

QUESTIONS TO COUNCIL FROM MEMBERS OF THE PUBLIC UNDER COUNCIL PROCEDURE RULE 11.11 TO BE TAKEN UNDER AGENDA ITEM 14

1. Question to the Leader of the Council (Councillor Bob Price) from Andrew McKay.

Carfax by-election

The recent Carfax by-election was held at a time when the vast majority of the ward's electorate were not in residence. This is because the Carfax ward is dominated by a student population who are absent from Oxford during the summer. Registered voters in this ward who are students have complained that the by-election's timing meant they were unaware it was even being held. Given this and the by-election's historically low turnout, does the Council accept that this election failed effectively to capture the democratic will of the citizens of Carfax ward?

Response

Once the request for a poll is received from the requisite number of electors, who can be from any party or no party at all, the Returning Officer has no discretion in the timing of a by-election. It is of course impossible to know what the outcome of the by-election would have been if held at another time, and therefore not possible to tell whether the democratic will of the electorate that was expressed clearly on September 4th would have been the same if held later or earlier.

2. Question to the Leader of the Council (Councillor Bob Price) from Sietske Boeles

Oxford Core Strategy

Does the Leader of the Council agree with South Oxford(shire) District Council that the Oxford Core Strategy is out of date as is it has no regard for the Duty to Cooperate as set out in the Localism Act?

Response

The Core Strategy is not out of date. The Localism Act and National Planning Policy Framework establish criteria against which a Local Plan is tested for soundness. Our 20 year strategy has been re-assessed against these criteria and we have concluded that the Core Strategy that was adopted in 2011 after an independent public inquiry is fully compliant with national legislation and guidance.

The City Council undertook a considerable amount of engagement with its local authority neighbours and other stakeholders while the Core Strategy was being prepared. This amounted to the same process now being termed as the duty to cooperate by the Localism Act. This engagement with, in particular SODC, involved considerable dialogue about the need for support from other districts in meeting that part of Oxford's considerable housing need, which could not be accommodated within the City's administrative area. This led to the Central Oxfordshire chapter of the SE Regional Plan, that was adopted by the Secretary of State of the day, including a policy for a Strategic Development Area for 4,000 houses on land South of Grenoble Road. This was then picked up through in a specific section of the draft Core Strategy enabling such an urban extension to be integrated into the fabric of the City.

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