

Council

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Briefing note and supplementary papers

Date: **Monday 4 October 2021**

Time: **5.00 pm**

Place: **Council Chamber - Oxford Town Hall**

The Council agenda, reports, this briefing note, and any other supplementary papers should be considered together.

This briefing note forms part of the papers to be considered at the Council meeting. It contains additional information; councillors' questions, public addresses; and amendments to motions.

All papers for this meeting can be accessed through the council's website.

For further information please contact:

Jennifer Thompson, Committee and Members Services Officer, Committee Services Officer

 01865 252275

 democraticservices@oxford.gov.uk

Briefing note

Information for councillors and additional papers to be considered.

Pages

PART 1 - PUBLIC BUSINESS

1 Apologies for absence

2 Declarations of interest

3 Minutes

Recommendation: to approve the minutes of the last meeting.

Main
agenda
pack

4 Appointment to Committees

Group Leaders may inform Council of changes.

5 Announcements

See main agenda frontsheet

6 Public addresses and questions that relate to matters for decision at this meeting

None

CABINET RECOMMENDATIONS

7 Integrated Performance Report for Q1

Cllr Turner, the Cabinet Member, will present the report and propose Cabinet's recommendations.

Recommendations: Cabinet recommends that Council resolves to agree the addition of £10 million into the Capital programme as set out in paragraph 12 of the report.

Main
agenda
pack

8 A bid for government RSAP funding to support the Council's Homelessness Strategy

Cllr Blackings, the Cabinet Member, will present the report and propose Cabinet's recommendations.

Recommendations: Cabinet recommends that Council resolves to agree to make budget provision for the required match funding of £2 million.

Main
agenda
pack

9	Decisions taken under Part 9.3 (b) of the Constitution	The Leader will propose the recommendations.	Main agenda pack
		Recommendations: Council is recommended to resolve to note the decisions taken as set out in the report.	
QUESTIONS			
10	Question on Cabinet Minutes: Minutes of meeting Wednesday 15 September 2021	This item has a time limit of 15 minutes. Councillors may ask the Cabinet Members questions about matters in these minutes.	Main agenda pack
11	Questions on Notice from Members of Council	74 questions on notice. The questioner may ask one supplementary question of the Cabinet Member who supplied the response, or the Leader in their absence.	Page 5
PART 2 - PUBLIC INVOLVEMENT AND SCRUTINY			
12	Public addresses and questions that do not relate to matters for decision at this Council meeting	3 public addresses and 4 questions <u>not</u> relating to matters for decision in Part 1 of this agenda. Up to five minutes is available for each public address and up to three minutes for each question. A total of 45 minutes is available for this item and verbal responses are included in this time.	Page 45
13	Outside organisation/Committee Chair reports and questions	No items for discussion.	
14	Scrutiny Committee update report – Annual Report	Council is invited to comment on and note the Scrutiny Annual Report.	Page 57
PART 3 - MOTIONS REPRESENTING THE CITY			

15 Motions on notice 4 October 2021

This item has a time limit of 60 minutes.

Motions and amendments submitted by the deadline.

Minor technical or limited wording amendments may be submitted during the meeting but must be written down and circulated.

Council is asked to consider the following motions:

- a) A social enterprise lettings agency for Oxford (proposer Cllr Wade, seconder Cllr Landell Mills) [amendment, proposer Cllr Turner]
- b) A Partnership between Local Government and National Government to tackle Climate Change (proposer Cllr Wolff, seconder Cllr Jarvis) [amendment, proposer Cllr Hayes, seconder Cllr Brown]
- c) John Radcliffe Hospital parking (proposed by Cllr Haines, seconded by Cllr Malik) [amendment, proposer Cllr Hollingsworth]
- d) Afghanistan and refugees (proposer Cllr Djafari-Marbini)
- e) E-Scooters and active travel (proposer Cllr Gant, seconder Cllr Smowton) [amendment, proposer Cllr Hayes, seconder Cllr Brown]
- f) Oxford Stadium (proposer Cllr Pegg, seconder Cllr Dunne) [amendment, proposer Cllr Brown]
- g) EU Nationals deserves to be treated with respect (proposer Cllr Bely-Summers, seconder Cllr Corais)
- h) Opposition to the Government's Planning White Paper (proposed by Cllr Gant)
- i) Opposition to the Health and Care Bill (proposer Cllr Jarvis, seconder Cllr Nala-Hartley)
- j) End Fire and Rehire (proposer Cllr Mundy, seconder Cllr Dunne)
- k) COP26 (proposer Cllr Dunne, seconder Cllr Mundy)

This briefing note is published as a supplement to the agenda and should be considered along with the agenda; reports; and other supplementary papers.

To: Council
Date: 4 October 2021
Title of Report: Questions on Notice from members of Council and responses from the Cabinet Members and Leader

Introduction

1. Questions submitted by members of Council to the Cabinet members and Leader of the Council, by the deadline in the Constitution are listed below in the order they will be taken at the meeting.
2. Responses are included where available.
3. Questioners can ask one supplementary question of the councillor answering the original question.
4. This report will be republished after the Council meeting to include supplementary questions and responses as part of the minutes pack.
5. Unfamiliar terms may be briefly explained in footnotes.

Questions and responses

Cabinet Member for a Safer, Healthier Oxford

LU1 From Cllr Jarvis to Cllr Upton – COVID case spike

Question	Written Response
Given COVID-19 cases are rising across the country, and projections suggest this will continue throughout the winter, what measures are being put in place by the Council to mitigate the health, social and economic impact of a spike in cases in Oxford and any tightening	Oxford City Council is working as part of an integrated systemwide response to the ongoing risks and issues posed by the COVID pandemic. A systemwide COVID Recovery Strategy has been agreed by Leaders of the District and County Councils which identifies priorities for ongoing support and assistance across the county. An Economic Recovery Plan has also been agreed under the auspices of OxLEP to target support for businesses, and skills development. A health and public health programme will focus on COVID

LU1 From Cllr Jarvis to Cllr Upton – COVID case spike

of restrictions from the government?

vaccination of 12-15 year olds and booster vaccines for older people, as well as mitigating the risks posed by Flu, Norovirus and RSV. A campaign is being developed to encourage non-urgent cases not to present at the John Radcliffe Hospital, to help manage capacity there. And the Local Outbreak Management Plan is being updated to reflect the risk of outbreaks in different settings, along with Standard Operating Procedures. We have accessed a significant amount of Government COVID funding, including the Contain Outbreak Management Fund (COMF) and Additional Restrictions Grant (ARG) to provide continued support for communities and businesses within Oxford through the winter months.

Funding has also been agreed for COVID Secure officers to patrol public places so resources are in place should there be any tightening of restrictions.

Cabinet Member for Affordable Housing, Housing Security, and Housing the Homeless

No questions

Cabinet Member for Citizen Focused Services

MR1 From Cllr Landell Mills to Cllr Rowley –Oxford Direct Services

Question

Can Oxford voluntary and charitable organisations use money that they raise independently of the City Council to employ contractors other than ODS to undertake building and maintenance work in parks and in council property?

Written Response

As with non- charitable organisations, charities are not bound to use ODS for works.

If a charity / voluntary organisation occupies property owned by the Council, the lease will provide guidance for any changes to the property, for example, gaining consent for major works. The leases do not stipulate that ODS carry out works or maintenance. If asked, officers would encourage tenants to include ODS in any tendering exercise.

MR1 From Cllr Landell Mills to Cllr Rowley –Oxford Direct Services	
	On land and buildings where repair and improvements are the Council’s liability ODS would be instructed in line with the contract between the 2 parties.

MR2 From Cllr Landell Mills to Cllr Rowley –Oxford Direct Services landscape and ecological management	
Question Does ODS have the necessary expertise in landscape and ecological management to undertake landscape and ecological work for Biodiversity Net Gain, and what qualifications and experience do ODS staff have for this sort of work?	Written Response ODS, as a contractor, has the expertise necessary to carry out the work specified for it by its clients. Depending on the job that can mean working for the Council’s Environmental Quality team but could be for any other client wanting similar work. When engaged in these types of activities, ODS draws on its qualifications and experience. Some examples include community tree planting schemes which have been carried out at Rose Hill, Croft Road and Sunnymead recreational grounds or acid grassland restoration which is happening at Shotover. Additional funding was awarded to the Environmental Quality Team to be able to appoint a full time ecology/biodiversity officer. We are happy to communicate that this officer has been appointed and will start working for the council in November 2022. This person comes with skills to undertake landscape and ecological work and will work collaboratively with other colleagues in the council and at ODS. This is a rapidly growing area of work and we are all learning how best to deliver Biodiversity Net Gain across the city and county wide. There are also opportunities to work with work with the Trust for Oxfordshire’s Environment which can support us in maximising opportunities for offsetting. This is currently being explored by officers as to how best to proceed.

MR3 From Cllr Landell Mills to Cllr Rowley –Oxford Direct Services and Park Services	
Question Is the Park Service able to independently assess the performance of ODS and how is the assessment of performance recorded? What can Park Service do if it is unhappy	Written Response The Parks service independently assess the performance of ODS through annual ROSPA inspections of its play areas. In addition, external assessments of playing pitches and ancillary provision

MR3 From Cllr Landell Mills to Cllr Rowley –Oxford Direct Services and Park Services

with aspects of the ODS service and what is the reporting mechanism?

have been conducted through the institute of groundsmen.

Over the past two years we have also conducted surveys of the sports clubs who use our sports facilities to help inform services.

The Council and the parks service holds regular client and performance meetings with ODS with senior management input.

MR4From Cllr Wolff to Cllr Rowley – HVO fuel

Question

Are our officers monitoring developments in the treatment of waste fats and vegetable oils to create Hydrogenated Vegetable Oil (HVO) Fuel — a diesel substitute for which claims of 90% reduction in CO2 emissions are made?

Could consideration be given to trialling such fuel in our own vehicle fleet?

Written Response

ODS are monitoring the development of HVO and the wider alternative fuel market. There is concern around the potential in increased frequency of vehicle maintenance linked to the use of such fuels. However, a trial on some specific vehicles is planned for the coming months.

MR5 From Cllr Smowton to Cllr Rowley- Aareon QL Housing Management Software

Question

1. Was the Aaeron system deployed in a testing environment (using real or realistic data) before the full rollout, such that problems could be identified without impacting officers or users? If it was, why did this not identify the problems encountered? If no such test deployment was attempted, why not?
2. Was it considered to part-deploy the Aaeron system to manage a subset of the Council's housing accounts prior to attempting a full rollout? If it was considered, why did this not identify the problems encountered? If it was not considered, why not?

Written Response

1. There will be lessons to be learned from how the testing was carried out and this will form part of the independent lessons learned exercise that will be carried out. These questions will be able to be fully answered at that stage.

Meanwhile the project team are working hard to move the project from 'recovery' to 'steady state'.
2. This will be best answered when the independent 'lessons learned' report is completed.

