF EXECUTIVE, THE CHIEF FINANCE OFFICER AND THE MONITORING OFFICER

None made.

117. ADDRESSES BY THE PUBLIC

Council received and took six addresses to Council (text of the addresses are appended to these minutes, along with an Officer response the address from Nigel Gibson concerning "Disability and Leisure in Oxford").

- (1) William Clark – Democracy in Oxford.
- (2) Edward Chipperfield – Sale of St. Clement's Car Park.
- (3) Nigel Gibson (1) – Disability and Leisure in Oxford.
- (4) Nigel Gibson (2) – Swimming Pools in Oxfordshire.
- (5) Georgina Gibbs – Loss of green spaces, overdevelopment, flooding and increased traffic in Northway.
- (6) Louise Kulbicki – Ecocide.

118. QUESTIONS BY THE PUBLIC

Two questions were submitted by members of the public as follows:

- (1) **Question to the Board Member, City Development (Councillor Colin Cook) from Sietska Boeles**

Student numbers living in private properties

There is a widespread view that student numbers living in private properties have been misrepresented by the two universities, and there are concerns that the city council don't adequately monitor local plan policies related to student housing. Following requests by residents groups in East Oxford and Headington the Council agreed to investigate these matters last September. In March local Councillors and residents were informed by the Council that their report would be published in early April. I understand that the report is finished but that the Council won't release it until the end of April at the earliest. Is it right that the City Council should suppress this report until after the local elections? Why cannot it be released immediately?

Response: We have consulted both universities on a first draft report although we have had feedback from Oxford Brookes University. We are awaiting comments on a second draft. Oxford University has been given until Tuesday 24th April to respond. The report will be published as soon as possible after that.

(2) Question to the Board Member, City Development (Councillor Colin Cook) from Georgina Gibbs

12 Saxon Way

I understand that one of the councillors from the Headington Hill and North Way Ward has, in his capacity as chair of Northway Residents Association, signed a legal agreement which transfers ownership of the Northway Community Centre to private developers. Can you give me the full written details and the date of this agreement.

Can you clarify the following please:

- (1) Is the City Council is assisting the councillor with legal advice on this matter;
- (2) If so can you give me the full written details of the advice and let me know if this advice was given by the in house legal team and/or was legal advice sought from outside;
- (3) Will further legal advice be sought?

Response: The Council has not given legal advice to the trustees of the community centre. We are not in a position to advise them – not least because one of the documents is a tripartite agreement between them, the Council and Greenspace.

We understand that the Community Association has had independent advice from a Solicitor engaged directly. In addition, they have had the benefit of independent advice from Community Matters, the national body that offers support to community association nationwide, and general support from the Communities and Neighbourhoods Team at the City Council.

I pay tribute to Councillor Roy Darke's sterling efforts to improve the facilities available to the people on the Northway estate.

Councillor Roy Darke also spoke and said that he had been elected as Chair of the Community Association in March 2011. The Association had taken independent legal advice and following this a 25 year lease was put in place with a peppercorn rent. With regard to him not being the Chair, he said that an impromptu Annual General Meeting had also been held, which had not been advertised in accordance with the Community Associations Constitution and this matter was not being adjudicated on by the Charity Commission. He added that he would be happy to step down as Chair at the next AGM of the Community Association, but had only stood initially as there were not enough people interested to be Trustees.

119. EMPLOYMENT POLICIES

Council had before it a report of the Head of People and Equalities and an extract from the minutes of the City Executive Board held on 8th February 2012. (previously circulated, now appended).

Councillor Bob Price (Leader of the Council) moved and spoke to the City Executive Board's recommendations.

Council resolved:

- (a) To approve the following policies, agreed with Trade Unions, with immediate effect:

Maternity Policy
Adoption Policy
Paternity Policy
Parental Leave Procedures
Flexible Working Policy

- (b) To remove the Fixed Term Contract Policy and Procedure and Job Share Policy due to their contents now being included in other policies;
- (c) To authorise the Head of People and Equalities to implement the approved policies and procedures and make changes to the policies and procedures if required to correct any clerical mistakes or to reflect changes in the law.

120. HOUSING STRATEGY AND ACTION PLAN 2012-15

Council had before it a report of the Head of Housing and Communities and an extract from the minutes of the City Executive Board held on 4th April 2012. (previously circulated, now appended).

Councillor Joe McManners (Board Member, Housing Needs) moved and spoke to the City Executive Board's recommendation.

Council resolved:

- (a) To adopt into the Council's Policy Framework the Housing Strategy for 2012-2015;
- (b) To approve the Housing Strategy Action Plan for 2012-2015.

