

## OXFORD CITY FULL COUNCIL MEETING 13 APRIL 2015

### AGENDA ITEM 16: QUESTIONS ON NOTICE FROM MEMBERS OF COUNCIL

#### Board member for Educational Attainment and Youth Ambition (Councillor Pat Kennedy)

##### 1. From Councillor Gant to Councillor Kennedy

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

##### **Response**

I should like to thank Councillor Gant for again raising the issue of poor performance of primary schools in the city. However, the schools which we supported made substantial improvements. Between 2012 and 2014, the schools which followed our education attainment programme saw a 10 percentage point increase in the number of children achieving level 2 in reading, writing and maths at age 7, from 65 to 75%. This contrasts with a 4 percentage point increase across Oxfordshire primaries. And the same schools saw a 4 percentage point increase in level 4 in reading, writing and maths at age 11, from 59 to 63%, as against a single percentage point increase across the county. This indicates that educational attainment in the most disadvantaged schools in the city can be raised by consistent and appropriate teaching methods. We hope that these improvements will provide a sound basis for bringing the performance of these schools closer to the county wide average.

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

## **Board member for Housing and Estate Regeneration (Councillor Scott Seamons)**

### **2. From Councillor Fooks to Councillor Seamons**

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

#### **Response**

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

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

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

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

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

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

### **3. From Councillor Hollick to Councillor Seamons**

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

#### **Response**

The Council's government contribution for DHP funding has reduced from £515k in 2014/15, to £288k for 2015/16. The Council is increasing the funding available for DHP's by providing an additional amount of £150k from Homelessness Prevention Funding, and £80k from the HRA, which makes a

total of £518k. This significantly exceeds the DHP expenditure for 2014/15 of £462k, and so should be more than sufficient.

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

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

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

#### **4. From Councillor Thomas to Councillor Seamons**

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

#### **Response**

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

<b>Sites and Housing Policy</b>	<b>Site</b>	<b>Owner</b>	<b>Capacity (dwellings) SHLAA Dec 2014</b>
<b>SP1</b>	Avis site	Christ Church College	12
<b>SP2</b>	Banbury Road Sites	University of Oxford	42
<b>SP9</b>	Court Place Gardens	University of Oxford	46
<b>SP14</b>	Diamond Place and Ewert House	University of Oxford (part) remainder Oxford City Council	100
<b>SP17</b>	Faculty of Music	University of Oxford	19 (or 100 student rooms)

<b>SP22</b>	Jesus College Sports Ground	Jesus College	24
<b>SP27</b>	Land off Manor Place	Merton College	40 (or 200 student rooms)
<b>SP28</b>	Lincoln College Sports Ground	Lincoln College	112
<b>SP40</b>	Oriel College land at Edward St and High St	Oriel College	7
<b>SP53</b>	Summertown House	University of Oxford	5
<b>SP61</b>	West Wellington Square	University of Oxford	13
<b>SP63</b>	Wolvercote Paper Mill	University of Oxford	190
		<b>TOTAL DWELLINGS</b>	<b>610</b>

**5. From Councillor Thomas to Councillor Seamons**

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

**Response**

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

**6. From Councillor Thomas to Councillor Seamons**

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

**Response**

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

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

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

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

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

**7. From Councillor Thomas to Councillor Seamons**

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

**Response**

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

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

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

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

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

**8. From Councillor Thomas to Councillor Seamons**

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

**Response**

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

**9. From Councillor Hollick to Councillor Seamons**

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

**Response**

The Council does not record 'relocations outside of the City or outside of Oxford' but does seek to assist a considerable number of households in housing need and either homeless or at risk of homelessness in a number of ways – often very focused on preventing or relieving their homelessness. In relation to assisting families to access private rented accommodation through the provision of a deposit or bond, through the Council's Home Choice scheme

– in 14/15, of the 95 new households assisted to find homes, 52 of these were in Oxford; 24 in other parts of Oxfordshire; and 19 elsewhere in the country. Most such moves are mutually agreed with the customer, but 12 of these moves were undertaken with the Council formally discharging its homeless duty through a Private Rented Sector Offer (PRSO). Of these 12, 2 were for offers in Oxfordshire districts and 10 were beyond Oxfordshire, in the next rental markets with suitable available homes at LHA rates.

**10. From Councillor Thomas to Councillor Seamons**

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

**Response**

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

**11. From Councillor Benjamin to Councillor Seamons**

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

**Response (as for Q28)**

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

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

## **Board member for Crime and Community Response (Councillor Dee Sinclair)**

### **12. From Councillor Brandt to Councillor Sinclair**

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

#### **Response**

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

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

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

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

### **13. From Councillor Brandt to Councillor Sinclair**

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

#### **Response**

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

## **Board member for Cleaner, Greener Oxford, Climate Change and Transport (Councillor John Tanner)**

### **14. From Councillor Upton to Councillor Tanner**

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

### **Response**

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

- 1) Tunnelling under the centre of Oxford is a costly nonsense which will damage the beautiful heart of Oxford and destroy archaeology.
- 2) The County are right about the increase in journeys in future but the Rapid Transit Buses (RTB) they propose will not provide the number of extra buses and seats that are needed. It is too early to rule out trams in the future.
- 3) The new Oxford Transport Strategy (OTS) does not make it clear which modes of transport should have most priority. We want to give priority to pedestrians, cyclists and buses especially during rush hours.
- 4) The City Council wants a speedy end to the effective moratorium on urgently needed improvements for cyclists on Oxford's roads.