MR5 From Cllr Smowton to Cllr Rowley- Aareon QL Housing Management Software

<p>3. Was parallel running of the existing and Aaeron systems for a transitional period considered? If not, why not?</p> <p>4. What measures if any were in place to permit a rapid rollback to the existing system in the event that the Aaeron system rollout did not proceed as planned? If there were such measures, why were they not used / were they ineffective when used? If no such measures existed, why not?</p> <p>5. What changes have been implemented in how software is acquired, developed and tested to ensure that future rollouts and better managed and risks of failure contained?</p>	<p>3. This will be best answered when the independent 'lessons learned' report is completed.</p> <p>4. This will be best answered when the independent 'lessons learned' report is completed.</p> <p>5. This can be more fully assessed when the independent 'lessons learned' report is completed. In the meantime, new systems that are due to be implemented are being carefully assessed to avoid the issues that may have caused the problems with system implementation.</p>
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MR6 From Cllr Fouweather to Cllr Rowley - Aareon QL Housing Management System implementation

Question	Written Response
<p>1. Can the Council now be given a target date for the complete implementation of the new system and how much this has overrun the original date?</p> <p>2. Can the Council be told how much the budget costs have overrun for this system, including the additional staff costs incurred by the problems encountered?</p> <p>3. Has the Council received a decision from the Information Commissioner's Office about any penalty for the data breach that occurred?</p>	<p>1. The plan for the complete installation of the system may take until after the end of the financial year to meet the Council's operational needs and also because of other systems that are due to be implemented within the Council in the meantime. Parts of the system are being used successfully in some areas and it will be progressively rolled out over the coming months to ensure that the benefits of the system can be delivered in advance of the complete implementation wherever possible</p> <p>2. An additional £229,221 for project resources has been committed for the project up to 30 September and a further £146,260 committed up to the complete implementation next year.</p> <p>3. A full report was lodged with ICO when the data breach came to light but to date there has been no response received from ICO in relation to the breach.</p>

MR7 From Cllr Fouweather to Cllr Rowley – council email service**Question**

Over the summer, Councillors' email was disrupted on several occasions. This affected both incoming and outgoing email and caused delays in responses to both residents and Council Officers both in the City and the County.

1. Is this due to an underlying problem with the way the Microsoft software is used?
2. What steps have been taken to alleviate this problem and can we be assured that it will not recur?
3. If not can an alternative solution be identified and implemented as soon as possible?

Written Response

1. There were two separate issues:

- A security upgrade carried out by the data centre provider incorrectly blocked emails for new Councillors with new laptops. ICT informed the provider who updated their records to include the new Councillors.

- Some Councillors had auto-forwarding set up between their Council and personal email addresses. When set up both ways it caused a continuous loop of emails from one account to the other and back again, over and over. The automated security systems picked this up as potential SPAM email and blocked those accounts. Once we had identified which accounts were auto-forwarding, we were able to update the system to recognise those email addresses as safe.

2. The first issue should not occur again as the new Councillors have been added to the safe list.

The second issue should not occur if Councillors adhere to the policy which does not allow auto-forwarding of Council email to personal email addresses

3. Not relevant

MR8 From Cllr Jarvis to Cllr Rowley – digital vs cash payment options**Question**

Digital payments - including bank transfers and contactless and card payments - are increasingly becoming the primary means of financial transaction. However, access to such payment methods, and indeed bank accounts is by no means ubiquitous, with - for example - many who are homeless or precariously housed, or have an irregular or undocumented migration status facing

Written Response

We accept that there will still be instances when payments may only be made in cash. The Council has moved away from accepting cash payments already, and is working across service areas to understand circumstances where cash may still need to be accepted, as the exception rather than the norm.

The Council is looking to trial cashless payments at one of its car parks. An initial Equality Impact assessment has been completed and various options to make payments will be offered, as well as plans to receive feedback before any roll out

MR8 From Cllr Jarvis to Cllr Rowley – digital vs cash payment options

substantial barriers to accessing them.
Does the Council intend to move away from accepting cash payments, and if so what assessments have been made as to the impact this may have on those lacking digital literacy and/or access to bank accounts?

takes place.
Of the UK's total population approximately 97 percent had any day-to-day account, amounting to approximately 49.7 individuals. 49.1 million UK adults as of October 2017 had a current account. In 2019 approximately 1.3m people did not have a bank account, although it is expected that this will have reduced as a result of the pandemic and more services moving to card only options.
The Council works with customers to assist with getting a basic bank account, and is also looking at other options that are available to customers, such as cards that are loaded with cash as part of an ongoing project looking at Going cashless.
Where people do still need to pay in cash or by cheque, they can do so at local Post Offices or at any one of the 42 Pay Point facilities across Oxford, which may well be more convenient than going to the Council offices.
If customers appear vulnerable and come to the Contact Centre with cash we do offer to accompany them to the Post Office, but this is not a common occurrence.

MR9 From Cllr Miles to Cllr Rowley - Vehicle fleet and Cargo bikes

Question
What is the total number of vehicles owned by the city council and its wholly owned social enterprise Oxford Direct Services (ODS) Group?
Specifically, within this vehicle fleet how many of the vehicles are electric or manual cargo bikes, and manual and e-bikes respectively?
What steps has the city council and ODS taken to encourage the use of manual or e-bikes and cargo bikes in the course of their duties within the city boundaries?

Written Response
OCC and ODS operate 330 vehicles
ODS has 4 e-bikes and are in the process of introducing 6 further e-bikes to the fleet.
ODS are exploring opportunities to increase our use of bikes of all descriptions. There are limitations to their use due to the majority of ODS' services requiring tools & equipment or materials.

MR10 From Cllr Jarvis to Cllr Clarkson – ‘Changing Places’ toilets grants**Question**

The government has allocated £30 million to support the provision of fully accessible ‘Changing Places’ toilets for the quarter of a million people nationwide that need them.

Has the council applied for funding for ‘Changing Places’ toilets, or does it intend to?

Written Response

A changing places toilet is included within the design for the soon to be developed East Oxford Community Centre. This funding pot had been earmarked within our funding plan for the site and we are in the process of reviewing whether we are able to submit an application in line with the funding pots terms and conditions, deadlines and also in line with the stage of the project that we are currently at.

A Changing Places toilet already exists at the Westgate Centre as a result of planning work with the developer based on the importance of having one available in the City Centre

MR11 From Cllr Jarvis to Cllr Rowley – empty homes**Question**

Reports in the Oxford Mail suggest that over 450 properties in Oxford are empty, over 350 of which had been empty for more than two years.

Can the Cabinet member confirm how many residential properties are currently registered as ‘empty’ in the city, and what additional information we have about them - for example, whether they are for sale and awaiting purchase or whether they are second homes for owners living elsewhere?

Could the cabinet member advise Council of our policy intentions regarding empty property and council tax?

Written Response

Council Tax records at 31st August 2021 suggest that there are currently 1,072 Empty properties. 598 have been empty for more than 6 months, and 123 have been empty for more than 2 years.

The Council’s empty property officer regularly contacts owners of empty dwellings, this also includes a yearly mailshot with questionnaire attached. The questionnaire requires information on current occupation status and information as to why the dwelling is empty and what intentions there are for the property to be re occupied.

Responses include,

- being renovated
- redevelopment
- probate processing
- up for rent
- up for sale
- caught up in a trust
- legal dispute

Owners who do not respond are contacted again and encouraged/supported to bring them back into use.

MR11 From Cllr Jarvis to Cllr Rowley – empty homes

Some empty properties are entitled to an Exemption- for example an unoccupied annexe, or left empty by someone who is bankrupt.

There are 937 properties that we identify as second homes. The Council does not allow any Council Tax second homes discount on these.

The Council charges additional Council Tax premiums for empty properties (as agreed by Cabinet in February 2019), depending on how long they have been empty. These premiums differ, and now go up to 300% for properties that have been empty for 10 years or more.

As this premium applies to the property, should that property remain empty following a change of ownership or tenancy, the premium will not be removed.

Cabinet Member for Culture, Leisure and Tourism**MC1 From Cllr Wade to Cllr Clarkson – Oxford Half Marathon arrangements****Question**

During the Blenheim Triathlon on 11 September, one competitor died and another suffered a heart attack which could have proved fatal. The Oxford Half Marathon is expected to take place in October. First responders will not be adequate if there is a major medical emergency.

Can the Cabinet Member confirm that the City Events Team has insisted that ambulances will be able to move freely across the race course, and that high level medical cover will be drafted in for the event?

Written Response

The Blenheim Triathlon was run by the same organiser as the Oxford Half Marathon (Limelight Sports).

Limelight Sports have confirmed that all emergency vehicles have access and can move freely throughout the Oxford Half Marathon course and they also have ambulance service presence within the event control room to facilitate this smoothly, if necessary.

Limelight Sports have submitted their Medical Plan to the Events Team. They have an independent medical consultant to advise on their plans. They will have 6 dedicated event ambulances available for this event as well as 8 cycle responders working in 4 teams tasked to patrol the course. Cycle Responders will be the primary response to any incident on the run route. For any patient requiring transport back to the Medical Centre, an event ambulance will be dispatched to the location.

MC2 From Cllr Wade to Cllr Clarkson – major event debriefing**Question**

Can the Cabinet Member confirm that, after each major event in the city, the Events Team will hold a debriefing session to ensure that positive and negative outcomes are identified for the future?

Written Response

The event management plans and risk assessments for each major event in the city are considered by the SAG (Safety Advisory Group), which Events Team representatives attend. Accordingly, debrief meetings for major events in the city are also held by SAG to enable the wider contribution of partner knowledge to the debrief (including fire, ambulance, police, environmental health etc.) and therefore there is a broader sharing of lessons learned across all the key stakeholders, including the Events Team.

MC3 From Cllr Landell Mills to Cllr Clarkson – Cleaner Thames**Question**

Will the Council will go ahead before this year's deadline (31st October), and apply for Designated Bathing Water status for the local stretch of the Thames?

What are the subsequent stages a 'Blue Flag' application needs to go through prior to confirmation?

Written Response

Yes an application for Designated Bathing Water Status for a part of the Thames within the city will be submitted to DEFRA by 31 October.

Blue Flag is an international award presented to well-managed beaches with excellent water quality and environmental education programmes. It is not clear that this would be available to a stretch of the Thames if Designated Bathing Water status is achieved.

MC4 From Cllr Wolff to Cllr Clarkson – Bathing Water Status application**Question**

At the last Full Council we were advised that our new Waterways Coordinator is working with the group involved in the Bathing Water Status application.

Could we be reassured that the drafting of this application is on track? Do we have a target date for its submission, and are there ways in which local residents can assist in drafting it?

Written Response

Yes an application for Designated Bathing Water Status for a part of the Thames within the city will be submitted to DEFRA by 31 October.

The Waterways Coordinator is liaising with the community organisation Thames 21 over the application.

MC5 From Cllr Wolff to Cllr Clarkson – waterways cross-agency working**Question**

The cabinet member's response to the waterways question at the last Full Council reported that the Waterways Coordinator "has already begun cross agency working with the Environment Agency and Canal and River Trust, and with the group involved in the Bathing Water Status application".

Could she provide us with a list of all the various organisations the Coordinator is in contact with and/or is intending to work with, and tell us what the 'coordination' remit and objective of the post is?

Written Response

The primary focus of this role is to address various health and safety issues on waterways assets where OCC is riparian land owner, and working with relevant agencies to rectify these.

Other areas of opportunity are working with Housing/Planning on provision for Boaters, opportunities for increasing biodiversity and active travel on our 'Blue' infrastructure, and linking agencies/community groups together to ensure the waterways can be enjoyed by all users.