121. ALLOCATION OF PREVENTING HOMELESS GRANT AND OXFORD CITY GRANT FOR HOMELESS SERVICES

Council had before it a report of the Head of Housing and Communities and an extract from the minutes of the City Executive Board held on 4th April 2012.

Councillor Beverley Hazell declared a personal interest as she was an Oxford City Council appointed representative on Oxford Homeless Pathways.

Councillor Gill Sanders declared a personal interest as she was a City Council appointed Member on the Management Committee of the Gatehouse.

Councillor Val Smith declared a personal interest as she was an Oxford City Council appointed observer for O'Hanlon House and Stepping Stones.

Councillor Joe McManners (Board Member, Housing Needs) moved and spoke to the City Executive Board's recommendations.

Council resolved:

- (1) To approve the allocation of the homeless prevention grant for 2012/13 as follows:
 - (a) Street Services and Reconnection Team (Broadway Homelessness and Support) - £235,000
 - (b) Reconnection and Referral Co-ordinator (Under 25s) (in the process of assigning it to a provider) - £37,245
 - (c) Reconnection Rent (O'Hanlon House) - £512
 - (d) Six subsidised Beds for Under 25s (Simon House) - £4,243
 - (e) Six subsidised Beds for Under 25s (Lucy Faithful House) - £4,179
 - (f) Mental Health Practitioner at Luther Street – £25,000
 - (g) Two Education, Training and Employment Workers (Aspire) - £60,519
 - (h) One specialist Alcohol Worker (O'Hanlon House) - £8,555
 - (i) One Multiple Needs Hostel worker (Elmore Community Services) - £40,757
 - (j) Service Broker – Big Issue Foundation - £25,000
 - (k) Homelessness Liaison Police Officer (for two years with an operating budget of £5,000 for each year) - £90,000
 - (l) Elmore Team ASB Services - £8,690
 - (m) Additional Home Choice Gold Top-up - £20,000
 - (n) Continuation of Enhanced Options - £50,000
 - (o) Fraud Investigation - £80,000
 - (p) Supplementing Discretionary Housing Payments - £100,000

- (2) To approve the allocation of Oxford City Council's Homelessness Grant budget for 2011-12 as follows:
- (a) O'Hanlon House Day Centre – homeless hostel for 25+, jointly commissioned with Supporting People - £133,432
 - (b) One Foot Forward – homeless hostel for 16-25 year olds, jointly commissioned with Supporting People - £42,992
 - (c) Elmore Community Services – Complex Needs Floating Support Service for clients in Oxford City Council temporary and permanent stock - £40,757
 - (d) Elmore Community Services, Anti Social Behaviour Service – £11,310
 - (e) The Gatehouse – café for the homeless - £9,502
 - (f) 'Steppin' Stone – day centre providing emergency provision and meaningful activity - £55,000
 - (g) Simon House Hostel – provision of respite beds at an abstinence based hostel - £11,596
 - (h) Emmaus Oxford Furniture Store – recycling store attached to the Emmaus Community £25,000
 - (i) Aspire Oxfordshire – social enterprise providing work opportunities for homeless and ex-homeless people - £112,690
- (3) To delegate authority to the Head of Housing and Communities to allocate the £252,300 unallocated balance of the Communities and Local Government grant money and to make changes if necessary to the allocations of the City Council's homelessness grants budget.

122. ANNUAL LETTINGS PLAN - ALLOCATIONS PERCENTAGES 2012-13

Council had before it a report of the Head of Housing and Communities and an extract from the minutes of the City Executive Board held on 4th April 2012.

Councillor Joe McManners (Board Member, Housing Needs) moved and spoke to the City Executive Board's recommendations.

Council resolved:

- (a) To approve the Housing Lettings Plan for 2012/13;
- (b) To note performance against the Housing Lettings Plan for 2011/12;
- (c) To approve that the Strategic Director, City Regeneration and the Head of Housing and Communities, brief Oxford's Members of Parliament on the effect of the Government Housing Policies on housing need in Oxford and to advise those local organisations offering housing advice.

123. CORPORATE PLAN 2012-2016 - TARGETS

Council had before it a report of the Head of Business Improvement, an extract from the minutes of the City Executive Board held on 4th April 2012 and a report from the Finance and Performance Scrutiny Panel. (Previously circulated, now appended).

Councillor Nuala Young declared a personal interest as she derived a small income from the Tourist trade via the Tourist Information Centre.

Councillor Bob Price (Leader of the Council) moved and spoke to the City Executive Board's recommendations.

Councillor Stephen Brown as Chair of the Value and Performance Scrutiny Committee, spoke introduced and spoke to the report of the Finance and Performance Panel.

Council resolved to approve the proposed Corporate Plan Targets for 2012-2016.

