

**To: Council**

**Date: 28 January 2018**

**Title of Report: Public addresses and questions that do not relate to matters for decision – as submitted by the speakers and with written responses from Board Members**

## **Introduction**

1. Addresses made by members of the public to the Council, and questions put to the Board members or Leader, registered by the deadline in the Constitution, are below. Any written responses available are also below.
2. The text reproduces that sent in the speakers and represents the views of the speakers. This is not to be taken as statements by or on behalf of the Council
3. This report was republished after the Council meeting as part of the minutes pack. This lists the full text of speeches delivered as submitted, summaries of speeches delivered which differ significantly from those submitted, and summaries of any further responses.

## **Addresses and questions to be taken in Part 2 of the agenda.**

### Addresses in part 2

1. Address by Dr Sheikh Ramzy – defining Islamophobia
2. Address by Joanna Holmes - Climate Change - urgent action needed
3. Address by Linnet Drury - declaring a climate emergency
4. Address by Artwell - Barton Royal British Legion building
5. Address by Judith Harley - ROAD NAME FOR TEMPLE COWLEY POOLS SLIP ROAD

### Questions in part 2

6. Question from Artwell – consultancy costs

## **Addresses in part 2**

## **1. Address by Dr Sheikh Ramzy – defining Islamophobia**

Respected and honourable members of the Oxford City Council

I greet you with Islamic greeting of peace, Asslamu Alaykum Wa Rahmatullah

May the peace and blessing of God be upon you all.

I am sure you are aware of the report on the new definition of Islamophobia by APPG All Party Parliamentary Group (Islamophobia). This definition has been well received by over 750 Islamic organisations and a number of local government organisations in London and other places and, God willing, by the Local government and further afield.

Honourable mayor, we are living in an excellent, just country that highly values and respects the rights of all individual or communities.

Unfortunately, however, there are still those who believe that insulting people for their way of life and beliefs is acceptable. They insult and abuse the weakest members of society.

Honourable friends, wrong is wrong no matter who says it or who does it.

In 2017, 1535 victims of Islamophobia were reported, and I, as founder of the Tell Mama (*campaign against Anti-Muslim hate*) in the Thames valley, believe this figure would have been much higher if all victims of islamophobia had reported incidents to the authorities.

Dear friends, we must realise that behind these numbers are Muslim woman who have been abused in the streets, old men and women who been harassed, or spat on, their scarves pull off, been victims of physical violence, hit, kicked and sometimes put in hospital.

There are people who are so scared that some do not come out of their houses.

When a well positioned member of society belittles the woman who chooses to wear full Hijab by calling her a bank robber or post box, that is islamophobia, when a community is dehumanized by describing as cockroaches and broadcast on media that's islamophobia.

We all have a responsibility to bring all members of all communities together and live as one large family, British family. We all should care about each other's wellbeing.

And the new definition of islamophobia is a step in this direction. We need to recognise this definition, and raise awareness of what constitutes Islamophobia, and that it is not welcome here.

We need to make sure all members of our society enjoy the rights that everyone is entitled to and that if anyone wants to abuse the rights of others, then the long arm of the British law will reach them anywhere they are.

Thank you for listening and God bless you all.

### **Verbal Response from Councillor Brown**

Thank you for your speech. This Council takes all forms of discrimination extremely seriously and we will be supporting the motion recommending adopting a definition of Islamophobia this evening.

## **2. Address by Joanna Gill - Climate Change - urgent action needed**

I first learned about Climate Change 30 years ago, when I was studying Geography for GCSE and A-levels. In those days it was called 'The Greenhouse Effect' and was just beginning to be a serious cause for concern outside of narrow scientific circles and there was still a lot of debate about how big a problem it really was and about the best way to tackle it.

In the 30 years since then, many things have changed:

Firstly, our scientific understanding has advanced, and is now backed up by evidence of climate change not in some hypothetical future, but actually happening now. The five hottest years on record have all been in the period since 2010. Ice sheets in Greenland and Antarctica are melting at unprecedented levels, and island nations such as Fiji are already having to evacuate villages as sea levels rise. All over the world we are seeing more severe droughts, wildfires and hurricanes, as predicted by scientific models of climate change. Since I moved to South Oxford in 2002, we have experienced five severe episodes of flooding in the city, more than in the whole of the last century.