Agencies and organisations the Waterways Coordinator has so far been in contact with are: the Environment Agency; Canal & Rivers Trust; County Council; other riparian landowners on Oxford's waterways; Thames 21/ Oxford Rivers Project; Earthwatch.

MC6 From Cllr Wolff to Cllr Clarkson – Iffley Fields Residents Association waterways group**Question**

Can Oxford City Council commit its officers to providing the Iffley Fields Residents Association waterways group with the help and support it needs to take forward its community initiative to improve the environment and safety of the Longbridges Nature Reserve for citizens?

Written Response

City Council bathing places were decommissioned in the late twentieth century. We welcome initiatives to improve local environment and safety, however the council have no plans to reinstate facilities at Longbridges.

The Waterways Coordinator would be happy to have a follow up conversation with the Iffley Fields Residents Association agenda on what steps can be taken to improve this area.

MC7 From Cllr Miles to Cllr Clarkson - Out of hours noise service**Question**

The out of hour noise service has been reduced by the council. What have been the average number of calls to this service currently on a

Written Response

The average number of calls over the last month on Fridays was 2 and on Saturdays the average was 4. Visits were made to 42% of the calls received and 58% of

MC7 From Cllr Miles to Cllr Clarkson - Out of hours noise service

Friday and Saturday night over the last month, by category of noise nuisance, and of these what proportion of these calls has the duty officer attended to?

callers either declined a visit or could not be contacted. The noise nuisance calls were primarily about parties with two calls about neighbours playing loud music and one call about noise from an alarm.

MC8 From Cllr Miles to Cllr Clarkson - Noise nuisance from outside dining**Question**

The COVID-pandemic has led to an increase in pubs using their outside space for customers. However the noise from amplified music and customers of pubs using outside spaces for entertainment are causing a nuisance to neighbouring residents throughout Oxford.

What steps is the city council taking to ensure that the licensed premises adhere to the noise-level requirements within their license conditions?

Written Response

A small number of pubs have been the subject of complaints about noise from outside space for customers and these were all investigated by officers and dealt with appropriately, with formal action only required at one premises.

The COVID Secure Team carried out nightly visits to hospitality venues across the city from September 2020 to the ending of restrictions in July 2021 and worked with businesses to help them comply with COVID restrictions and reduce disturbance from outdoor areas to a minimum. From July when the restrictions ended, visits have been carried out every weekend although they were increased to nightly for Freshers' Week at Oxford Brookes University. In addition the Licensing and Business Regulation Teams regularly liaise with businesses and share intelligence about premises with the police. Officers will make additional visits as necessary to ensure licensed premises are compliant.

MC9 From Cllr Miles to Cllr Clarkson - Temporary events licences**Question**

How many temporary events licences have been received by pubs in Oxford over the last six months, and of these how many have been refused?

Written Response

From March 2021 the Council received 22 applications for Temporary Event Notices from Pubs in Oxford. All of them were issued as there were no objections from the Police or Environmental Health

Cabinet Member for Finance and Asset Management; Deputy Leader of the Council

ET1 From Cllr Roz Smith to Cllr Turner – Internal auditors for ODS and City Council

Question

Can the cabinet member assure the Council that having the same audit firm, BDO, for our internal audit and for Oxford Direct Services is consistent with the latest CIPFA guidelines?

Written Response

The current CIPFA document concerning Public Sector Internal Audit Standards (updated March 2017: <https://www.cipfa.org/policy-and-guidance/standards/public-sector-internal-audit-standards>) confirms the application of Public Sector Internal Audit Standards (PSIAS) from 1 April 2017. Standard 1100 – ‘Independence and Objectivity’ does not preclude a single audit firm from providing internal audit service for both a parent company & its group companies. The provision of internal audit services by BDO for both the Council and ODS is therefore consistent with the latest CIPFA guidelines.

ET2 From Cllr Landell Mills to Cllr Turner - boardwalk at Port Meadow

Question

What does the City propose to do with the boardwalk at Port Meadow? There were serious concerns that insensitive proposals to address health and safety concerns might visually damage Port Meadow. The city council has not followed up with any proposals since the spring 2021.

Written Response

As agreed with the moorers at Port Meadow a further review was undertaken by RoSPA in relation to the proposed security fence. The report concluded that fencing was not required and moorers have been advised accordingly. Officers have recently received the results of a condition survey that is being considered and there will be a meeting with moorers and other stakeholders in the next couple of weeks to advise on any proposed work to the boardwalk .

TH1 From Cllr Wolff to Cllr Hayes – sedum-roofed bus shelters	
<p>Question</p> <p>Will the Council be seeking to emulate Witney Town Council’s installation of its first sedum-roofed bus shelter?</p>	<p>Written Response</p> <p>The bus shelter at Morrell Avenue is to be replaced with a green roof model as part of a trial. The shelter was ordered earlier in the year and is expected to arrive in the latter part of this year. Clear Channel have advised that they would not fund further trials and any additional shelters would need to be purchased.</p> <p>Clear Channel have the current contract for provision of bus shelters in Oxford until November 2022. At that time, there will be an opportunity to include green targets in any new contract.</p>

TH2 From Cllr Wolff to Cllr Hayes – Low Traffic Neighbourhood programme	
<p>Question</p> <p>Perhaps we are forgetting what traffic levels were like pre-pandemic, but there is a widespread feeling that both within the city and beyond they have greatly increased and are now unsustainable. The Low Traffic Neighbourhood programme is currently stalled for five months while the County engages with its objectors, whom to date have shown little recognition of the scale of the problem. We have been told to expect a final decision on December 23rd.</p> <p>What assurance can we be given that the city council is fully supportive of the programme and is determined to see it implemented?</p>	<p>Written Response</p> <p>At the 26th July Full Council, an amended version of Cllr Wolff’s motion was adopted. The City Council supports the LTNs programme in principle as part of wider strategic efforts to reduce congestion, improve air quality, and support active travel and public transport. The most critical thing now is to expedite Connecting Oxford, so that a wide-ranging, coherent package of changes (including traffic filters, workplace parking levy, support for buses and active travel) is introduced. The current piecemeal approach is unhelpful.</p>

TH3 From Cllr Malik to Cllr Hayes – Low Traffic Neighbourhood Schemes

Question

Why are there no LTN scheme in North Oxford and all the experimental LTN schemes are in East Oxford?

Written Response

The County Council consulted on an LTN scheme in Jericho and Walton Manor and report that the lack of clear consensus within the community for any plan led to the decision against any new implementation. This took place at a Cabinet Member Decision on 29th April 2021 before the change in administration. The County Council report that they selected East Oxford as the area for experimental LTN schemes based on the findings contained within its Local Cycling and Walking Infrastructure Plan.

TH4 From Cllr Malik to Cllr Hayes – Low Traffic Neighbourhood Schemes data

Question

Is the current Labour Administration's support for the LTN based on any data provided or just on the consultation?

If there is any data can you share this with the council?

Written Response

As per the 26th July Full Council motion, which reaffirms the opening paragraph of a 5 October 2020 motion, the support in principle is based on established data from other cities.

“This Council welcomes the public discussions which are taking place in this city about the value of Low Traffic Neighbourhoods (LTNs) in encouraging walking and cycling, preventing rat-running, and decreasing air pollution, while also having the positive effect of opening up residential and shopping streets for local communities, supporting local businesses and boosting community ties. This ongoing discussion is informed by successful LTNs in Waltham Forest, Groeningen in the Netherlands and Ghent in Belgium.”

We are expecting Oxfordshire County Council to publish information in due course, and encourage Cllr Malik to address his request to the local transport authority that exercises responsibility for the LTNs.

TH5 From Cllr Gant to Cllr Hayes - ZEZ

Question

In response to a question from Cllr Miles at council in July about the further delay to the introduction of the city centre ZEZ, the Cabinet member stated that he had fully answered previous questions about how the zone will be enforced, and provided links to a number of earlier documents and statements. None provide information about numbers and siting of cameras, whether they are fixed or mobile, hours of enforcement, or whether enforcement will be carried out by council officers or a contractor, and if so who the contractor is.

Will the Cabinet member please answer those specific questions?

Cllr Hayes also stated in July that “we expect to have more clarity on timescale shortly” for resolving the technical issues about back-office and emissions checking which he referred to in his answer. Can he provide an update?

Written Response

In my response I highlighted Cllr Miles’ inaccuracy about opposition members asking on a number of occasions about enforcement. I did not feel it was correct to permit the Opposition to so overstate their performance of a scrutiny function. Of the 29 questions asked about the ZEZ over 8 meetings of Full Council, 2 broadly covered enforcement. I would also urge Cllr Gant to revisit recordings of my verbal responses to follow-ups.

Five static cameras and one mobile camera are anticipated to be used for the ZEZ Pilot. The static cameras will be at the following locations:

- New Inn Hall Street junction with George Street
- New Road / Castle Street / Bonn Square junction by County Hall
- Cornmarket Street junction with Queen Street
- Cornmarket Street junction with George Street
- Ship Street near junction with Cornmarket Street

Hours of operation are 7am to 7pm on all days of the year. Enforcement will be carried out by a contractor, Conduent Public Sector UK Ltd.

The ZEZ pilot is set to launch in February 2022, with the registration system for exemptions and discounts going live in December 2021.

The ZEZ is a joint project but a matter in the direct remit of Oxfordshire County Council and that administration is led by Cllr Gant’s party in a coalition. I expect that Cllr Gant will wish to ask the same question in the next Full Council meeting of that local authority.

TH6 From Cllr Gant to Cllr Hayes - ZEZ -comments about delays

Question

Commenting on the delay to the ZEZ, Cllr Hayes said in the Oxford Mail “If you’ve been to the shops recently and wondered why some shelves look bare, you’ll understand why we’re launching the Zero Emission Zone early next year.”

The link between bare shelves and the delay to the ZEZ is not clear to me. Could the Councillor explain?

Written Response

This question refers to a quotation that features on a joint press release by the City Council and Oxfordshire County Council. In agreeing to this quotation, the County Council’s administration recognised the validity of my explanation. The latter authority is governed by an administration led by Cllr Gant’s party in a coalition.

We are all aware of just how torrid a time our local businesses are enduring owing to the pandemic. This was made worse for a time (coinciding with the delay to the ZEZ announcement) and fears of a further significant supply chain disruption have been realised. This Council is fully committed to supporting local businesses to have the best possible Christmas trading—something that will be made worse by this supply chain disruption manifesting itself in bare shelves.

Therefore, with the Christmas season being an important time for traders, a launch of the ZEZ in the new year, after the busy trading period is over, feels like a cooperative approach to take.

We know that the introduction of the pilot involves change and challenge—we have supported our local businesses to adapt to such change with, for example, multi-year discussion and planning, the provision of electric cargo bikes to the Covered Market, and arrangement of discounts and exemptions.

I would remind Cllr Gant that transport changes are best made when a Council properly consults and listens to local businesses set to be affected by such changes. I do not believe that we are seeing such an approach by the County Council in relation to LTNs.

TH7 From Cllr Landell Mills to Cllr Hayes – ZEZ 1

Question

Why didn't the proposed ZEZ go ahead in August as previously promised, and what caused it to be delayed?