124. CITY EXECUTIVE BOARD DECISIONS (MINUTES) AND SINGLE EXECUTIVE DECISIONS (MINUTES)

Council had before it minutes of the City Executive Board and Single Executive Member meetings held since the last meeting of Full Council.

City Executive Board decisions – 4th April 2012 (minutes)

- (a) Minute 94 – Scrutiny Report Recommendations. Councillor Jones welcomed that all of the recommendations from the Scrutiny Select Committee on Public Health had been endorsed by the City Executive Board and appreciated the involvement of Councillors Van Coulter and Val Smith in the preparation of these recommendations.
- (b) Minute 103 – The Green Deal – Delivery. Councillor Jean Fooks welcomed this and hoped that the City Council would develop coherent advice to give to people and endorsed the approach that the City Council was taking on this issue.

Single Executive Member Decisions (Minutes)

- (1) Minutes of the Single Executive Member Decision meeting (Board Member – Housing Needs) held on 15th February 2012.
- (2) Minutes of the Single Executive Member Decision meeting (Board Member – Cleaner Greener Oxford) held on 16th February 2012.
- (3) Minutes of the Single Executive Member Decision meeting (Board Member – Finance and Efficiency) held on 20th February 2012.

- (4) Minutes of the Single Executive Member Decision meeting (Board Member – Housing Needs) held on 27th February 2012.
- (5) Minutes of the Single Executive Member Decision meeting (Board Member – Finance and Efficiency) held on 2nd March 2012.
- (6) Minutes of the Single Executive Member Decision meeting (Board Member – Finance and Efficiency) held on 29th March 2012.

125. RECOMMENDATIONS AND REPORTS FROM SCRUTINY COMMITTEES

No reports submitted.

126. QUESTIONS ON NOTICE FROM MEMBERS OF COUNCIL

(a) Questions notified in time for replies to be provided

1. Question to the Board Member, Cleaner Green Oxford (Councillor John Tanner) from Councillor David Williams

Commercialisation of Services

Now that the Council has introduced charges for Pest Control and Garden Waste collection would the Portfolio Holder give an indication what other Council services he intends to 'commercialise'.

Could he confirm that in other Councils where this payment route to service delivery has been followed it has led to the Council withdrawing from provision of the service or its privatisation.

Would he acknowledge publicly that charging for these services has effectively depressed demand for actions that are generally for the common good.

Would he agree with me that if Mrs. Margaret Thatcher were the Rubbish Tsar in Oxford she would no doubt follow his policy directive. Could he explain how his free market actions seem rather counter to his socialist rhetoric.

Answer: The Garden Waste Collection Service has been a huge success with over 13,000 customers. The Council has continued to provide the service to those on Housing Benefit and Council Tax Benefit free of charge. It is a type of household waste for which a charge can be made. In Direct Services we already provide services from Building Maintenance, Engineering, commercial waste/recycling and provide MOT services. These areas we hope to expand in the coming years and it is not the Council's intention to outsource these services.

It has been demonstrated that the quality of services are high and that demand has increased. This is an encouraging start to a strategy which will help maintain jobs and raise the Council's profile of providing quality services.

Our strategy is to keep our Council Tax low to benefit all those who live and work in the City and to ensure that there are no compulsory redundancies, which so me are sound socialist policies that are delivering these objectives.

On response to a supplementary question from Councillor Williams, Councillor Tanner said that there was no evidence that the charge was suppressing demand, but he agreed with Councillor Williams that it was not a service that should be charged for and encouraged him to join him in getting rid of the Coalition Government.

2. Question to the Board Member, Cleaner Greener Oxford (Councillor John Tanner) and the Board Member for Housing Needs (Councillor Joe McManners) from Councillor Jean Fooks

Water butts

As Oxford is now subject to a hosepipe ban, would the City Council consider providing water butts on request for Council properties, to help tenants water their gardens? Should water butts not be recommended too for all new housing, to reduce tapwater usage generally?"

Answer: We do stipulate some water conservation measures in new build, and I agree that for our own new build it should be part of the plans as far as possible.

For tenants who request water butts, we will look if there is room in the HRA to fund them (which would also require fitting)

In response to a supplementary question from Councillor Fooks concerning additional publicity, Councillor McManners agreed to ask officers to investigate the costs involved.

3. Question to the Board Member, Finance and Efficiency (Councillor Ed Turner) from Councillor Dick Wolff

Single Person Tax Discount

Could the Portfolio Holder clarify if Oxford City Council will abolish the Single Persons Council Tax discount?

Answer: The Local Government Finance Act 1992 (section 11) states that a discount of 25% is applicable when there is only one resident of the dwelling. This provision has not been affected by the technical changes to Council Tax contained within the Local Government Finance Bill that was published on 19/12/11. Thus we

have no discretion to abolish the Single Persons Discount, and would not intend to anyway.