More positively, huge progress has been made in the development of low carbon technologies. We are in the middle of a major transition to non-fossil fuel based energy generation, and similar changes are beginning to happen transport. Our houses and appliances are far more energy efficient than they were 30 years ago. We have the technology we need for a zero carbon future.

However, in spite of the optimism which followed the Paris agreement, political action to tackle climate change has consistently been too little and too slow. CO<sub>2</sub> levels in the atmosphere have continued to rise year on year and now stand at 405.5 parts per million, well above the 350ppm deemed safe by scientists. There is no sign of any slowing down in the upward trajectory. As the motion before you states, the 2018 IPCC report tells us that we have just twelve years to act if we are to keep temperature rise below 1.5 degrees Celsius. If we don't act now, there will be further temperature rises, with potentially catastrophic consequences for global food production, as well as further destruction of the natural world.

To put it simply, this is an emergency and we need to respond to it as such. That means, as stated in the motion, action immediately and at every level. Local governments should not wait for national governments to act, but should take action themselves and demand a national response. All local and national government policies need to be viewed in the light of the overwhelming priority of tackling climate change. In addition, leaders at all levels need to tell the truth about the scale of the problem in order to explain to people the lifestyle changes we all need to make.

I have two daughters, aged 10 and 14, and I worry hugely about the world they and their children will inherit. If we do not take immediate and drastic action to tackle the climate emergency, we are likely to see a really major impact during our lifetimes and even more during our children's. I want to ask you if you have children or grandchildren, and if you also worry about the world they will grow up in. I also want you to think about what you will tell them when they ask in the future what you did about the biggest threat facing us as a planet.

You are in a privileged position as councillors: you have more power than the average citizen to do something to confront the emergency facing us. That means, I believe, that you also have more responsibility to act. Please pass the motion before you, and please make that the beginning, not the end, of what you do.

**Verbal Response from Councillor Hayes – see address 3**

### **3. Address by Linnet Drury - declaring a climate emergency**

I am a young person from Oxford and I am here today to tell you that young people in the city support the proposed Declaration of Climate Emergency.

All this Climate Change stuff can seem very daunting. We can't see it happening on the streets, but it impacts every one of our lives. It can sometimes seem a bit too "big", and as if nothing we can do will make any difference. But that is where we are wrong.

This declaration of climate emergency is a great opportunity for the city, and I can't exaggerate how much hope it gave other people in my classes when I told them about it; the consensus for positive action is massive. For many of us, this declaration is not just about the short-term action, but about affirming a mindset. Affirming that you acknowledge this to be a problem, to be a concern of young people, and that you will represent us. I want you to know the support that there is out there for you to be bold enough to affirm this now.

We have all seen the statistics as set out in Cllr Simmons proposal. There is not much to say, if not that they are daunting. But I'd like to say that there is faith in the action of declaring a climate emergency. The city is in a great place to convince the county to follow suit. If enough councils put in this effort the pressure on the government could have a global influence. We are supporting you to represent us by declaring the climate emergency and convincing the county to do so too.

Because it seems so big, each individual person can feel like they can't make the difference, so therefore nothing will happen. But if every person who would have done nothing because they felt they were insignificant *did* do something...well, then we will have responded to the urgency required to beat the statistics. Please let your small action today be to support the declaration of climate emergency.

One day, we want to be able to give our children a beautiful, sustainable world to live in. To be able to tell them what role we played in changing the fate of our planet. But the 2018 IPCC report has said we only have twelve years to make a difference. Twelve years? If you too want to give your children a beautiful, sustainable world to live in and tell us what role you played in changing the fate of our planet, it looks like you are going to have to act now. I hope that this vote will bring cross-party city unity, which one day may contribute to the national unity we need to tackle this emergency.

We have all seen the statistics. Why *wouldn't* you vote for the declaration?

### **Verbal Response from Councillor Hayes to both addresses 2 and 3**

Thank you both for your well-presented and enthusiastic speeches. Local action is crucial. We will be supporting the motion to declare a climate change emergency on a cross-party basis and will be encouraging Oxfordshire County Council to do the same.