Written Response

The Councillor may wish to consider the press releases issued in July 2021:

https://www.oxford.gov.uk/news/article/1966/zez_pilot_to_launch_in_february_2022

and in September:

https://www.oxford.gov.uk/news/article/1899/statement_on_zez_pilot

The scheme could not be launched because Conduent, which is providing the back office payment system have had to overcome a number of challenges with writing the programming.

The ZEZ is a joint project with Oxfordshire County Council and that administration is led by Cllr Landell Mills' party in a coalition.

TH8 From Cllr Landell Mills to Cllr Hayes – ZEZ 2

Question

Won't the proposed ZEZ deter shoppers from coming into Oxford and what provision has the City Council made to ensure that shoppers are not deterred ?

Written Response

The ZEZ is a joint project with Oxfordshire County Council and that administration is led by Cllr Cllr Landell Mills' party in a coalition.

The City and County Councils continue to promote and support the use of public transport and active travel by shoppers coming into the city centre, in particular from our Park & Rides. We are seeking urgent action by the County Council to prioritise bus transportation, including priority access for buses on roads, and strongly hope that they will respond to calls for action positively. Buses are in real need of a lifeline and anything that prevents their recovery is a bad thing.

For those that do need to drive into the city centre and park, those carparks are outside the area covered by the ZEZ Pilot, which starts in February. Longer term, the full city centre ZEZ and Connecting Oxford will still permit those that need city centre parking access to it, while incentivising a shift to non-polluting vehicles.

TH9 From Cllr Landell Mills to Cllr Hayes – ZEZ 3**Question**

Would not the ZEZ proposals be more effective — in terms of improving air quality while promoting active travel — combined with a congestion charge zone?

Written Response

As the Councillor will be aware, the City and County Councils are proposing to combine the full city centre ZEZ with Connecting Oxford – which will improve air quality while also promoting active travel. A congestion charge was assessed as part of the development work for Connecting Oxford and rejected on the grounds that it would have insufficient impact.

The ZEZ and Connecting Oxford are a joint project with Oxfordshire County Council and that administration is led by Cllr Landell Mills’ party in a coalition.

TH10 From Cllr Landell Mills to Cllr Hayes – air quality monitoring station**Question**

How much does it cost to buy an air quality monitoring station and how much does one cost to operate one per year? How many has the City got and is it proposed to buy any more?

Written Response

A Typical network monitoring station for measuring NO2 and PM can cost between £50k-£150k to buy and £10k-£30k p.a. to run. I have explained this to Cllr Landell Mills at the time of his most recent request to introduce new air quality monitoring into the city and, at that time, I identified that we were very satisfied with our coverage.

We have 3 of these stations (2 road site stations and one background station: AURN St Ebbes, AURN Oxford Centre, Oxford High Street)

Oxford City Council operates an extensive air quality monitoring network. In addition to the 3 automatic monitoring sites identified above, we monitor air quality levels at 71 different locations across the city. For the purposes of deciding which locations to monitor, the City Council considers locations with relevant public exposure. Approximately half of the monitoring locations are within central Oxford, in locations where the City Council reasonably believes relevant public exposure is most likely to be significant. The remaining locations are outside of the central area, with priority again fixed to locations where relevant public exposure is most likely.

The City Council has a rotational system, ensuring sites are covered, on average, every 2 to 3 years, to increase our coverage and continuously identify potential new air quality hotspots or new areas of interest

One important aspect of monitoring is to be able to demonstrate trends in air quality over long time periods.

TH10 From Cllr Landell Mills to Cllr Hayes – air quality monitoring station	
	<p>In order to do so, the Council sustains multi-year monitoring at a number of sites, so that the results can help to evidence trends that are independent of location.</p> <p>Oxford City Council has recently approved a new Air Quality Action Plan which sets the toughest air quality standards in the country.</p>

TH11 From Cllr Malik to Cllr Hayes – Connecting Oxford	
Question	Written Response
<p>Does this administration support Connecting Oxford which proposes bus gates around the city and how do you propose people will be able to commute?</p>	<p>Yes, as I believe Cllr Malik did himself while part of the Labour Group. We propose that more people will be able to commute by bus. With fewer cars in front of buses slowing them down, bus travel will become more reliable, more punctual, more attractive, and more successfully used.</p> <p>Based on the Oxford Transport Strategy (2016) and Connecting Oxford Plan (2019), a 10% decrease in the car driver mode share is needed to maintain the current unacceptable levels of congestion. And by 2031, the impact forecast increases in congestion could result in a loss of around £150 million from the economy of the city.</p> <p>The County Council’s congestion monitoring, shows that congestion on city centre streets has nearly returned to pre-pandemic levels. Average bus speeds in Oxford have been under 8 mph since 2016 and worsening</p> <p>Oxfordshire County Council are submitting a BSIP bid to Central Government next month, which if successful will deliver substantial amounts of new funding via an ‘Enhanced Partnership’ over a three-year period. We have worked closely with the County Council on the bid to ensure that it has a higher level of ambition in respect of improved infrastructure, an enhanced passenger experience, simpler/discounted fares, and a high-quality new vehicle specification.</p> <p>Oxfordshire County Council have been shortlisted to prepare a business case for ZEBRA funding. This Central Government funding initiative will support the delivery of 166 new battery-electric double deck vehicles during 2023. This will ensure that buses operating exclusively within the SMARTZONE will be zero emission and very quiet. Again, the City Council has worked closely on this opportunity.</p>

TH12 From Cllr Gant to Cllr Hayes – Westgate Centre car park charges**Question**

Can the councillor report if any progress has been made in his discussions with the Westgate Centre over their undertaking to “have regard” to charges in City Council-owned car parks in setting tariffs in their own car park?

Observation suggests that charges at Westgate remain significantly lower, thus continuing to draw motorised traffic into the city centre, and reduce income for this council.

Written Response

The City and County Councils agreed to send a joint letter to the Westgate with a view to raising our issues and working constructively to underline the importance of car park charging as part of a broader approach to achieving modal shift. In our conversations to date, Westgate have said that they are keen to understand the impact of interventions such as Connecting Oxford and the Zero Emission Zone as part of any longer-term plan around their car parking charges.

Officers advise me that the joint letter has not yet been progressed due to capacity. However, they assure me that they have picked this up with County Council and will progress with them in the coming weeks.

TH13 From Cllr Landell Mills to Cllr Hayes - Sea Court Park And Ride**Question**

- When will the Seacourt park and ride extension become operational?
- How much has the Seacourt park and ride cost in terms of capital cost and professional fees to date?
- How much more, is it anticipated, will need to be spent on the Seacourt Park and Ride to make it operational and when will it be opened?

Written Response

As set out in the response to a similar question to Council in July the Seacourt extension is complete (completion certification was given in June 2021) however, the car park extension has been temporarily barriered off whilst usage levels remain low due to the pandemic with original car park still operating below capacity.

This saves money in terms of maintenance and management and reduces risks of damage, which seems prudent whilst usage is down. Pre-pandemic and evidenced as part of the planning application, the original park and ride was full very early in the morning and there was significant demand for the extension. We expect the very low levels currently being experienced to be temporary and for increased usage to return over time. This is particularly relevant given we want to encourage further modal shift over time compared to the modal split we currently have to support reduced congestion and improved air quality. The usage is being kept under review and the barriers can easily be removed to allow access.

The final accounts for the scheme are being completed but the cost came in within the budget agreed at last budget setting and is around £5.372m. Ongoing costs are part of the operation budget and not part of the capital investment cost.

TH14 From Cllr Wolff to Cllr Hayes – eCargo bikes grant funding

Question

The government has announced a £400,000 Fund to enable the purchase of eCargo bikes (closing date 14th December) by organisations.

Has the Council applied for a grant or is it intending to? Would the cabinet member welcome suggestions for the deployment of such machines?

Written Response

Defra awarded the City Council a grant to support the introduction the ZEZ, which helped to acquire two eCargo bikes for use with traders in the Covered Market. Officers at both the Council and ODS are working with traders to support and encourage the optimal use of these cargo bikes. In order to have a chance of successfully applying for funding in future, having received some already, the Council needs to evaluate the take-up of Atlas and Aria, the two bikes and demonstrate to the funder that we have a need which can be met and a track record for delivering such schemes.

As Cllr Wolff will be aware, the Council has a track record of seeking and securing external funding to further our air quality and zero carbon ambitions. We are at a juncture between a decade and more of terrible underfunding of local government and potentially much deeper cuts to our councils. We need external funding to be able to move forward as quickly as possible to our goal of net zero emissions as a city by 2040 or earlier and the toughest local government air quality standard in the country. Bringing in external funding, whenever the right opportunity arises and we can maintain our track record of successful delivery, will be key, and I thank Cllr Wolff for highlighting such a possibility.

More information: the Council's news [article](#)

Cabinet Member for Inclusive Communities

SA1 From Cllr Pegg to Cllr Aziz – numbers of Afghan refugees

Question	Written Response
<p>How many Afghan refugees does the Council expect to arrive in Oxford, when are they expected, and what steps, if any, is the Council taking to find housing for Afghan refugees in Oxford?</p>	<p>The Council has made a commitment to house up to 10 Afghan families through either the ARAP (Afghan Resettlement Accommodation Programme) or ACRS (Afghan Citizens Resettlement Scheme). Families will be matched to Councils when the housing has been sourced.</p>

SA2 From Cllr Pegg to Cllr Aziz – resettling Afghan refugees

Question	Written Response
<p>Will the council make a commitment to find permanent accommodation places for refugees on the Afghan resettlement scheme?</p> <p>Will this impact the number of resettlement places currently committed for the new UKRS scheme, and can you confirm the number of places currently available under the UKRS scheme?</p> <p>What factors, if any, are limiting the council from offering more resettlement places?</p>	<p>Yes, please see above SA1.</p> <p>The commitment to ARAP and ACRS is in addition to the existing commitment of 8 families from the UKRS (UK Resettlement Scheme) and the previous 30 families from SVPRS (Syrian Vulnerable Persons Resettlement Scheme).</p> <p>The main factor limiting the Council is the lack of available and affordable private sector housing.</p>

SA3 From Cllr Pegg to Cllr Aziz – supporting groups assisting Afghan refugees

Question	Written Response
<p>How will the Council support the work of community groups like Asylum Welcome, Oxfordshire Afghan Aid, Refugee Resource and Care4Calais who are offering assistance to Afghan refugees locally?</p>	<p>We have supported a number of community groups, including Refugee Resource and Asylum Welcome, through our community grants programme and Controlling Migration Fund. We are exploring how our current community grants may be able to assist local community groups with Afghan refugees.</p> <p>Through the Refugee, Asylum Seeker and Vulnerable Migrant Coordination Group, and other forums, officers will continue to work closely with many local groups who offer assistance to refugees.</p>

SA4 From Cllr Pegg to Cllr Aziz – supporting Afghan refugees**Question**

How will the Council look to work more closely with the County Council, who are currently responsible for Afghan refugees in temporary accommodation, to ensure the best quality local authority support?

Written Response

The County Council will continue to be the lead authority for those in temporary accommodation. The City Council will play a full role in the systemwide response led by the County and is committed to providing short term emergency assistance wherever possible to help with this.

The Council will continue to discuss the potential for longer term county-wide provision and support for all refugees, asylum seekers and migrants in Oxfordshire.