4. Question to the Board Member, Finance and Efficiency (Councillor Ed Turner) from Councillor David Williams

Redundancy Pot of Money

Could the portfolio holder explain why there is over £750,000 placed in the Labour Party's Budget for redundancy payments when the stated aim of the Administration is that in future the reductions in spending will be achieved by 'natural wastage' (i.e. people resigning, moving on to other jobs or retirement to an occupational pension) rather than voluntary or compulsory redundancies.

Would he agree with me that this seems an unnecessary pot of money unless a very large number of redundancies for lower paid workers is envisaged or there are to be large scale payouts to very senior staff in their 50s who are willing to take voluntary redundancy cheques?

Could he confirm that no senior officers will be offered redundancy cheques and that large numbers of low paid workers will not be made redundant shortly after the May elections.

Answer: The Council remains committed to minimising the requirement for any redundancies, and in particular compulsory redundancies. As confirmed in the Medium Term Financial Strategy and the Budget (including proposals from all political groups) there is an on-going programme of post reductions (110 FTE over 4 years in the agreed version) made in full consultation with the trade unions; it is expected that many of these post reductions will be achieved by "natural wastage", as staff naturally leave the organisation, but there will be some redundancies. Indeed, the larger the contingency, the easier it is for the council to offer voluntary, rather than compulsory redundancies. It is obviously prudent to retain a contingency fund for severance costs as they arise. No new programme of redundancies is proposed or envisaged. Each redundancy is only authorised on the basis that business case gives rise to savings, factoring in the cost of the severance.

Councillor Williams in a supplementary question asked if there were no compulsory redundancies, why was there the need to have the money. In response Councillor Turner said that the Council had to make cost savings on a planned basis due to the Government cuts in funding. He explained that in the agreed Mid-Term Financial Statement, 100 plus posts had been identified over 4 years and this again was also in the budget papers which Council had. He said that there had been a large number of redundancies put forward in budget amendments which had not been agreed. He further added that there was an existing programme of efficiency savings and there were no new plans to add to this. He

concluded by urging Members to read the e-mail from Unison concerning the introduction of the Universal Credit and how this could mean the loss of staff.

5. Question to the Leader of the Council (Councillor Bob Price) from Councillor David Williams

Travesty of Democracy

Does the Leader of the Council agree with Councillor Tanner's public denunciation of single member decision making committees as a 'Travesty of Democracy'?

Answer: Single-member executive decisions are allowed for in the regulations governing local authority constitutions. Since they are governed by all the other regulations relating to executive decisions such as publication in advance and public attendance at the decision making meeting, it would be straining logic to define as any less democratic than executive decisions taken at a cabinet or executive board meeting. Councillor Tanner's point was more directed at the way in which the formulation of the recommendation to the single member concerned had been arrived at than the format of the meeting.

6. Question to the Leader of the Council (Councillor Bob Price) from Councillor Dick Wolf

Break up of the Occupy the City of London Campaign

Does the Portfolio Holder regret, as I do, the removal; of the Occupy protest camp outside St. Paul's Cathedral, which was so effectively drawing attention to the disastrous impact of what Prime Minister Gordon Brown once praised as a "new golden age for the City of London"?

Would he agree with me that since the early 1980's successive Conservative and Labour governments have, through 'light touch' regulation, transferred too many levers of power into the control of an unaccountable global finance industry, and that for all its talk the present Coalition Government is showing no real intention of constraining that industry's excesses and chicanery?

Answer: The origins of the banking and finance crisis can be traced back to the so-called Big Bang driven by the Thatcher government and associated measures taken in the US at the same time. These changes led to the development of increasingly complex financial tools and processes in the last decade of the 20th century and the first decade of this century. As one of the world's major financial centres, the City of London was at the heart of these developments, and the growth of employment, turnover and profitability in the City in that period was a key feature of the development of the UK economy from which significant wider public benefit was derived. It is a sobering reflection on the weakness of international financial regulation that no national or

international body had the analytical or constitutional capacity to intervene in a system built on a derivatives structure underpinned by unsustainable property valuations and reckless lending policies. The St Pauls protesters, as well as many other campaign groups around the world, and Socialist politicians such as the French presidential candidates, Francois Hollande and Jean-Luc Melanchon, are doing a great service to the global community by maintaining a clear spotlight on the need for a globally integrated system of controls on international financial capitalism.