#### 4. Address by Artwell - Barton Royal British Legion building

I call on the Mayor, the publicly paid Executive employees and Elected Councillors to prioritise Barton's working-class people's **community needs above corporate greed**.

Since 2014, Barton's Royal British Legion hall (RBL) has been closed and unused. When open, the RBL welcomed Youth celebrations, and its large function suite was hired continuously for milestone celebrations – for example eighteenth and twenty-first birthday celebrations, and Christenings, Wakes and Wedding celebrations.

The RBL was the principal Public Space for hire in Sandhills and Barton for such celebrations. The loss of the RBL site deprives people of Sandhills and Barton of Community Space in which to gather and celebrate and it is unforgivable that its Labour Councillors care little about restoring a public space where amplified musical celebration is positively welcomed.

The RBL's closure followed closely after the closure of the nearby St. Mary's Church and Community Hall. The people of Sandhills and Barton heavily hired these Public Spaces. For thirty years, until its closure in 2012, the Church Hall hosted Isis Dance Academy, where hundreds of Sandhills and Barton's youth have fond memories of being taught the principles of ballet dancing.

In addition, Barton is also home to the very popular and successful dance company Messy Jam. Dance troupes from both Messy Jam and Isis Dance Academy have suffered terribly from having insufficient community space for hire in Barton. I cannot stress enough just how popular these dance troupes were for boys and girls from ages six to sixteen. The closure of Barton's Community Spaces for hire has unacceptably deprived opportunities for Barton's youth.

Councillors are happy to describe Barton as 'deprived' in order to secure favourable government grants, but they are content to do little to practically assist the broadening of Youth and community facilities.

For this reason, I suggest that they support my call to refurbish the RBL into a Community-Managed facility for hire. In my view Barton's eight hundred youth under the age of eighteen and adults of all ages, would welcome a well-managed community facility with facilities such as a **sprung dance floor, a function hall capable of easily accommodating 200 people, a Bar with an Aunt Sally Ally, and a twelve-seater computer suite**. An imaginative Community facility of this type would be a treasure for the ward and for the Labour controlled Oxford City Council. It would set a gold standard for England's Community facilities.

In January 2019 the City Council posted a demolition notice on the RBL building. Alarming, the Oxford Mail of 11/1/2019 reports Councillor Rowley saying,

“I would like to see both a community facility and housing on the site – as has been done successfully in Barns Road, though **on a more modest scale.**”

Has the Board Member for Housing seen the tiny Barns Road facility? Has the Councillor not understood that combining a community facility beneath housing complexes severely restricts activities which “community rooms” can offer? Why should Oxford’s Labour have administered City Council dislike like purpose-built Community Centres managed by the residents?

Cowley’s newly built Venue bears no comparison to Cowley’s former Community Centre. Cowley’s former Community Centre had a huge ballroom, which was large enough to host the annual class of 1978’s **Barns Court** reunion celebration, and musical events could be held without fear of disturbing the residents living above.

Community Centres should be places of celebration. With Labour’s predilection for placing “community rooms” beneath housing association facilities; as at Barns Road, entertainment which includes music is forbidden. In addition, the Barns Road facility to which Councillor Rowley refers, is already on an incredibly ‘**modest**’ scale, and is too small to hold all but the tiniest public meeting.

Cowley’s Venue Community Rooms, with housing directly above, are proving to be inadequate and unfit to function as a traditional Community Centre. The Venue are no substitute for Cowley’s former Community Centre. Cowley would have benefited from having a large purpose-built facility; especially as I believe Cowley’s population increase is the largest in Oxford.

Council, please note that Northway’s Community Centre has also been reduced to “community rooms” within a housing complex, with similar limitations and constraints.

Sandhills and Barton urgently needs a decent, first-class, purpose-built, stand-alone Community Centre. As Government Benefits and Banking and Financial Services become accessible online only, a Computer suite within the Community facility will become of enormous assistance with a large function Hall: I believe a Bar, including an Aunt Sally Alley would attract a wide range of the ward population.

Such a community designed facility would help to promote a community spirit and challenge loneliness, which is increasing in today’s society.