SA5 From Cllr Pegg to Cllr Aziz – Operation Warm Welcome**Question**

Has the Council received money from the UK Government as part of its Operation Warm Welcome?

Written Response

No. Funding for Operation Warm Welcome has been granted to Oxfordshire County Council as the lead authority co-ordinating the emergency response.

SA6 From Cllr Malik to Cllr Aziz – rehousing Afghan refugees**Question**

Have the City Council rehoused all the Afghan families arriving from Afghanistan?

Written Response

No, the City Council has made a commitment to house 10 families who have arrived from Afghanistan and currently living in bridging hotels.

SA7 From Cllr Pegg to Cllr Aziz – reducing LGBTQ+ hate crimes**Question**

Data from Thames Valley Police has shown that recorded LGBTQ+ hate crimes in Oxford have increased 150% in 2020/21, as reported in the Oxford Mail on 2nd September. What plans does the Council have to address this, in partnership with other authorities?

Written Response

The Council will be working with the new Local Police Area Commander to continue its partnership approach to addressing hate crime in all its forms in Oxford. Our collective focus is on increasing public confidence to report hate crime; engaging with our communities and partners; using data analysis to identify and manage repeat offenders, victims and locations; and improve recording, outcomes and the quality of investigations.

SA8 From Cllr Pegg to Cllr Aziz – reducing transphobia**Question**

Given that data from Thames Valley police shows that reported transphobic hate crimes in Oxford doubled in 2020/21, how will the Council work with other authorities to address transphobia in the city?

Written Response

The Council will be working with the new Local Police Area Commander to continue its partnership approach to addressing hate crime in all its forms in Oxford. Our collective focus is on increasing public confidence to report hate crime; engaging with our communities and partners; using data analysis to identify and manage repeat offenders, victims and locations; and improve recording, outcomes and the quality of investigations.

SA9 From Cllr Linda Smith to Cllr Aziz – supporting the Hindu community**Question**

Will the cabinet member join me in commending the excellent contribution to the local community made by the Oxford Hindu Temple and Community Centre Project over many years?

Does the cabinet member agree that Oxford's Hindu community would benefit from dedicated premises from which to grow their activities and further their contribution to the fantastic diversity of this city?

How can Oxford City Council assist with this?

Written Response

The Hindu Temple has certainly made an excellent contribution to Oxford and its communities over the years and we are very thankful for this. The Council have met with the Hindu Temples on various occasions to understand their requirements and how we can work together on potential solutions. This strand of work is ongoing and the Council is currently undertaking a review of potential space that may be able to provide options to help serve their needs.

Cabinet Member for Parks and Waste Reduction

LA1 From Cllr Malik to Cllr Arshad – support for a Muslim cemetery

Question

In the next local plan review, would the Labour administration support a separate Muslim cemetery, following the examples of other cities in the UK?

Written Response

As work on the 2040 Local Plan only began a few weeks ago, it's far too early to predict what it will contain. However, it is important to note that the Local Plan only covers the planning designation of sites within the City boundary; sites outside the boundary would come under the Local Plans of the relevant neighbouring District Council. As the City Council has carried out extensive searches over many years for sites for new burial spaces, and no potential sites inside the City have been identified the 2040 Local Plan for Oxford is unlikely to identify a new burial site. It is worth noting that there is a national shortage of burial space. We have regular conversations with faith communities in Oxford and are continuing to try and progress new burial space near the city, working with neighbouring authorities.

LA2 From Cllr Roz Smith to Cllr Arshad – No-Mow May verges

Question

Would the cabinet member agree that some residential verges are **not** suitable for 'no mow' May and should be cut on a regular basis?

Written Response

While the Council is committed to allowing some of the city's verges to grow long to promote biodiversity, it is certainly the case that not all verges should be kept long. The current pilot involves a relatively small number of predominantly arterial routes. If we are satisfied the pilot is successful this could be expanded in a carefully managed way in areas where there is support. Elsewhere, grass verges will continue to be cut in the normal way.

LA3 From Cllr Miles to Cllr Arshad - Litter

Question

The level of littering within Oxford is currently significant. Many residential streets are going for more than a week without being cleaned.

Written Response

ODS comply with our service standards within residential areas by litter picking or mechanically sweeping areas at least once every 15 working days. We also

LA3 From Cllr Miles to Cllr Arshad - Litter

What is the current minimum service level agreement requirement set by the council for residential street cleaning in Oxford, and is this currently being met?

What steps are being explored by the council to better leverage technological solutions to increase efficiency and the standards of cleaning of the pavements and removal of litter?

carry out regular street inspections which allow us to target our resources in high demand areas. Shopfronts in residential areas have their bins emptied and are litter picked on a daily basis.

We are always exploring new ways of working with the aim of improving efficiency and service provision across the city. ODS are heavily involved in trialling new technology as and when it comes to market.

LA4 Cllr Landell Mills to Cllr Arshad – Green Flag scheme**Question**

Are parks that were previously entered for Green Flag award as well maintained this year as in previous years and what metrics and being used to gauge this?

Written Response

The parks are being managed in a different way. The trees are still being surveyed every three years as part of the Tree Management Policy and bins are still being emptied twice a day. However grass cutting has changed because of the biodiversity action plan which calls for drip lines around to be left long rather than mown. Also there is a greater participation from residents to manage/maintain shrubs/flowers beds. The management of all the parks have moved with the wider industry/ public consensus that parks don't need to be overly manicured because it has a negative impact on biodiversity.

LA5 From Cllr Malik to Cllr Arshad - community facility at Cowley Marsh Park**Question**

Temple Cowley had more than its share of housing in the area, in fact, it's over developed. After the closure of Temple Cowley pool, local residents have nowhere to get together to socialise in Temple Cowley.

Can the current leadership support the community facility at Cowley Marsh Park and draw up a financial strategy over two to three years in the budget

Written Response

There are a number of community accessible facilities within the wider catchment area. These include the soon to be improved East Oxford Community Centre, Asian Cultural Centre, Regal Community Centre, Oxford Spires Academy, St Gregory The Great School, Florence Park Community Centre, Cowley Workers Sports and Social Club and The Venue at Cowley to name some.

There is currently no Council budget to develop or operate a facility of this type at Cowley Marsh park. If there were community groups or organisations who were interested in developing a community facility within Cowley Marsh Park then they would need to ensure that they could demonstrate clear need for the

LA5 From Cllr Malik to Cllr Arshad - community facility at Cowley Marsh Park

to fund this?

facility, that it was deliverable with a comprehensive and fully funded business case. A fair and equitable competitive process would also need to be undertaken to ensure that all interested groups/organisations were able to apply and necessary diligence undertaken such as planning and feasibility.

LA6 From Cllr Pegg to Cllr Arshad – reducing paper recycle going to landfill

Question

What measures do the Council and Viridor Resource Management take to ensure that the paper and card they export from the UK does not end up in landfill?

Written Response

Recycled commodities, like many products, are a truly global trade. Fibre packaging is produced abroad and comes into the UK to be sold, used and then collected as recycling before it arrives at Viridor's MRF. There is huge demand in SE Asia and India (previously China until recent years) as this is where the majority of the world's paper mills are located. They are a major markets for UK fibre as the product quality is high. The material is shipped to these mills to be re-manufactured into new packaging and it is a constant cycle around the world.

There is limited processing capacity within the UK, with circa 8 million tonnes per annum of paper and card collected each year but only 3 million tonnes per annum processing capacity available at a small number of paper mills that still operate. Consequently, the majority of collected materials are exported.

As newspaper and magazine readership declines as we continue into the digital age, cardboard packaging is rising as a trend with more and more residents shopping online. This means that in the near future there is likely to be additional capacity within the UK as waste and resource organisations look to develop facilities fit for the future.

Viridor Resource Management (VRM), is responsible for marketing these materials optimally, both nationally and internationally as appropriate, to ensure maximised financial and environmental benefits. VRM sells large amounts of paper and card products to manufacturers in the UK.

VRM's prime objective is to ensure that the quality products generated are positioned and placed within the UK, European and global markets in a timely, professional and balanced manner to ensure the secure, reliable, financially stable and environmentally

LA6 From Cllr Pegg to Cllr Arshad – reducing paper recyclate going to landfill

sustainable use of the recyclate.

As an ethical operator we work hard to ensure all our output materials are used appropriately and in the most sustainable way. With this in mind, VRM are careful who they approve to sell materials on to. In line with the Proximity Principle, our preference is always to minimise the distance any materials travel. The end destinations used for Crayford MRF outputs are carefully selected in line with this, in compliance with the Waste Hierarchy, and also dependent upon their appropriateness and distance from site.

LA8 From Cllr Pegg to Cllr Arshad – public water fountains**Question**

Does the Council have any plans to install additional public water fountains in Oxford, like those in Florence Park, Bury Knowle and Cutteslowe Park?

Written Response

The fountains installed were part of additional funding provided in collaboration with the 'Refill' campaign. Exploring further opportunities to expand provision of fountains would be subject to identifying appropriate locations that demonstrate good value/need, and finding the necessary resource to deliver and maintain these for future years.

LA9 From Cllr Jarvis to Cllr Arshad – felling mature tree on Howard Street**Question**

Why was a mature tree at the junction of Iffley Road and Howard Street removed when it hadn't been listed as being in need of attention in any of the previous five weekly tree lists?

Written Response

We have been monitoring the tree over the last three years and over this time have seen the crown become thinner in distribution and an increase in decay causing fungi around the base of the tree. These observations highlight that the tree is under a large amount of stress and it is likely that the root system of the tree is physiologically and structurally dysfunctional leading to its eventual death or failure.

The ward councillors were made aware of the condition of the tree and the works in July this year.

The weekly tree list is sent out by the planning department and is a list of trees that have planning applications submitted. This tree did not require a planning application.

AH1 From Cllr Wade to Cllr Hollingsworth – biodiversity gain mapping

Question	Written Response
<p>The biodiversity net gain which developers are required to show, is often met by offsetting the net gain on to another piece of land, separate from the development site.</p> <p>Will the City Council now create a publicly available map to identify sites deemed appropriate for offsetting within the city boundaries?</p>	<p>Policy G2 of the Oxford Local Plan 2036 says that “Offsetting measures are likely to include identification of appropriate off- site locations/projects for improvement, which should be within the relevant Conservation Target Area if appropriate, or within the locality of the site.” A map of Oxfordshire’s Conservation Target Areas, which cover just over 20% of the county by area, can be found at https://www.wildoxfordshire.org.uk/biodiversity/conservation-target-areas/oxfordshires-ctas-to-download/</p> <p>Since these maps already exist, are publicly available and can be located in seconds using a standard search engine, I don’t think it is necessary for the City Council to create its own versions.</p>

AH2 From Cllr Landell Mills to Cllr Hollingsworth - biodiversity gain mapping 2

Question	Written Response
<p>Will the City Council create a publicly accessible map which shows all areas of Biodiversity Net Gain agreed as part of a planning permission with the City Council, both inside and outside the city’s boundary, that references the planning permission and the Biodiversity Net Gain agreement and provides a summary of the agreement?</p>	<p>Policy G2 of the Oxford Local Plan 2036 says that “Offsetting measures are likely to include identification of appropriate off- site locations/projects for improvement, which should be within the relevant Conservation Target Area if appropriate, or within the locality of the site.” A map of Oxfordshire’s Conservation Target Areas, which cover just over 20% of the county by area, can be found at https://www.wildoxfordshire.org.uk/biodiversity/conservation-target-areas/oxfordshires-ctas-to-download/</p> <p>Since these maps already exist, are publicly available and can be located in seconds using a standard search engine, I don’t think it is necessary for the City Council to create its own versions.</p>

AH3 From Cllr Gant to Cllr Hollingsworth – securing biodiversity net gain in development

Question

The Government’s Environment Bill (2020), currently making its way through Parliament, contains an important section on securing biodiversity net gain in development. As well as being an important initiative in terms of the future of our country and planet, this provision has significant implications for councils. A number of councils, including West Oxfordshire, Vale of White Horse and South Oxfordshire, have acted as “early adopters”, implementing a range of requirements on developers to deliver net gain, allow third-party offsetting and/or contribute to a council-led offsetting fund.

