

To: Council

Date: 13 July 2026

Report of: Director of Law, Governance and Strategy

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

Introduction

Addresses made by members of the public to the Council put to the Cabinet members or Leader, registered by the deadline in the Constitution, are below.

1. 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

This report will be republished after the Council meeting as part of the minutes pack. This will list the full text of speeches delivered as submitted, summaries of speeches delivered which differ significantly from those submitted, and any further responses.

Addresses to be taken in Part 2 of the agenda

1. Nick Eyre
2. Dom Birch
3. Chaka Artwell

Addresses to be taken in Part 2 of the agenda

1. Nick Eyre

Thank you, Lord Mayor

I'm not going to talk in general terms about the importance of climate change. I know that commitment to climate action is widely shared across the Council. Many of you have recently defeated opposition from climate deniers. And, from working with your officers on climate issues over the last few years, I know they are very committed and effective.

What I do want to talk about is the Council's specific goal to making the city net zero by 2040. This arose from the Citizens' Assembly on climate in 2019, where it was very clear that Oxford's citizens believe we should be a leader on climate action.

But net zero by 2040 is a tough goal. It's worth spelling out why.

'Net zero' means, by definition, matching emissions of carbon dioxide to the atmosphere with removals from the atmosphere.

In urban areas, the opportunities for removals within the city are quite limited. Tree planting can and should contribute but given the city's boundaries and pressures on land use, its contribution can only be small. And it's increasingly clear that the prospects for engineered removals are negligible.

Offsetting is possible – essentially by paying other places to reduce their emissions instead of doing it here. But offsetting our direct emissions is not compatible with good practice guidance on net zero.

So, the science clearly points to a conclusion that, to meet the city's net zero commitment, we have to eliminate most fossil fuel use in the city by 2040.

Fortunately, that is possible. And largely good economics, because of the declining costs of solar power, electric vehicles and heat pumps.

Many measures can contribute and are in the existing 2040 Net Zero Action Plansolar roofs, more insulation, public transport, better provision for cycling and walking, local food etc.

And these can all help. But when we are planning to eliminate most fossil fuel use, two measures stand out as essential.

First, replacing gas boilers, and

Second, replacing combustion engine vehicles.

If we don't do both of these, we will fail to meet the net zero goal.

In both cases, the change is beginning to happen. But it needs to go faster. And it will take time to complete. Both boilers and vehicles have lifetimes of about 15 years. We are now less than 15 years from 2040! So, we should already be avoiding installing gas boilers and buying new petrol and diesel vehicles. Delivery of the 2040 target implies speeding up action on these quickly.

Fortunately, there is a context in which this can be done – the Local Area Energy Plan. (Not to be confused with the Local Plan). Work has started on it, with input from your officers, who will update you on progress in due course.

My advice to you is to ask two questions of the plan

First, is it clear what incentives and regulations are going to be used to drive the phase out both petrol- and diesel-fuelled vehicles and gas boilers?

Second, is there a plan for changing our city's energy infrastructure: for including building district heating networks, upgrading electricity networks and decommissioning gas networks?

Of course, developing a detailed geographical plan is complex and may not be possible quickly. But the Local Plan Energy Plan at minimum needs to set out key priorities and begin a process to deliver that detail.

This clearly will raise questions for Cabinet and Scrutiny. But the changes needed will affect every neighbourhood, and almost every household. So, it's also an issue for you all as ward councillors as well.

That, I think is my 5 minutes. But I am happy to follow up with any of you in political groups or other forums.

Lord Mayor, thank you.

Response from Councillor Anna Railton, Deputy Leader, and Cabinet Member for Planning and Zero Carbon Oxford

Firstly, thank you very much Professor Eyre for coming along this evening to address us on this issue and for your ongoing excellent role as scientific adviser to the Council.

You have mentioned the local area energy plan which is one of four plans that have come up in this agenda, all of which are on different geographies. It is a really important piece of work for this Council, but it is somewhat difficult to discuss as we do not actually have it which is one of its problems. Discussion of it came up at the most recent climate scrutiny meeting, where numerous updates have also been heard on the delivery of the heat network.

When it comes to EV adoption, we already have some of the highest numbers of EV drivers in the in the country but also accept that it is only about 25% of new cars that are EV; there is still a pretty long way to go. The Council wrote an EV infrastructure strategy a few years ago which sets out the approach to support this transition given the 26,000 EVs in the city requiring charging. We are also looking forward to seeing EV chargers installed in the city at the end of this year after several years of no new infrastructure being installed. GUL-e is also part of the solution here; this is a cross pavement charging solution that ODS will be putting in for the county council.

When it comes to domestic heating, that is a more difficult problem. I am glad to see the boiler upgrade grant is still around and there is now a separate grant which covers air to air which I think is a great step forward. But I think you know air to air needs to be more seriously considered as part of the solution here, not only do you convert to electric heating, but you also get electric cooling as well. Personally, I am very keen for improvements for how residents interact with the planning system on this, and I think it is currently a little bit too challenging for people. We, as you know, are expecting people to become experts in planning policy and know where to find stuff too, for example, installing an air source heat pump or even an EV charger.