This could all be realised with an imaginative refurbishment of the former RBL site into a first-class Community-managed community facility for hire. Please do not develop a token “community room” as an adjunct to a Housing Association facility as has been tried in other parts of Oxford. Will the Labour leadership of Oxford City Council recognise the need to develop a purpose-built Community facility or refurbish Barton’s RBL site?

### **Written response from Councillor Simm**

The Royal British Legion building has unfortunately experienced several break-ins and is unusable in its current state. Due to the condition of the building, a demolition notice was served by the council 3 January 2019. The site will be redeveloped at a later date.

The City Council is improving community spaces across the city. In Barton we are investing just under a million pounds into the Neighbourhood Centre so it can better meet the needs of local people by increasing the capacity of the doctor's surgery and improving spaces for community activities and events. Activities currently running at the neighbourhood centre include an advice centre, breakfast and lunch clubs, community food cupboard, various exercise and dance classes, children's stay and play sessions, a youth club and a bingo night. The development at Barton Park also includes a pavilion and space at the new school which will also be available for use by community groups. This is on top of the hireable spaces at Barton Leisure Centre.

We note comparison is made to The Venue in Cowley as a community space. We understand The Venue to be a thriving community facility which also hosts a number of activities and events for the benefit of residents including adult learning classes, support for children with special educational needs, health and wellbeing sessions, a local history group, 'environmental boot camps' and yoga. Data supplied to us by The Venue shows that the facility is well used; for example in the week beginning 19 November 2018, 378 people attended activities, of whom 247 were under the age of 18 years and 264 from black and minority ethnic groups.

### **Verbal response from Councillor Simm**

We are committed to improving and increasing community space in Barton centre - the redevelopment will include space for an advice centre and lots of activities. The Venue is independently run and in my opinion an excellent facility. I see no reason for the Council to provide more community facilities over those it currently makes available and has planned.

## 5. Address by Judith Harley - ROAD NAME FOR TEMPLE COWLEY POOLS SLIP ROAD

Lord Mayor, Councillors,

I am here on behalf of Old Temple Cowley Residents' Association (OTCRA) and residents of Temple Cowley to appeal the City Council's plans to name the slip road into the Temple Cowley Pools (TCP) development as "Sher Afzal Close". This decision was taken by December's CEB without our knowledge, and to our dismay, as this was not a name that we supported. Had we known that it was being discussed we would have attended to make strenuous opposition to this, and to promote our own choice of name.

This choice is controversial, and mistaken, because Sher Afzal has no known connection to our area. Temple Cowley residents are frustrated, angry, and insulted that we were asked to choose a name for this slip road, then our suggestions were completely ignored.

In the Oxford Mail of Monday 14th January, Cllr Brown is quoted saying:

"Mr. Sher Afzal's name has been suggested several times before because he was so highly regarded by many local people."

Not only has this name been suggested several times, it has been rejected several times, because he has had no known association with the areas concerned. He might be 'highly regarded' by Oxford's Pakistani community, but residents of Temple Cowley, including a resident who was a former City Councillor and former Deputy Lord Mayor, have never heard of him. Members of OTCRA's committee have e-mailed ward and other councillors, and the Pakistan Welfare Association, to ask who Sher Afzal is – and have received no, or inadequate, replies. I am awaiting a response to an FOI request on this. Internet searches have drawn mostly blanks, apart from Oxford Mail articles from June 2007 and July 2008, both of which report the rejection of Sher Afzal for road names on the grounds that he had nothing, or little, to do with the respective areas.

The Oxford Mail of 7<sup>th</sup> June 2007 reports the naming of William Morris Close and Beresford Place, both in Temple Cowley and very close to the TCP site, and records the rejection of the name Sher Afzal Place, after Mr Sher Afzal Khan:

"..... it was agreed [by the City Council's Cowley Area Committee] that, as Mr Khan had no direct links to the site, his name could be put forward for a planned development in North Way, Marston, near where his family live."

Presumably Sher Afzal was rejected as a name for the North Way development also.

The Oxford Mail of 11<sup>th</sup> July 2008, on naming three new roads in Rose Hill, reports the rejection of Sher Afzal Khan's name for this development:

"[The Rose Hill Residents' and Tenants'] Association chairman .... said ' .... I am sure [Sher Afzal] was a very honourable man, but he had little to do with Rose Hill. We wanted to acknowledge the work of stalwarts of Rose Hill who had worked hard for the community of the area.'"