Has Oxford City Council made similar provisions in advance of the progress of the Bill?

Written Response

The City Council is currently in discussions with a third party organisation about the establishment of such measures; if the outcome of those discussions is successful this will be reported in due course.

AH4 From Cllr Landell Mills to Cllr Hollingsworth - Biodiversity Net Gain 1

Question

Biodiversity Net Gain will mean that developers will be required to make long term commitments lasting tens of years. How will the City Council be policing these agreements and ensure that the agreements are upheld years after they were agreed, and which City Council officers will be responsible for monitoring the delivery of the plans?

Written Response

Policy G2 of the Local Plan specifies that ‘A management and monitoring plan may be required for larger sites’ and the Technical Advice Note on this matter adds that ‘the future maintenance and management of habitats that are identified as forms of mitigation or compensation must be assured through the provision of funded management plans. The City Council will consider the appropriate use of Section 106 obligations, Community Infrastructure Levy or financial endowments to achieve security for management in perpetuity (or the lifetime of the development)’. The responsibility for monitoring these agreements will sit with City Council corporately, with specific officers – such as the Ecology Officer, officers in the Environment and Planning teams, in Parks and Leisure and so forth – being responsible for different aspects of different projects, as appropriate.

AH5 From Cllr Landell Mills to Cllr Hollingsworth - Biodiversity Net Gain 2**Question**

Is it sensible for the City and our in-house contractor ODS to both monitor and deliver Biodiversity Net Gain? Is this not a case of the City acting as both poacher and gamekeeper?

Written Response

While ODS may on occasion be the contractor delivering a particular Bio-Diversity Net Gain scheme – for example in a City Council owned Park – the responsibility for the scheme lies with the Council corporately as Local Planning Authority and the applicant on whose behalf the scheme is being delivered. In this case ODS is no different to any other contractor, and is neither poacher nor gamekeeper.

AH6 From Cllr Landell Mills to Cllr Hollingsworth - Biodiversity Net Gain 3**Question**

There is considerable local expertise in landscape, ecology and amenity outside of the City Council. How will this expertise be accessed and what opportunities are there for stakeholders to be consulted on Biodiversity Net Gain plans and have a meaningful input into them before they are adopted?

Has the planning department got the necessary expertise and experience to assess developers' Biodiversity Net Gain plans?

Written Response

Yes. The Planning Department, and the Ecology Team who assess Biodiversity Net Gain plans, have the necessary skills and expertise to assess plans, something that all Councils are required to do as part of their statutory responsibilities. Plans that are part of planning applications are both consulted upon and assessed as part of the development control process, allowing for stakeholders and interested parties to express their views on the adequacy or otherwise of the proposals, in exactly the same that groups expert in say building conservation do at the moment.

AH7 From Cllr Wade to Cllr Hollingsworth - Oxford North biodiversity off-setting**Question**

TWO, the developers of Oxford North, reached a s.106 agreement with the City Council under which a biodiversity net gain of 5% had to be delivered — this net gain to be through off-site provision in Cutteslowe Park. The scheme prepared by the developers was not discussed with the Park stakeholders, although TWO were informed that it had been. The stakeholders have, when they learned

Written Response

The premise of this question appears to be incorrect. The offsetting scheme in question was designed in a collaborative process involving the City Council Ecology and Parks teams, the Friends of Cutteslowe Park before the Oxford North application was determined. It was subsequently signed off by Oxford City Council Planners as part of the s.106 process after the application was approved. The scheme is the restoration

AH7 From Cllr Wade to Cllr Hollingsworth - Oxford North biodiversity off-setting

of the scheme late in the day, made compelling objections based on their long-term knowledge of the park.

Can the Cabinet Member now take steps to ensure that future off-setting works are consulted on with local stakeholders, so that the situation in Cutteslowe, where the plan is powerfully opposed by stakeholders, cannot happen again?

of a wildflower meadow from 3ha of grassland in the lower level of Cutteslowe Park, an aspiration referred to in the 2018-2022 Cutteslowe & Sunnymead Park Management Plan and specifically referred to in the Oxford City Council Green Spaces Biodiversity Review, last updated in February 2020, as being funded through the offsetting scheme (see paragraph 10.1 'Top 12 Priority Projects' of that report).

This being the case, it would appear that local stakeholders were consulted about the scheme as part of the Management Plan and in particular the Green Spaces Biodiversity Review, and were some considerable time ago.

AH8 From Cllr Gant to Cllr Hollingsworth –biodiversity net gain from Oxford North

Question

While the principle in the Environment Bill of requiring biodiversity net gain in order to receive planning permission is welcome, indeed vital, there is considerable concern about how it will be achieved in practice, including around the metric proposed to measure net gain and assess landscape and habitat, the lack of empirical exploration of outputs so far, the question of who does the measuring, and the ability of councils to monitor and police mandatory requirements. Many stakeholders, including parliamentarians based in Oxford, the LGA and academics have expressed concern. For example, a recent academic paper¹ stated that "...these [biodiversity] gains fall within a governance gap whereby they risk being unenforceable...", and concludes "...designing governance mechanisms for reconciling infrastructure expansion with biodiversity conservation is deeply challenging".

Meanwhile, Oxford continues to deliver huge developments like Oxford North, whose

Written Response

The process for ensuring that biodiversity off-setting plans are sufficient is one that is carried out by the relevant officers of this Council who have the professional and expertise to judge whether or not proposals are satisfactory. It's their professional opinion that matters.

The offsetting scheme here, which was outlined in the original report on Oxford North to the West Area Planning Committee in late 2019, is for the enhancement of 3ha of grassland in Cutteslowe Park which currently has a relatively low biodiversity level because of the domination of wildflower species by a limited range of grass species. The scheme was first proposed as an aspiration in the *2018-2022 Cutteslowe &*

AH8 From Cllr Gant to Cllr Hollingsworth –biodiversity net gain from Oxford North

proposed biodiversity plan includes planting a hedge in Cutteslowe Park.

Is the Cabinet member satisfied with the biodiversity offsetting plans for Oxford North, and with the Council’s processes for securing net gain?

Can the Cabinet member explain how planting a hedge in what is already a varied natural habitat represents any significant mitigation for such a huge development (as well as limiting the openness and amenity of the lower playing field)?

1.: zu *Ermgassen and others*, “Exploring the ecological outcomes of mandatory biodiversity net gain using evidence from early-adopter jurisdictions in England” in *Wiley, Conservation Letters*, March 2021.

Sunnymead Park Management Plan and specifically referred to in the *Oxford City Council Green Spaces Biodiversity Review*, last updated in February 2020, as being funded through the offsetting scheme (see paragraph 10.1 ‘Top 12 Priority Projects’ of that report).

There are no current proposals, as far as I am aware, to plant a hedge.

AH9 From Cllr Gant to Cllr Hollingsworth – Oxford North access from site

Question

Is the Council administration happy with details in emerging plans for Oxford North for residents to get in and out of the development on foot and by bike, including to Wolvercote primary school, to join up with active travel lanes on Woodstock Road, and to Parkway station (in particular bearing in mind the actual experience of residents of Barton Park)?

Written Response

The details of access to the site for all modes were discussed at substantial length when the planning application was heard by the West Area Planning Committee. In general terms the City Council’s view is that active travel modes should take priority. However it is important to bear in mind that Oxfordshire County Council is the Highways Authority, and as a statutory consultee its views are critical in shaping a planning application appropriately. Experience of numerous sites in Oxford is that the County Council has not been as willing to support restrictions on speeds and the prioritisation of active modes over private cars, as the City Council would have required had it been able. Barton Park is prime example of this. Fortunately the recent elections have led to a change of political administration at County Hall – and I would like to congratulate Cllr Gant on his appointment to an important role in that administration – and I very much look forward to a changing of emphasis in the advice from the Highways Authority on schemes like this.

AH10 From Cllr Gant to Cllr Hollingsworth – cycle and pedestrian access to Barton Park

Question

The Cabinet member will be aware that residents of Barton Park and other stakeholders held an event on Friday 10 September, attended by several members of this council and other elected representatives, to draw attention to the unsatisfactory facilities for residents to cross the A40 on foot or by bike.

Is the city council satisfied with this aspect of how the Barton Park scheme has been delivered, bearing in mind it was the landowner, promoter and planning authority?

What plans, if any, does this council have for improving this aspect of the amenity of residents of Barton Park?

Written Response

As Cllr Gant has perhaps forgotten, the City Council strongly supported a significant reduction in the speed limit along the A40 past Barton Park, in order to give greater security and safety for residents of the development and make it easier to cross between Barton Park and Northway. Unfortunately this was not supported by Oxfordshire County Council. I am very proud of the work that Oxford City Council has done as landowner, promoter and planning authority for the Barton Park development. But the one aspect, outside of the control of the City Council, that is less than satisfactory is the speed limit on the A40 at this point and the consequent ease of crossing for pedestrians and cyclists. Given that higher speeds simply allow motor vehicles to travel from one queue of stationary traffic to another at a higher speed but with minimal impact on overall journey time, it seems to me that the situation would be significantly improved if the County Council were to change their position, and reduce the speed limit on this part of the A40 to a reasonable level. Perhaps Cllr Gant, as an important member of the ruling administration at County Hall, might be best advised to press for this change there, since the power to make the change now rests with him and his colleagues. I therefore look forward to seeing him take forward this long overdue measure.

AH11 From Cllr Pegg to Cllr Hollingsworth – Horse Fields EIA

Question

Recognising the site's biodiversity value, will the Council be requesting a full Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) from Oxford City Housing Ltd before it develops the Horse Fields site in Iffley Village?

Written Response

The rules governing EIAs are clearly set down in the Town and Country Planning (Environmental Impact Assessment) Regulations 2017. An EIA is only required when certain thresholds relating to the type of development (for example a nuclear power station, an airport, a motorway, a waste-disposal facility and so forth) or to the scale of the development (for a housing development, one of more than 150 units or more than 5 hectares) are exceeded. The site in Iffley Village does not come close to exceeding any of these thresholds, so no EIA is required.

AH12 From Cllr Roz Smith to Cllr Hollingsworth - Warren Meadow housing stability: to be replaced

Question

The 1973 Foundation Engineering/British Geological Survey concluded that the 12m drop of the rubble slope from Warren Meadow to the Lye Valley below is unstable and thus unsuitable for a new access road to the Churchill hospital. There is evidence of at least one landslip down the bank that has buried a sewer hatch. The slope angle is 32-42 degrees, far steeper than the safe maximum of 22 degrees according to Dr Curt Lambeth.