7. Question to the Leader of the Council (Councillor Bob Price) from Councillor Jean Fooks

The Military Covenant and housing

Oxford City Council has signed the Military Covenant along with Oxfordshire County Council and the other districts. I think we all recognise the particular difficulties facing ex-military personnel on leaving the service, after many years being accommodated by the MOD. Although the covenant does not, and was not intended to, give ex-military personnel priority in social housing, it does imply that their particular needs should be given sympathetic consideration. I am very concerned that City Council staff should be trained to recognise that ex-military personnel may need more guidance than others in finding accommodation in Oxford's very difficult housing situation. Can we be assured that the City Council will recognise their particular situation and treat them with the same sympathetic understanding that they display to other potentially vulnerable applicants?"

Answer: Oxford City Council has signed and supports the Military Covenant, and ensures that members of the armed forces are assisted in their housing priority-for example we do not apply local connection rules which could disadvantage service personnel who move and do not spend long in the local area.

Oxford has exceptionally high housing demand, and is the least affordable location in the UK, outside parts of London. We have over 6,000 households on our Housing Register. This year we expect to have 550 council or housing association homes available to let. With 475 households assessed as having exceptional or urgent need (Band 1 or 2), we already have over 100 households in emergency homeless temporary accommodation. This number is rising with the cuts to housing and welfare benefits. In addition, we have a further 1,475 households assessed with a significant housing need (Band 3), which includes severely overcrowded families and homeless persons who need to leave the city's frontline hostels. The Government's new Right to Buy scheme and the removal of the previous limit on discounts will increase the sale of Council homes and reduce the amount of rented homes available in the city. The Council keeps its Allocations Policy under review, and further Government guidance is expected later this year.

It is not practical to put service personnel automatically at the front of the queue but housing officers will treat veterans with respect and sympathy and help as much as they can within the limited resources. Officers recently met with other Oxfordshire Districts, the County Council, and a representative of the armed services on this issue. As a result of this meeting, it was agreed that the City and Districts would:

Develop an information pack for members of the armed forces, work more closely with the military information service to ensure that they are aware of policies and processes and place information relevant to armed forces personnel seeking housing on the relevant web sites.

8. Question to the Board Member, Customer Services and Regeneration (Councillor Val Smith) from Councillor Jean Fooks

Lost forms

I am becoming aware of several cases of forms being lost by the Housing benefits and allocation services. What action is being taken to ensure that forms, once delivered, are not lost but reach the right person and are dealt with as they should be? What checking is in place to ensure that the citizen concerned is informed if an expected form does not reach the intended member of staff?

Response: There are no reported incidents of lost Housing Benefits forms either in the back office or the Customer Service Centres, or lost allocation forms that may come into the Customer Service Centres.

In terms of the Housing Benefit Service, any documentation that is sent in by post, will be delivered to the Council's Post Room in the first instance, and this is then given to the Customer Services Scanning Team. The standard is to scan documentation received and return any original documentation within 24 hours.

In terms of any evidence brought in person, this is either copied on the spot and the originals handed back to the customer. Alternatively, if the customer does not want to wait, the customer can place their documentation in a sealed envelope. These items are then passed into the relevant back office service (i.e. either the Benefits or Allocations Team) deliveries being made twice daily.

In terms of Housing Benefit, if we are expecting evidence to be supplied, a diary note will be made of this on our software, and if not received by the due date the customer will be contacted for it.

The Housing Benefit Service is moving towards risk based verification in the next couple of months. It is anticipated that the introduction of this way of working will mean that circa 55% of what will be classed low risk claims will only need to provide proof of

identity, production of a National Insurance Number and if they are a student formal confirmation of status. In addition, we are also going to introduce the opportunity for customers to make a housing benefit claim on-line. Both of these initiatives will significantly reduce the amount of paper that we are currently processing. If the Member has any further cases, then she should inform me.

9. Question to the Leader of the Council (Councillor Bob Price) from Councillor David Williams

Improvement in the reduction of staff absences

Although there is a long way to go would the Leader of the Council join with me in praising the relevant officers of the Council in the recent improvements in attendance levels (days off work), keeping the number of registered homelessness figures down in the face of major changes to the Housing Benefit System and the increasing use of the Council Web page references?

Response: This reduction is a good example of management action across the Council and achieved an attendance improvement of 40% over the past 3 years. This will be maintained through the work being undertaken through the Wellbeing Programme, but we still have a long way to go on the use of the Council's website.

Councillor Williams in a supplementary question said that when something happens that is good we should congratulate the Officers, for example in holding down the number of homeless in the City which is something that we should be proud of. In response Councillor Price said that we neglect at our peril not to show staff that Members had confidence in them and to congratulate them on improvements etc.

127. STATEMENTS ON NOTICE FROM MEMBERS OF COUNCIL

Councillor Jean Fooks made the following statement to Council.