Given these planning precedents, of rejecting Sher Afzal from both Temple Cowley and Rose Hill because he had no direct links with these areas, why should Temple Cowley now be subjected to having the same, unwanted, name foisted on us, for the same reasons. If Sher Afzal's name wasn't suitable in 2007 because he had no direct links to the area, it isn't any more suitable now, 12 years later. As Mr Khan died in 1999 it isn't as if he was able to generate any connection with this area in the intervening years.

This choice adds insult to injury. First you demolish our swimming pool and gym. Then you allow a bulky development to overshadow our library and detract from our Conservation Area. Now you name the slip road after someone we have never heard of, with no known connection to this area. Several of you were on the Area Committees that rejected Sher Afzal from Rose Hill and Temple Cowley in 2007 and 2008.

Residents of Temple Cowley, through OTCRA, were asked for a suitable name for the new TCP slip road. We wanted this name to acknowledge the area's connection with the Knights Templar, and following a meeting attended by some 30-40 residents, offered the name "Templars End". Not only was our



suggestion ignored, but a name on which we were not initially consulted, and which we rejected, was chosen instead, without any reference to our wishes. This makes complete mockery of any democratic consultation process, and we wish our voices objecting to this to be heard. Are you listening? Do you hear us?

The Committee of OTCRA, on behalf of Temple Cowley residents, wish you to rescind the current unacceptable choice. Rose Hill's Residents' Association made their choice, and the Oxford Mail ran a poll allowing residents to have their say on that decision. We have been afforded no such courtesy. Insultingly, our ward councillors supported this name with no discussion with OTCRA, or with Temple Cowley residents. As Sher Afzal's family are reported to live in Marston, then a development such as Barton Park would be more appropriate to honour his name. Sher Afzal had no connection to Temple Cowley, and if this slip road is to be named after a person, we wish to acknowledge the work of those who worked hard for the community of this area. We would have offered names of several hard-working community members had we known you wanted these. Many of you will remember Stan Taylor and Bob Hoyle, both popular and hard-working Temple Cowley ward councillors. Stan even lived close to the TCP site, and I suggested his name to the Street Naming Team, but this was inexplicably rejected.

This consultation had serious flaws:

- Communication from the Street Naming Team was poor;
- we didn't know about, or understand, any restrictions or rules;
- we didn't know that our ward councillors were offering their own choice without considering or consulting us;
- we were not informed that the decision was going to CEB;
- we were informed of the CEB decision too late to request a call-in.

Now that we know about the rules Had we can play your game, but we need a fair and level playing field, not one tilted to our disadvantage. our ward councillors been keen to represent fairly all communities in their ward, they would have discussed this with OTCRA and Temple Cowley residents, and considered local associations and requirements. I repeat, we wish you to rescind the current unacceptable name and allow us the courtesy and respect of presenting our choice – a local choice by local people.

If you have listened, and heard our request, and have a willingness to support us and fair play, then thank you on behalf of OTCRA and residents of Temple Cowley.

### **Verbal Response from Councillor Brown**

The final decision is for the Executive Board to take. On this occasion names put forward were ruled out as either not meeting the guidelines for street names, or were not supported, and did not have a close connection to the area. The decision has been communicated to the developer and the Post Office and is final. I hope you will welcome naming the road after an outstanding local Oxford citizen.

## Questions in part 2

### 6. Question from Artwell – consultancy costs

Question to the Board Member, Councillor Hollingsworth

What is the cost to Oxford City Council of hiring Phil Jones Consultancy?

#### **Written Response from Councillor Hollingsworth**

This question refers to work to develop the [Movement and Public Realm Strategy](#) carried out by Phil Jones Associates (land development consultants) to support the vision set out in the Oxford Local Plan 2036, published in July 2018.

The costs for the above study were.

- i. Total study £77,060 split equally between City and County Councils - the City Council paid 50% of this amount = £35,830
- ii. Origin destination study ( as part of the work) additional cost £16,500 split unequally between City and County Councils – the City Council paid £4,983
- iii. Room bookings £385

**Total paid - £41,198**