

Questions from Nigel Gibson

1. In relation to Agenda Item 5, Appendix 6 of the supporting documentation itemises the Capital Programme 2012/13 to 2015/16. Can you please provide a breakdown of the £700,000 shown for 2012/13 as Leisure Centre Improvement Work, identifying how much is being spent on what work at which leisure centre?

Answer - These works were agreed by CEB in September 2011; the minutes and report are on the council's website.

2. In relation to Agenda Item 5, Appendix 6 of the supporting documentation itemises the Capital Programme 2012/13 to 2015/16. Can you please confirm that you are not planning any further Leisure Centre Improvement Work for this period apart from the £700,000 shown for 2012/13?

Answer - Nothing else is planned at this time. However it is feasible there may be some slippage from 2011/12 into 2012/13.

3. In relation to Agenda Item 5, Appendix 6 of the supporting documentation itemises the Capital Programme 2012/13 to 2015/16. You show a total of £224,000 being spent over this period on Upgrading Tennis Courts – can you please identify which courts are being upgraded at what point during this period, and also provide a breakdown of items of expenditure for which these values form the total?

Answer - These are cost estimates that will be refined by conditions surveys. This will then enable a works programme to be developed.

4. In relation to Agenda Item 5, Appendix 6 of the supporting documentation itemises the Capital Programme 2012/13 to 2015/16. You show a total of £220,000 being spent over this period on Upgrading a Multi-Use Games Area (MUGA) – can you please identify which MUGA is being upgraded at what point during this period, and also provide a breakdown of items of expenditure for which these values form the total?

Answer - As per question three.

5. In relation to Agenda Item 5, Appendix 6 of the supporting documentation itemises the Capital Programme 2012/13 to 2015/16. You show a total of £421,000 being spent over this period on “Leisure Centre Extensive Repairs” – can you please identify which Leisure Centre repairs are being carried out at what point during this period, and also provide a breakdown of items of expenditure for which these values form the total?

Answer - This budget is for carrying out maintenance repairs and improvements at centres where the Council has a retained responsibility. The works plan is currently being finalised.

6. In relation to Agenda Item 5, Appendix 6 of the supporting documentation itemises the Capital Programme 2012/13 to 2015/16. You show a total of £6,938,071 for “New Build **Competition** (sic) Pool”, which seems a very exact amount for a budget figure – can you please explain why it is so exact, and provide a detailed breakdown of this total?

Answer - This is the residual estimated spend excluding S106 contributions for the leisure centre scheme, taking into account previous years actual spend and the estimated spend for the current financial year.

7. In relation to Agenda Item 5, Appendix 9 of the supporting documentation itemises an Equalities Impact Assessment Screening. In it you propose mitigating the effect to youth sport by creating a three-year post to promote use of leisure facilities by schools. Can you explain why it would be better to do this than retain Temple Cowley Leisure Centre, given that the savings on refurbishing the Leisure Centre in an area where schools can walk to swimming would promote more sport in schools than building a pool, at hugely greater expense, that would only be accessible by these schools if they hire buses?

Answer - Maintaining Temple Cowley Pools will not achieve the objectives that this funding is targeting.

8. In relation to Agenda Item 5, Appendix 8, Risk Implications, you use the phrase “robust monthly monitoring” as a risk mitigation – can you please explain the use of the word “robust” in this context, and provide detail on how “robust monthly monitoring” differs from what would appear to be less effective “monthly monitoring” that is not “robust”? Can you also please explain why you are using non-robust monthly monitoring at all, if it is less effective than robust monthly monitoring?

Answer – The Council’s budget monitoring arrangements are robust and evidence based and have recently been verified as such by Price Waterhouse Coopers, the Council’s auditors. Budget monitoring data is regularly reviewed senior council managers, and additionally on a quarterly basis by the City Executive Board.

9. In relation to Agenda Item 5, Appendix 3, Detailed General Fund Budget Proposals, page 63, line 28 Pressures, Leisure Competition Pool, can you please provide the detail behind the £354,000 reduction, along with an explanation?

Answer - This relates to the revenue implications in relation to the prudential borrowing to finance the capital expenditure for the competition standard pool. This

cost of £354k was originally included in the leisure service revenue budget but has now been included in the corporate services budget with all other interest and financing costs. In addition due to slippage on the scheme the majority of this cost has been slipped to 2013-14.

10. In relation to Agenda Item 8, Treasury Management, page 185 of the supporting documentation paragraph 91, presents a Table showing Net Borrowing v CFR. Can you please confirm that the Council's debt is currently £225 million and explain how this value changed from the original 2010/11 figure of only £35m? Can you also please explain whether you feel that a quarter of a billion pounds is a sensible level of debt for a Council the size of Oxford to maintain, and if so, why?