- 5) The City Council supports the same balanced transport policy for the Headington hospitals and the Cowley business park that has operated successfully for the city centre for many years. At present very many people who work in the eastern arc have little choice but to drive.
- 6) The County's latest OTS has failed to indicate sensible routes for the RTBs. Using crowded roads like the Cowley Road and London Road, or driving a bus lane across a golf course and nature reserve in Lye Valley, are unworkable.
- 7) The City Council will continue to keep open its Park & Rides (P & R) in the city. Indeed we want to expand Seacourt P & R. But we also support more P &Rs beyond Oxford.
- 8) We support some ideas in the OTS such as more electric vehicles, cleaner air, a passenger rail link to Cowley and consulting about a work-place parking levy. We are opposed to road pricing as an unworkable burden on car drivers and businesses.

15. From Councillor Fooks to Councillor Tanner

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

**Response**

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

16. From Cllr Simmons to Councillor John Tanner

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

**Response**

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

**17. From Cllr Gant to Councillor John Tanner**

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

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

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

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

**Response**

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

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

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

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

**18. From Cllr Simmons to Councillor John Tanner**

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

**Response**

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

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

**19. From Cllr Simmons to Councillor John Tanner**

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

**Response**

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

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

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

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

**Deputy Leader of the Council, (Councillor Ed Turner)**

**20. From Councillor Fooks to Councillor Turner**

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

**Response**

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

## **Leader of the Council, Corporate Strategy, Economic Development and Planning (Councillor Bob Price)**

### **21. From Councillor Wilkinson to Councillor Price**

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

#### **Response**

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

### **22. From Councillor Wilkinson to Councillor Price**

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

#### **Response**

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

### **23. From Councillor Hollick to Councillor Price**

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

#### **Response**

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

### **24. From Councillor Fooks to Councillor Price**

At the recent Examination into the Northern Gateway Area Action plan, it became clear that there was a wide range of possible figures on the number of jobs to be created. As this will determine the scale of transport infrastructure improvements needed to meet the Core Strategy Inspector's criterion of

'Development is dependent upon the securing of measures designed to mitigate the impact on the local and strategic road networks, acceptable to both the Highways Agency and Highways Authority', it is a very important figure which needs to be agreed before any approval can be given for development on the site. Estimates range between 3,500 and 'over 8,000' as said by you at the recent Oxford Strategic Partnership event in the Town Hall. Which is the figure to which the highways authority and the Highways Agency should be working in developing the necessary infrastructure?

### **Response**

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

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

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

### **25. From Councillor Fooks to Councillor Price**

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

### **Response**

The report to City Executive Board on 12th March 2015 on the 'Allocation of Homelessness Prevention Funds in 2015' set out the proposed spending plans for the coming year. This was approved by the Board. Delegated authority was granted to the Head of Housing and Property Services in consultation with the Board member for Housing and Estate Regeneration to allocate any balance in the Preventing Homelessness Funds. This is unlikely to apply in this year, as

the report shows that expenditure will broadly equate to the funding available in-year. Any spending of accrued balances from this year or previous years will follow the financial delegations as set out in the Council's Constitution, with any spend over £500,000 requiring the approval of the City Executive Board.

**26. From Councillor Gant to Councillor Price**

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

**Response**

The evidence from the analysis of the KRM programme shows clearly that, in the two schools which stuck to the programme throughout the period, more rapid progress was recorded than in the rest of the city and elsewhere. There is no proposal to continue the KRM programme in schools which do not wish to adopt it.

**27. From Councillor Gant to Councillor Price**

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

**Response**

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

**28. From Councillor Gant to Councillor Price**

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

**Response (as for Q10)**

The City Council's Sites and Housing Plan Policy HP3 is clear that a minimum of 50% of dwellings on larger sites should be provided as affordable housing, (40% at social rent and 10% as intermediate housing) although exceptions will

be made if it can be robustly demonstrated that this makes a site unviable . This policy will apply to the Oxpens site as to other housing sites in the city.

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

**29. From Councillor Simmons to Councillor Price**

Will the Council be reviewing its processes with respect to gender equality after someone was initially turned away from a housing interview because they no longer identified as the gender listed on their birth certificate (and did not possess a passport) and were thus unable to provide the requested proof of identity? (Note: In the end, housing accepted a National Insurance number but apparently this is not normal procedure).

**Response**

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

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

**30. From Councillor Benjamin to Councillor Price**

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

**Response**

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

**31. From Councillor Benjamin to Councillor Price**

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

**Response**

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

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

**32. From Councillor Benjamin to Councillor Price**

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

**Response**

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

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