Note: Foundation Engineering suggested reinforcing the slope, filling in the Valley with tonnes of hogging and culverting the Lye Brook to stabilize it.

Has the slope now been stabilized and its precipitous drop reduced prior to development?

Written Response

As part of the planning application approved in 2016, and the subsequent preparatory work for building the approved scheme, Oxford City Council, OCHL and the contractor have carried out a number of site surveys:

- Phase 1 Ground Condition Assessment, in 2012 by Peter Brett Associates and Geotechnical Engineering Ltd (GEL) for Oxford City Council
- Land Quality Assessment, in 2018 by WSP and GEL for OCHL
- Interpretive Report on the Ground Investigation, in 2019 by GEL for the contractor
- Slope Stability Appraisal in 2020 by GEL for the contractor

This most recent survey, the Slope Stability Report, found no recent slippage, and found no evidence of movement or instability in the ground or the mature trees on the slope. The report explains that the development of mature vegetation on the site with its significant root mass is the most likely reason: the made ground had been present for less than 20 years when the Foundation Engineering survey was carried out in 1973; a further 48 years have now passed, allowing for the root complex to grow and enhance the slope stability. No buildings are being constructed close to the edge of the slope.

The report does not identify a need to further stabilise the slope nor to reduce the drop; there is therefore no intention to do so.

The contractor and OCHL have carried out a significant level of site survey work and are satisfied that due diligence has been applied. The works will be undertaken by competent and qualified professional engineers, in partnership with the relevant statutory bodies, to comply with the relevant standards.

SB1 From Cllr Malik to Cllr Brown – councillors contacting service areas

Question

When I contact officers for council business, in their reply it's always copied to an email addressing: MP & Councillorenquiries -at- Oxford.gov.uk. Can I ask why this is happening?
Who ordered it, and was this council informed?

Written Response

I am very surprised that Cllr Malik doesn't seem to be familiar with the email address set up for councillors to use for all enquiries to Housing Services. All enquiries to housing services should be directed to this email address which is a monitored mailbox and ensures that enquiries are picked up and dealt with in an appropriate timescale. It has been in use for many years, is listed on the contacts list circulated periodically to all councillors and issued in a pack to new councillors, and returning councillors on their (re)election and referenced in councillor training sessions that Cllr Malik will have attended. I assume this means that he is not using it. Can I please encourage him to do so?

SB2 From Cllr Wade to Cllr Brown – reinstate the Carfax Conduit

Question

Broad Street is about to be considered for a major renovation. It is a street internationally famous for its powerful buildings. The mini-meadow which we saw this summer is not appropriate in this architectural context. Since 1869 the Corporation of Oxford has owned the Carfax Conduit, an amazing renaissance construction, currently languishing on the Nuneham Courtenay estate.
Will the Cabinet Member consider the possibility of reinstating the Carfax Conduit where it belongs — at the heart of the city — in Broad Street?

Written Response

On 1st July 2021, the City Council has introduced "Broad Meadow", a temporary public space on the western half of Broad Street, made up of grass, planters, trees and mobile furniture. All feedback on the scheme is welcome, and the public consultation (at consultation.oxford.gov.uk) remains open until 29th October, a few weeks after the scheme is coming to an end on 10th October.
After the public consultation closes, the City Council will analyse the results before publishing them. Once Broad Meadow is finished, responsibility for Broad Street reverts to the County Council, the highway authority. Oxford City Council wants the experience of Broad Meadow to inform the development of longer-term options for creating better civic spaces on Broad Street and in other parts of the city.
Any suggestion of relocating the Carfax Conduit to Broad Street would need to be taken in the round, alongside many other suggestions and lessons learnt from Broad Meadow.

SB3 From Cllr Landell Mills to Cllr Brown – City Centre business plan**Question**

Does the City Council have a business plan for the city centre taking into account the City's property assets?

Written Response

The Council is developing an Asset Management Plan that is scheduled to be considered by Cabinet in December. This will set out the strategy for how we manage assets across the city including the City Centre. We are also about to start consultation on the City Centre Action Plan and the City's Economic Development Strategy.

SB4 From Cllr Landell Mills to Cllr Brown - Economic Development Strategy and City Centre Action Plan**Question**

What is the brief for the new Economic Development Strategy and City Centre Action Plan and when will they be published for consultation?

Written Response

The brief for these pieces of work were published on the South East Business Portal in Autumn 2019 and consultants were appointed in November 2019 to undertake the work.

In summary the intention of these documents is to set out the key issues that face the economy of the city and city centre and identify key actions and interventions that we can work with partners to address over the short, medium and longer term. They have been broadened since the original brief to encompass a response to the impacts of the pandemic and Brexit with an aspiration to have a more inclusive and sustainable economy that does more for individual residents and the environment as well as the national bottom line.

These documents are in the final stages of preparation having been paused earlier in the pandemic whilst officers were diverted onto COVID-19 related work and to allow time to review evidence and understand the renewed context as far as possible in terms of economic recovery.

Consultation drafts are now in the final stages of preparation with consultation plans being confirmed but the expectation is that consultations will launch on both documents by November 2021 ideally before the end of October.

SB5 From Cllr Miles to Cllr Brown - Town Hall Picture frames	
<p>Question</p> <p>With reference to the question raised at the last Council meeting, regarding the lack of diversity within the portraits in the town hall, it was noted by the council leader that there are issues specifically with replacing the existing artwork due to the requirements of the picture frames as the town hall has listed building status.</p> <p>Can the cabinet member provide details of the specific requirements for picture frames for paintings or photographs within the town hall due to its listed building status?</p>	<p>Written Response</p> <p>Conservation have confirmed their initial thoughts are that Listed Building Consent would be required to replace the paintings. The reason for this is because the paintings are so closely associated with the function of the room and the building, they would be regarded as being fixtures, of belonging to the room, and therefore their replacement would trigger the need for listed building consent.</p> <p>The conservation team are now seeking further advice from Historic England.</p>

SB6 From Cllr Miles to Cllr Brown Town Hall Art archives	
<p>Question</p> <p>What artworks does the council have in-store or in the archives in the following categories: (portrait paintings, landscape paintings, photographs and statues)?</p> <p>Of those that depict individual people, how many are of women and how many of men? Secondly, are there any reciprocal or direct loans of art with the Council and any of the colleges or museums, if so what are these art works?</p>	<p>Written Response</p> <p>All of the paintings/artwork we have are on display.</p> <p>There are 115 in total, of which 45 are portraits showing people and the breakdown is as follows:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Male – 40 • Female – 3 • Male and Female - 2 <p>All of these are fully owned by the council, there are no loans.</p>

SB7 From Cllr Wolff to Cllr Brown – Restart grants, Additional Restrictions grants and Home & Mobile Worker Licence grants	
<p>Question</p> <p>How many applications did the City Council receive from local businesses for Restart grants, Additional Restrictions grants and Home & Mobile Worker Licence grants?</p> <p>How many of these</p>	<p>Written Response</p> <p><u>Applications received:</u></p> <p>Restart grants: 1,365 (1,280 without duplicates)</p> <p>ARG: 3,269</p> <p>Home and Mobile worker licences: 583</p> <p><u>Applications granted</u></p>

SB7 From Cllr Wolff to Cllr Brown – Restart grants, Additional Restrictions grants and Home & Mobile Worker Licence grants

applications were successful, and were we able to deploy the full £4.4m provided by central government for this purpose?

Restart grants: 957

ARG: 2,029

Home and Mobile worker licences: 482

Yes we used the full two allocations for the Additional Restrictions Grant totalling £4.4m and subsequently secured a further £991k funding allocation in August to be spent by 31/3/22

To: Council

Date: 4 October 2021

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 Cabinet Members

Introduction

1. Addresses made by members of the public to the Council, and questions put to the Cabinet 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 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.
4. The views expressed by members of the public are their own and do not reflect, and are not necessarily endorsed as, the views of the Council.

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

1. Address by Dr Gian Guptal of the Oxford Hindu Temple & Community Centre Project (OHTCCP)

Questions from the Oxford Hindu Temple & Community Centre Project (OHTCCP)

2. Question from Mrs Kanta Gopal (OHTCCP)
3. Question from Mr Mukesh Shori, OHTCCP
4. Question from Ms Ingrid Widdows, OHTCCP
5. Question from John Marjot, representing the Friends of Lye Valley: Warren Crescent Development: 13/01555/CT3
6. Address by Craig Holmes, on behalf of residents of Warren Crescent.
7. Address from Ferishta Bakhtari-Boodoo, in support of Motion 15d (Afghanistan and refugees)

1. Address by Dr Gian Guptal of the Oxford Hindu Temple & Community Centre Project (OHTCCP)

Mr Chairman, esteemed Councillors, I am here today to appeal to you **to help us set-up a Hindu Cultural & Spiritual Centre for the large number of Hindus both in the City and the County.**

The Oxford Hindu Temple & Community Centre Project registered as a Charitable Organisation in 2009 to meet the need of the growing (more than 3000 declaring themselves in the 2011 Census) Hindus for a Central place of their own where they could gather to celebrate their Culture and do communal worship. Since 2011 the number is close to 10,000 - adding in those in the County

I am here today to make the same appeal being made for 13 years now; the appeal for this council, one of the largest landlords in Oxford City, to sell us one of your properties. I say “your properties” even though practically these properties belong to the people of Oxford because we, the Hindus of Oxford do not feel we are part and parcel of this historic city as we have been knocking on your door for 13 years.

For 13 years councillors have heard our appeals, attended our events and been honoured for their presence. You have expressed your support for us & expressed your commitment to helping us have a community & faith space for Hindus. Yet more than a decade later here I am, standing here asking for your help. With respect, I submit that what we have been given is a lot of hot air. We have had enough of that. Is it within your capacity to really help us? The time you fully embrace the Hindus of this city will be the time you find us worthy and valuable enough to facilitate us having a proper place in this city.

Working in the Medical field, the IT field and Academia the Hindu community contributes immensely to the life of Oxford. We have been significant contributors to many other events organised by the Council itself or other organisations. These volunteers have had to do a huge amount of preparation in their own homes so just imagine how much more we could contribute if we had a Central Place of our own.

This brings me to the question of lack of help from this Council – which owns **over 800** properties in this city. Is it too much to ask **that just one** of the unused or underused could be allocated to us? You have responded to the suggestion that we cannot buy a residential property and convert it to a Hindu Temple and Community Centre because it reduces the housing stock. We get that there is a housing shortage but will granting permission for **ONE** building to be converted for a temple for the Oxford residents seriously dent your housing target? I would like to point out that Oxford is full of such centres of worship within housing areas; setting up one more would hardly dent the Council Housing Target. I submit to you that it is firmly within your power to help the thousands of Hindus, many of whom have voted for you to run this city.

We understand your legal obligation to ensure best value for any property you sell. But best value should not always be monetary value. What about community value? Many of you have attended our events and **despite our homeless situation**, seen the value we add to Oxford. Imagine the tremendous community value we can bring with premises of our own.