Adoption of road in Cutteslowe

Many years ago the then Chiltern Hundreds Housing Association bought the site of the demolished Cutteslowe Court old people's home in Cutteslowe and acquired four bungalows and some disused Council garages accessed along Wyatt Road to enlarge the land available for development. After some time planning approval was given for 33 units of social housing, all for rent, namely three and four-bedroom houses and good-sized two bedroom flats. These were built and occupied in 2008, with very many young children in both the houses and the flats. Almost immediately the residents expressed concerns about the speed of traffic coming along Wyatt Road round a blind corner onto the estate – where the children played on the paved road due to lack of an allocated play space. Vehicles parked on this narrow access road and this created a further hazard due to poor visibility. As local councillors Councillor McCready and I

asked for traffic calming measures and some yellow lines to prevent obstructive and dangerous parking.

It eventually transpired that the section of road between Jackson Road and the houses on the estate still belonged to the city council. The County Council are willing to adopt this road, so that traffic calming and yellow lines can be considered, but require the road to be brought up to adoptable standard first. This is estimated to cost about £15,000, to redo the pavement and resurface the road. Paradigm Housing Association, the current owners of the estate, have brought their roads up to adoptable standard but the County Council cannot adopt them until the link road to Jackson Road is adopted too. The City Council is not willing to fund the necessary work, despite this being necessary to finish the job of providing social housing for our citizens.

We understand that this may be an unusual situation but the City Council's failure to accept any responsibility for this short piece of road, despite being the owners, is putting tenants, and especially their children, at risk. I ask that this work be considered a priority just as soon as funds are available in the new financial year.

Following the Statement by Councillor Fooks, Councillor Turner said that this was a suggestion that the Council should spend money and should be considered during the next round, but added if the possibility arose sooner then it should not have to wait.

128. PETITIONS

None were submitted for debate.

129. MOTIONS ON NOTICE

Council had before it nine Motions on Notice and reached decisions as follows.

(1) Democratic Structures for Oxford City Council – (Proposer – Councillor Nuala Young, seconded by Councillor David Williams)

Oxford City Council recognises that the recent changes to decision making have been undemocratic and would seek (as made possible under the Localism Act) to return to a more open and fair system of local government that encourages participation and engagement by the Community.

The Council will.

- (1) No longer invest powers in a single 'Strong Leader'. Such powers will be devolved amongst service committees focused on specific Council functions.
- (2) Return to decision making focused on all party representative committees reflecting the political balance on the Council with committees reflecting service delivery with a central policy committee to set strategic objectives.

- (3) Restore the Area Committees with their officer support, devolved budget and planning powers along with other additional devolved powers.
- (4) The Council will return to a six week cycle with 8 meetings a year one of which will be a distinct budget setting Council.
- (5) Restore the duty on planning officers to inform those residents adjacent to and near to a proposed planning allocation.

A report on the Constitutional Changes required to implement these changes, to be brought to the present City Executive Board for implementation in the autumn period.

Councillor Stephen Brown move an amendment as follows:

To delete paragraph 3 and replace with the following words:

Will devolve power to democratically accountable Community Assemblies, and give them control over local spending such that residents and community groups in every part of Oxford can achieve real improvements in their own area. Using provisions in the Localism Act, local control will be established over key planning decisions, grants to community bodies, street cleaning, community centre management, highway maintenance and management of parks. These Community Assemblies will be responsive to local needs and priorities, and will encourage areas to develop their own Neighbourhood Plans.

The mover of the substantive Motion, Councillor Nuala Young, accepted the amendment by Councillor Stephen Brown. Following a debate, Council voted:

- (a) To not adopt the amendment by Councillor Stephen Brown;
- (b) To not adopt the substantive Motion by Councillor Nuala Young.

(2) Temple Cowley Pools – (Proposer – Councillor David Williams, seconded by Councillor Nuala Young)

Given the escalating cost of the project to build a new swimming Pool at Blackbird Leys, the growing public opposition to the proposal and the pending legal actions against the scheme, this Council will abandon the proposed development and will commence the refurbishment of Temple Cowley Pools and the existing Blackbird Leys pool.

The estimated cost of refurbishment and contract withdrawal being taken from the capital allocation set aside for the building of the proposed new pool at Blackbird Leys.

Following a debate, Council voted and the Motion was not to adopted.

(3) Ecocide – (Proposer – Councillor Matt Morton, seconded by Councillor Nuala Young)

The International Criminal Court was formed in 2002 to prosecute individuals for breaches of 4 Crimes against Peace. They are: Genocide, Crimes against Humanity, War Crimes and Crimes of Aggression. Ecocide has been proposed as the missing 5th crime against peace.