Answer - The level of debt is not currently at the level mentioned, but will rise to it due to the change in funding arrangements for the Housing Revenue Account. Stock-retaining councils have to take on an allocation of debt to buy themselves out of the HRA. This decision was taken by primary legislation and is not at our discretion.

11. In relation to Agenda Item 9, the first recommendation is in relation to £400,000 of feed-in tariff solar panel capital works. It is now established that the total energy generated by solar panels at Oxford's latitude, even over the expected 25-year lifetime, is less than the energy needed to mine the raw materials and manufacture them. Given this, can you please explain where you are going to show this net increase in Council carbon emissions, and why you are using solar panels rather than a more effective renewable energy source?

Answer - The premise of this question is incorrect - PV solar panels do not consume more energy in their manufacture than they generate in their lifetime.

Prof David McKay - energy advisor to the government quotes an energy yield figure of 4 (ratio of delivered energy to the energy required to make it) for roof mounted, grid connected PV in the UK, for a system with a lifetime of 20 years. This of course means that 4 x as much energy is generated over 20 years as is required to manufacture the system. Current systems are expected to have a life in excess of 25 years so in practice the yield may be even higher.

Studies looking into this question typically conduct what's called a life cycle assessment (LCA), often known as "cradle-to-grave analysis", which looks into all the resources that go into the production, operation and disposal of a PV system (including "embodied energy" required for mining the raw materials and producing the panels) as well as the resources (electricity) produced by the system. The energy aspect of the LCA is often expressed in terms of the energy/carbon payback time, the time the system has to operate to produce the amount of energy (or carbon

reductions) required for its production. Hence it can be seen that outputs greatly exceed inputs.

A 2006 report by the UK Parliamentary Office for Science and Technology, has calculated a "carbon footprint" of less than 60g per kWh of electricity from PV in the UK (and around 35g/kWh for PV in southern Europe), compared to 10 times as much for fossil fuels. More recent research suggests that the total greenhouse gas emission (including CO₂ and other gases) for electricity from PV panel is between 20 and 80g CO₂-equivalent per kWh under UK conditions. This is ten times lower than the emissions for electricity from fossil fuels.

The Council is pursuing a mixed economy approach and is not basing energy policy upon a single technology. Renewable energy sources are also part of the equation.

12. In relation to Agenda Item 9, the accompanying Budget Monitoring report, paragraph 6, refers to £606k of contingency funds being used for 'partnership payments' to eligible staff. Can you please explain who these staff are, and how they are eligible? Can you also please explain what 'partnership payments' are, how long this practice has been in existence within the Council, and why any scheme of this sort merits £606k of taxpayers' money being allocated for payment to council officers?

Answer - The partnership payment system was established in April 2011 for 2 years as part of an agreement with the trade unions to freeze pay progression for the following two years: the terms of the agreement were included in the budget for 2011-12. There has been no pay increase for staff under a cost of living award since 2009. The basic partnership payment of £300 to all staff is dependant on the Council meeting is stretch target budget and savings requirements, to which all staff contribute through their work. To qualify for this payment staff must also have achieved an acceptable level of personal performance and a good attendance record. All staff, other than the Chief Executive and the Directors are eligible for this lump sum partnership payment subject to meeting these conditions.

13. In relation to Agenda Item 9, the accompanying Budget Monitoring report, paragraph 42, Table 4, Capital Programme, City Leisure, shows a difference of £7,786,000 between the approved and latest budget – can you please provide the detail showing how individual elements sum to that difference? Can you please itemise the subsequent figures on that line for Spend as at 31st Dec, Projected Outturn, Outturn Variance to Latest Budget and Outturn Variance due to Slippage? Can you also please confirm, given that you have slipped the capital spend on the proposed new 25m non-Olympic swimming pool in Blackbird Leys into the next financial year, when during the next financial year you are forecasting this capital spend?

Answer - The difference between the approved budget and the latest budget largely relates to the following areas:

- Competition Pool £(6.438)million – slippage of project to 2012-13
- Play Barton £ (0.8)million - Removal of budget due to external financing
- Play Project £(0.7)million – This was a budget adjustment due to an incorrect figure input at budget setting, which was adjusted for early in 2011-12.

See table (below) for breakdown of £1.3million spend on leisure capital schemes as at 31 December 2011.

We have yet to determine the profile of the spend on the Competition Standard Pool in 2012-13 as this depends on the commencement on site date.

Leisure Capital Spend as at 31st December, 2011

Capital Scheme	Latest Budget 2011/12	Spend as at 31 December 2011
A1300 Playground Refurbishment	685,509	609,219
A1301 Play Barton	744,465	23,580
A3124 Barton Village Pavillion	372,006	375,282
A4810 New Build Competition Pool	1,000,000	313,414
City Leisure	2,801,980	1,321,494

14. In relation to Agenda Item 11, Risk, the accompanying report lists a large number of red-rated risks – the pdf format found on your website seems to present an incomplete table accompanying paragraph 25, as it appears to be landscape formatted but presented as portrait – can you please supply the document in readable format, and will you delay consideration of this Agenda item at CEB until there has been an opportunity to review the information completely and if necessary ask questions about it?