District heating heat network; I think plans are slowly moving forward but are in a procurement process. Hopefully towards the tail end of this year, it will move forward positively. You talk about decommissioning the gas grid and I think it is fair to say there is currently no real workable plan for this; in my ward it is continually frustrating that road after road is dug up for gas leak after gas leak. The infrastructure is genuinely falling apart and there does need to be a plan for decommissioning it; Scotland has some plan, but I think in England there is currently nothing.

On the local area energy plan, I am glad to see the growth commission is leaning into the grid upgrade problem which the energy plan covers. As you know, this is a real source of friction for putting in new developments.

When it comes to the local area plan, we will continue to work with the county council and its consultants to essentially make this as useful a plan as possible for the city and the wider county; when this emerges, we will have a good go around with various committees on it.

Thank you very much.

2. Dom Birch

As a non-binary resident of Oxford, I am speaking on the impact of the EHRC code of practice on Oxford's substantial trans community. The code of practice empowers the exclusion of trans people from services and spaces and will make the lives of trans people worse.

For a non-binary person like me, this means that I will have no legal access to government defined 'single sex' spaces or services. Or, to do so, I am now required by law to identify as my birth sex for accessing a service. Given the extensive changes to my body due to the impact of hormone replacement therapy this essentially places me with the choice: acting unlawfully to access a female only space or service, or face discrimination or open hostility by accessing a male only space where my gender presentation and identity make me a visible outlier. I have, since the introduction of the EHRC draft guidance, already been challenged in bathrooms and changing rooms no less than six times—moments that often start with confusion and leave me challenged and harassed when moving through Oxford or simply trying to do my job. One at least one occasion I was left fearing for my safety after particularly aggressive questioning in a nightclub (men's) bathroom. Not only does the code undermine my dignity of living out my gender, it also puts me (and people like me) in danger.

I say this to highlight that the impact of the code is not trivial, and it is particularly serious in Oxford. A city with a substantial trans community that is being threatened by our own government. Insidiously and subtly, yes, but threatened, nonetheless.

As an educator who works in inclusion and access, and volunteers with marginalised youth, I add that this harm will not simply be felt by Oxford's adults—but also by young people who are already struggling to interpret a world that chooses to reject them. Forcing them, as they come to terms with their gender identity, to also make the difficult choice between dignity and lawfulness, and between self-betrayal and safety.

Response from Councillor Nigel Chapman, Cabinet Member for Citizen Focused Services and Council Companies

Firstly, I would like to thank our speaker Dom Birch for coming to address Council on the concerns many trans people feel about the impact of the ECHR Code of Practice on their community. Hearing this testimony reminds us all of the discrimination and harassment many trans people face in their daily lives, and we know it takes courage to speak up, especially in a public forum like this.

Later in the meeting, we will be returning to the subject of trans rights in a motion which I expect will attract widespread and passionate support across the chamber. This Council

is proud of standing up for and with transpeople and that it offers inclusive services to all its citizens, including all groups with protected characteristics as defined by the Equality Act of 2010.

Speaking personally, I do not want to see the EHCR Code of Practice used by unscrupulous and often prejudiced individuals and organisations to try and water down the rights of the many groups which have so far been protected by the Act. Human rights are not a zero-sum game, advantaging one group at the expense of another. Rather, we should be taking every opportunity to strengthen the framework of rights we have now.

The Supreme Court was very clear that its ruling last year does not diminish legal protections against discrimination for transgender people. *Oxford City Council is committing to providing safe accessible and dignified services to all residents. The Council is working within the 2025 ruling of the Supreme Court and the Government's draft Code of Practice in developing a policy setting out how we will ensure we do not fail to comply whilst recognising the impact it has on those not identifying as their gender at birth.*

As the Council begins its work this autumn on the impact of the revised Code on its services and facilities, we will be very mindful of the position taken by the Court.

There will need to be several stages, including establishing a policy position and then reviewing each service and space provision for current compliance against the code and next steps for each, on a case-by-case basis. As the work continues, the Council will consider the impact on, and the input of all affected persons with protected characteristics, given that the scope of the changes in the Code spans many areas beyond single sex spaces.

I would add that, where there is a need because of the guidance to implement any changes to specific sites or services, we will ensure there is strong engagement and consultation with all the relevant parties and organisations.

3. Chaka Artwell

Stonewall, the leading publicly funded lobby for the LGBTQIAP2S+ men and women, has been mute, and has not condemn the behaviour of the same-sex adoptive parents; who have been convicted of baby Preston's death.

Given that Oxford City Council has reported to have paid to attend Stonewall's training, and sending Oxford City Council employees to Stonewall's expensive training courses, will Oxford City Council disengage from financially supporting, and attending any training organised by Stonewall?

Response from Councillor Nigel Chapman, Cabinet Member for Citizen Focused Services and Council Companies

Thank you for your address. The case of Preston Davey is a tragic and deeply upsetting one and has been described by the children's Commissioner for England, Rachel de

Souza, as a “massive safeguarding failure.” A number of enquiries are underway to learn the lessons of it and help us ensure all other children – especially the most vulnerable - do not suffer a similar fate.

It is the practice of Stonewall (like most charities I know) not to comment on individual cases where they are not directly involved and we should not – unlike our speaker – draw any inference from that decision.

The council is a member of Stonewall as it provides access to resources and guidance to support and build inclusion. We do not currently buy into any training Stonewall provides. The council will continue as a member of Stonewall in line with our commitment to being an inclusive employer.