There is a proposed amendment, which if accepted will add Ecocide as a crime against peace. This will change the way the earth is exploited and allow big business to avoid harmful practice and still fulfill their legal obligations to shareholders. In order to pass a 2/3rd majority is needed, and the UK could play a major role in tipping the balance.

This council believes that this amendment is an important step in ensuring the future sustainability of Oxford city and the global environment. We ask the executive to contact the 2 MP's for Oxford to ask them to support the UK diplomatic service in supporting this amendment in the UN.

Following a debate, Council voted and the Motion was adopted.

(4) Boating Community – (Proposer – Councillor Matt Morton, seconded by Councillor David Williams)

The boating community and residential boaters are an integral part of the character of the City of Oxford yet, in a time of growing housing need, their welfare is often overlooked in City provision.

In light of this situation, Council resolves:

- (1) to re-direct the £44,000 allocated in the recent budget for an extra riverbank enforcement officer to a new welfare and support worker post dedicated to supporting residential boat dwellers.
- (2) that the welfare and support worker post will include an understanding of the needs and challenges residential boat dwellers face and what support is available to them.

Following a debate, Council voted and the Motion was not adopted.

(5) Times Safer Cycling Campaign – (Proposer – Councillor Val Smith)

This Motion was taken with Motion 8 – Oxford Cycle City Project.

This Council supports the Times newspaper safer cycling campaign.

Following a debate, Council voted and the Motion was adopted.

(6) NHS PFI Loan Programme – (Proposer – Councillor David Williams, seconded by Councillor Nuala Young)

The NHS in Oxfordshire faces years of financial pressure which will inevitably affect the quality of health care for the people of Oxfordshire.

One of the larger elements of pressure comes from the need for Oxford University Hospitals NHS Trust to pay at least £53 million per years to the owners of its PFI facilities. PFI paymentst are inflated by the profits taken by the owners and the very higher interest rates required from private

companies compared to public entities such as local councils.

Northumberland County Council, have recently provided a loan to Northumbria Healthcare Trust to secure savings from its PFI contracts and to help buy out part of the contractual obligations. The Government, although accepting that PFI deals are a crippling burden on local Health Carer Trusts, would appear to be making no provision to buy out PFI contracts or ease the burden on NHS Trusts. In view of this fact Oxford City Council would seek to investigate in conjunction with the County Council and other District Council if it could use its investment portfolio to formulate a loan scheme that would reflect the Northumbrian NHS investment programme.

This City Council therefore requests that the CEB appoint a working Party of appropriate members and officers to investigate with colleagues from the County Council and Oxford University Hospitals Trust, the potential for savings to be made through provision of a loan support investment package funded by the Oxfordshire local authorities to ease PFI burdens but still return a reasonable dividend to local council coffers.

Councillor Ed Turner moved an amendment as follows:

To delete the final paragraph and inset a new paragraph with:

Council therefore requests that officers investigate the feasibility of a loan support investment package, including appropriate dialogue with the Hospitals Trust and other local authorities, and report back to the leaders of political groups upon the outcome of this exercise, so that work can be progressed if feasible and appropriate.

The mover of the substantive Motion, Councillor David Williams accepted the amendment by Councillor Ed Turner. Following a debate, Council voted and the amended Motion was adopted as follows:

“The NHS in Oxfordshire faces years of financial pressure which will inevitably affect the quality of health care for the people of Oxfordshire.

One of the larger elements of pressure comes from the need for Oxford University Hospitals NHS Trust to pay at least £53 million per years to the owners of its PFI facilities. PFI paymentst are inflated by the profits taken by the owners and the very higher interest rates required from private companies compared to public entities such as local councils.

Northumberland County Council, have recently provided a loan to Northumbria Healthcare Trust to secure savings from its PFI contracts and to help buy out part of the contractual obligations. The Government, although accepting that PFI deals are a crippling burden on local Health Carer Trusts, would appear to be making no provision to buy out PFI contracts or ease the burden on NHS Trusts. In view of this fact Oxford City Council would seek to investigate in conjunction with the County Council and other District Council if it could use its investment portfolio to formulate a loan scheme that would reflect the Northumbrian NHS investment programme.

Council therefore requests that officers investigate the feasibility of a loan support investment package, including appropriate dialogue with the Hospitals Trust and other local authorities, and report back to the leaders of political groups upon the outcome of this exercise, so that work can be progressed if feasible and appropriate”.

(7) Scrutiny – (Proposer – Councillor David Williams, seconded by Councillor Dick Wolff)

Oxford City Council, recognising that all of its members have been elected to play an active part in the formation and implementation of Council policies, believes that Scrutiny is an important part of the democratic process. This is especially true now that one-person committees have been introduced, extra powers given to the Council Leader and that decision-making has been concentrated in the hands of a small group of majority party councillors, thereby distancing 'backbench' and opposition councillors from discussion and decision-making. Now that Area Committees have been abolished and many powers such as planning centralised in fewer committees dominated by the majority party, it is especially important to ensure that a robust and effective system is in place for assessing Council performance across the whole city (not just those parts represented by the majority party), and for monitoring the impact of existing and proposed Council policies.