Answer – paragraph 25 is meant to be and is printed in portrait form. However, in the printed version the comments column is missing (it is visible on the web). An updated copy will today be emailed to the Executive.

15. Can you please explain why the Minutes of the December CEB meeting, Agenda Item 19, do not include the public questions and answers that the minutes say are included as an appendix at the end of that document?

Answer – the questions and answers are attached to the signed copy of the minutes (the Council's official record of proceedings). They are also posted on the web. Given these two means of record we do not as a matter of general practice circulate them with the printed minutes that form part of the next following agenda.

Question from John Power

16. Why was I not told that my grant application would be turned down because it asked for capital money not revenue monies? On behalf of Osney St Thomas and New Botley Allotment Association I went to the Council's web site. Looked up grants and filled in the necessary details. I checked both by phone and by letter that it had been received. The grants officer supplied me with information about a missing bank statement which I immediately remedied. At no time was I told that my application could not be considered because it asked for capital monies. Indeed I would dispute that the grant is solely for that purpose, much of it would have been spent on labour costs. If the council cannot afford my application I would accept that, what I cannot accept is involving me in many hours of admin when I should have been told from day one that my application did not meet the criteria.

Answer - The grants budget is for revenue expenditure and within the guidance notes and the prospectus for the grants programme it informs applicants what will not be funded through this programme. Capital items or work are one of those items listed.

If Mr Power had contacted the grants officer to discuss his application prior to completing the application he would have been informed of this.

To help mitigate situations like this there is a statement at the top of the application form requesting applicants to read the guidance notes and grants programme prospectus before completing their application.

However, for the grants programme to be transparent and fair, once an application has been received and acknowledged it must follow the same process as every other application where it is evaluated and assessed by the grants panel.

Question from David Jackson

17. Agenda item 5, appendix 3, Chief Executive section, Policy subsection, item 13 titled "Olympics": In this item, there is a £100,000 spend in financial year 12/13. Please can you provide more detail on what this expenditure is for. For example, is it to fund attendance by Councillors and Officers at the Olympics or is some sort of public engagement event for the citizens of Oxford.

Answer - Oxford City Council is hosting the Olympic Torch Relay and is one of the few designated evening celebration sites. The £100,000 allocated in the budget is to plan, produce and deliver a celebratory event and entertainment for the people of Oxford to enjoy, free of charge, in the city in July. It is not to fund any tickets, entry to the Olympics or any other activity taking place outside of the city centre. The amount required is to cover all health & safety requirements, including stewarding, fencing and to be able to offer an exciting and memorable experience for our communities to celebrate the Olympic year.

Question from M Hugh-Jones

18. Why in your budget for 2012-13 is there no provision for Dial-a-ride minibuses - which may be reduced for 2 to 1 in April – this at a time when both are fully booked 52 weeks a year, and when you are budgeting some £300,000 for education which is a County Council matter?

Answer - Significant sums of money (over £4 million) were transferred, at the start of last financial year, from Oxford City Council to Oxfordshire County Council, to fund concessionary transport, which obviously includes dial-a-ride; this is not the case for education. It is our firm belief that the new dial-a-ride scheme should be funded out of this money by the County Council.

Question from Gwynneth Pedlar

19. In the past Oxford City has generously funded an enhanced Dial-a-Ride Service. This has been much appreciated and used by disabled people taking them out of isolation and social exclusion.

It is a well-known fact that in many cases both of these are the forerunner of depression and dependency leading to hospitalisation and then a care home.

Why, when Oxfordshire County Council has money in its budget is it taking the stance, as less enlightened council have done in the past, that it is OCC responsibility not theirs.

I understand that £300,000 is being proposed for education but isn't education to a responsibility for Oxfordshire County Council.

A full time enhanced service would cost at the most £50,000. So come on City, that the lead from West Oxfordshire and at least fund some extra service.

Answer - The key point is in the third paragraph of this question: that significant sums of money (over £4 million) were transferred, at the start of last financial year, from Oxford City Council to Oxfordshire County Council, to fund concessionary transport, which obviously includes dial-a-ride; this is not the case for education. It is our firm belief that the new dial-a-ride scheme should be funded out of this money by the County Council.

Obviously we would like to "make good" county council cuts wherever they arise – in this area, just as in the area of warden services, for example, where the county has made some very damaging cutbacks (while funding new services in other districts). However, we simply do not have the means to this in all areas where it would be desirable. Government reallocated funds from District to County Councils in respect

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of concessionary transport because it felt, quite rightly, that spreading costs across larger areas would allow for costs to be reduced by procurement over a larger area, as well as for fairer calculation of subsidies for pensioners' free bus travel.