With this clear democratic need made more obvious by the continued centralisation it is most important to resist moves to reduce the number, briefs and powers of the already reduced in number Scrutiny Committees and to make a commitment that this Council will maintain at least two existing major scrutiny panels with the present criteria for review undiminished along with the 'call in' principle for ward spend allocations, planning decisions and single members 'committees'.

Councillor Stephen Brown moved an amendment as follows:

To delete the final paragraph and replace with the following paragraph:

'While noting the above, this Council defers any decision on Scrutiny Structure until a review of the current Decision Making Structure is carried out and the re-introduction of Committee Decision Making, in some form, is considered.'

Councillor Bob Price moved an amendment as follows:

To delete all of the words after the first sentence in the first paragraph of the Motion.

Councillor David Williams Motion on Notice was not considered nor was Councillor Stephen Brown's and Bob Price's amendments as the time allowed by the Constitution for Motions on Notice had lapsed.

(8) Oxford Cycle City Project – (Proposer – Councillor Graham Jones, seconder Councillor Jean Fooks)

This Motion was taken with Motion 5 – Times Safer Cycling Campaign.

This council applauds the work already done by officers and stakeholders on the Oxford Cycle City project;

asks officers to refine further the prioritised list of schemes through consultation with local communities and ward councillors as well as the excellent involvement of organisations such as Cyclox and Sustrans – not least on local infrastructure;

welcomes the many positive ideas set out in a letter to local authorities by the Cycling Minister, Norman Baker, and the moneys for encouraging and improving cycling earmarked by the Coalition government;

urges the inclusion of a city-centre cycle hub and more cycle stands further up the list of priorities;

notes the recent unanimous vote of the county council to work closely with districts on these issues;

and calls on the County Council, in consultation with Cyclox and the City Council, to take measures to implement in Oxford *The Times* eight-point plan for making “Cities fit for Cycling”, and to respond to cyclists’ concerns in relation to shared space proposals such as those for Frideswide Square.

Following a debate, Council voted, and the Motion was adopted.

(9) Council Estate Management – (Proposer – Councillor Stuart McCready, seconder Councillor Jean Fooks)

Up until the start of the 2011/12 financial year, twelve estate managers provided a landlord presence that reached all Council housing in Oxford. The estate manager visited frequently and kept a constant pro-active eye out for problems and knew which department had the solutions. Tenants knew who their estate manager was and could depend on getting a reply when they asked their estate manager to visit, see what a given problem was, and provide advice, help and advocacy in identifying and dealing with the City departments that had the solutions.

For the past year we have had only five estate managers for the whole City, and the emphasis has been on tenants identifying and contacting for themselves the specialist team most likely to help with a given problem - and then they cannot be sure of dealing with the same person twice in a row. This has meant that tenants are faced with a more fragmented, and consequently less effective, landlord service. There is a sense on some estates that cases that were progressing when an estate manager was on the case have stalled and even very simple matters sometimes seem a bewildering challenge to get seen to.

The Council therefore requests officers to investigate restructuring the landlord function to ensure that every tenant has a single familiar officer to whom they can reliably turn for a home visit and advice when they need help or service from the Housing Department.

Councillor Stuart McCready's Motion on Notice was not considered nor as the time allowed by the Constitution for Motions on Notice had lapsed.

130. REPORTS AND QUESTIONS ABOUT ORGANISATIONS THE COUNCIL IS REPRESENTED ON

None raised.

131. SENIOR MANAGEMENT RESTRUCTURES - DELEGATION

The Head of Law and Governance had submitted a report (previously circulated, now appended) which proposed an amendment to the Council's Constitution that would have the effect of granting the Chief Executive authority to implement organisational changes at senior levels of the Council.

Council resolved to adopt with immediate effect the proposed amendment to the Council's Constitution and to authorise the Monitoring Officer to amend the Constitution accordingly.

132. REGULATION OF INVESTIGATORY POWERS ACT 2000 - 1ST APRIL 2011 TO 31ST MARCH 2012

The Head of Law and Governance has submitted a report which reports the Council's application of its powers under the Regulation of Investigatory Powers Act 2000.

Council is asked to note the use of its powers under the Regulation of Investigatory Powers Act 2000 (RIPA) during the period 1st April 2011 to 31st March 2012.

The meeting started at 5.00 pm and ended at 9.15 pm