We have identified derelict and unusable properties which have fallen into a state of disrepair eg. Blackbird Leys Pavilion & the changing rooms at Marsh Lane. We have offered to buy one of those buildings from you, pay over £150K to bring it into use as a community & spiritual centre. We have negotiated with you for over two years with nothing to show for those talks. We have been pushed around with empty promises

and are nowhere further than where we started. Are you serious about helping us? If you are -WHEN?

If the response to this speech is **“Yes, we are committed to helping you”**, please let it be meaningful and deliverable this time as WE have heard it in many different forms over the last decade. I can assure you that we **will** establish Oxfordshire’s first Hindu Cultural and Spiritual Centre; we hope it will be in this historic City attracting many visitors.

So, I urge you to make it a part of your Plans or we **will set up** one **elsewhere** in the County.

Written Response from the Cabinet Member Councillor Aziz

Thank you for your passionate address today at Council. We very much want to put on record our recognition of the excellent work and contribution to our City by the Oxford Hindu Community. I certainly empathise with you in relation to the ongoing search for a suitable property and the time it is taking to find a suitable one. We would of course very much like to see this within the City if that is at all possible. Unfortunately the property situation within the City is challenging.

The majority of the City Council’s non-housing properties are either operational and in current use, or are part of our commercial investment portfolio e.g. retail and offices, which deliver rental income to help us support core services. However, we have undertaken a more general review of community provision with the area to see if any properties could be marketed for reuse. While this exercise was to consider potential opportunities for wider community uses, as you know, we have kept an open dialogue with you during this process.

This review has this resulted in the identification of the two properties you mention above; the pavilion at Blackbird Leys and the changing rooms at Marsh Lane. The former is partly in use by another community group and the vacant part is in extremely poor condition. The Council concluded that this building could not offer a sensible and viable option for us to market at this time. We carried out a survey of the redundant changing rooms at Marsh Lane and agreed that this building could be considered for further due diligence and exploration. To do this the Council has to consider its statutory obligations to all members of the community and therefore we would need to market any future opportunity in a fair and transparent manner. However we agree that it might be a potential home for the Hindu Community. We are considering the next steps needed to be able to openly market the building in its current condition including the Council resource necessary to be able to take this forward.

Questions from the Oxford Hindu Temple & Community Centre Project (OHTCCP)

2. Question from Mrs Kanta Gopal (OHTCCP)

OHTCCP frustration about council owned, unused building that would suit our charity to make an even bigger contribution, than we already do, to the diverse community of Oxfordshire & the difficulty we have had to date making progress getting an answer from the Council.

In discussions with the Council officers, Community Councillors & Leaders, it has been positively suggested that the Blackbird Leys Pavilion and the Changing Rooms at Marsh Lane, Court Place Farm, is a possibility for the Council to HELP US ESTABLISH A Hindu Centre AT ONE OF THESE SITES. These discussions have gone on for over two years without any conclusion!

When will the Council come to a decision on one of these properties?

Written Response from the Cabinet Member Councillor Aziz

We are mindful that there is demand for community space, not only from the Hindu Community, but also other groups. Therefore, we did explore how we might bring the two sites mentioned back into community use given there is a demand for community space in this part of Oxford. This would be on the basis of marketing the properties to lease in their current condition with subsequent development/refurbishment to be undertaken by the future leaseholder. The Council carried out a condition survey of both earlier this year. We have also carried out a desktop review of other options for realising additional community space within the city but without success. The surveys showed that the bowls pavilion is in too poor a state to present a viable option for community groups at this time.

We are aware that the Hindu Community is keen on this latter option but it is important to note the Council would need to market the site in a fair and transparent manner, to give other community groups the same opportunity. The impact of the pandemic over the last 18 months has meant that the Council had to refocus its resources to support those most vulnerable within the City. It also meant that we had to pause our capital programme delivery which has slowed this process down and resources are still very tight. This workstream is now currently being reviewed along with any necessary resources. Any marketing process that does come forward as a result of this will need to be open and fair to all, but we would certainly encourage the Hindu Community to engage with this.

3. Question from Mr Mukesh Shori, OHTCCP

If OHTCCP were to find and buy an appropriate residential property, will the City Council approve change of use for the Hindu Temple and Community Centre? After all there are many places of worship within residential areas already in Oxford.

Written Response from the Cabinet Member Councillor Aziz

Such a proposal would need planning permission. Any application would need to demonstrate how it accords with the Oxford Local Plan 2036. The policies within the plan provide guidance on where we would normally wish to see community facilities such as this located. We would normally resist development proposals that result in the loss of residential accommodation given the very severe housing shortage in the city,

and any application would need to be judged on its merits within local plan policies, with due consideration of issues such as transport, parking etc.

4. Question from Ms Ingrid Widdows, OHTCCP

By tacitly refusing to sell OHTCCP a property for 13 years, does the Council feel that it has treated the Hindus of this city fairly and equally over the years, given that other major faiths all have a place of worship in Oxford?

What we are trying to do is to set-up an inclusive community dual-purpose Centre for both Spiritual and Cultural activities.

Written Response from the Cabinet Member Councillor Aziz

We believe that we have treated the Hindu Community fairly and equally and will continue to do so. The different faith groups in Oxford have pursued various routes in relation to establishing places of worship with some choosing to pursue private property options, including repurposing other places of worship, some renting space in community centres and schools, and some have used Property Agents who are able to advise on wider opportunities in the private sector market within the City.

5. Question from John Marjot, representing the Friends of Lye Valley: Warren Crescent Development: 13/01555/CT3

Three planning conditions concern the trees along the top of the slope being retained without damage (especially the Root Protection Areas). The tree roots are important in stabilising the bank, but excavating the soakaway right up to and under the trees will damage their roots. The trees have to be severely permanently coppiced to minimise the leaves dropping into and clogging the soakaway, since dead leaves would prevent the desired infiltration of water to the SSSI Lye Valley fen. The combination of root damage and crown damage could easily kill the trees, another factor causing likely instability and potential collapse of the bank. The attached SDS Consulting SuDs design shows the proximity of the trees (the little grey rings) to the soakaway. The tree leaf canopy, the wavy line leaning over the swale shows where the leaves will drop. The adjacent red line shows the precipitous 12 m drop into the Valley.

The Planning conditions for the trees are in direct conflict with the construction and function of the soakaway as designed.

Does Councillor Hollingsworth agree that only a redesign and relocation of the soakaway will address these issues?

Please see attached document showing the site layout

Written Response from the Cabinet Member, Councillor Hollingsworth

The contractor and Oxford City Housing Limited have carried out a significant level of site survey work and are satisfied that due diligence has been applied. The works will be undertaken by competent professionals, in partnership with the relevant statutory bodies. The contractor has discharged the planning conditions related to the future maintenance of the site, in conjunction with Oxford City Council.

With regard to excavations at the tree line by the swale, the contractor has confirmed that the construction methodology would avoid any impact on existing tree roots. The main excavation is centrally within the swale. The functionality of the swale is linked to the SuDS maintenance and management plan which advises on the requirement of removal of litter and debris.

6. Address by Craig Holmes, on behalf of residents of Warren Crescent.

As councillors are aware, there are plans for a housing development on the meadow adjacent to Warren Crescent. Numerous objections to this development have been made in the past, concerned both with the detrimental impact on the Lye Valley SSSI and the diversion of an established footpath. Today, we instead are voicing our concerns about the impact this loss of green space will have on the local community.

The meadow is the only meaningful green space that still exists on the Girdlestone Road estate. It is a space where children and families are able to play, walk dogs and spend time outside. During the past 18 months of the pandemic, having a local space for doing so has become especially important. This is particularly true for the residents of the flats on the estate who do not have access to private gardens, meaning the development will take away the one remaining public outdoor space within a short walking distance. This is not easily replaced with alternative spaces in the nearby area – these involve longer walks, crossing multiple busy roads, or using space intended for another local community who will also value their own green space.

The background report on Green Infrastructure and Biodiversity for the development of the Local Plan 2040 states the following objective: “To provide adequate green infrastructure, leisure and recreation opportunities and make these readily accessible for all”. It also notes that “Paragraph 97 [of the National Planning Policy Framework] states that “Existing open space, sports and recreational buildings and land, including playing fields, should not be built on unless:

- a) an assessment has been undertaken which has clearly shown the open space, buildings or land to be surplus to requirements; or
- b) the loss resulting from the proposed development would be replaced by equivalent or better provision in terms of quantity and quality in a suitable location; or
- c) the development is for alternative sports and recreational provision, the benefits of which clearly outweigh the loss of the current or former use.”

We are unable to find any evidence of a rigorous assessment which would show the meadow was surplus to requirements. Speaking personally as residents of the street since 2013, we have never been directly consulted on our views or usage of the meadow, and we have been unable to find anyone else who has had a different experience. Communication about the development has been piecemeal. For example, two years ago foundations were pre-emptively dug for the first building. We received letters to notify of this after the work had started. This area of the meadow has remained fenced off since then. Our view is that this space is very much not surplus to requirements, is well used, and would represent a significant loss to the local community. There is no proposal to find an alternative space to replace that which will be lost.

In the light of the above we ask if councillors think that the principles set out above are fine in theory, but in practice are easy to disregard when it becomes time to actually apply them?

If the answer is that these principles shouldn't be so easily set to one side, do councillors agree that Warren Meadow is not surplus to requirements, that the proposed development represents a significant, irreplaceable loss to the community and that consequently this development should not be going ahead?

Written Response from the Cabinet Member Councillor Hollingsworth

This site was allocated for development in the Sites and Housing Plan adopted by this Council in 2013 as part of its Local Plan. The allocation formed part of the legally required 5 year housing land supply at the time, and while it involved the redevelopment of an area of green space, the allocation came about following a rigorous consultation process over several years, culminating in a formal examination in public. The site having been allocated for development, a planning application was submitted in 2013, and approved in 2016. A number of objections were made at the time which mirror those in the address; all of these were carefully considered in the report to the planning committee, and thus taken into account by the members of that committee when they voted to approve the application.

The allocation was consulted upon as part of the Sites and Housing Plan examination, and public consultation was undertaken throughout the determination of the application from the initial submission in 2013 and again during the determination process whenever variations were made to the plans, most recently in 2020.

The site was properly allocated for development – after consultation – and planning permission granted for that development – after further rounds of consultation. Both the allocation and the permission took into account all the concerns raised. Work had commenced on site, thus implementing the planning permission. These ten new council homes will make a small but important contribution to meeting the huge need for genuinely affordable housing for local families in Oxford.

7. Address from Ferishta Bakhtari-Boodoo, in support of Motion 15d (Afghanistan and refugees)

Dear Council leaders,

I am the child of Afghan refugees, who fled the Soviet Invasion. My parents were granted asylum in Germany and were able to safely travel to Europe without fear.

Growing up in a country, where I was safe from bombs and mines has enabled me to go to school and university, to build friendships, to work and to live a relatively happy and safe life.

Decades forward Afghans and their children are again fleeing from their home country, not knowing where they would find a new home. Many were not able to travel safe and without fear.

Trauma and stigmatisation is already part of their life since they left Afghanistan. You council leaders are now in a unique situation, where you can directly make a choice. To help the Afghan nationals here in the UK to heal from their past and start a new life here and to live in dignity. It is up to you to make a choice today for them.

I'm addressing you, our respected council leaders, today with the following plea:

Please ask the home secretary to withdraw the Borders Bill, grant safe permanent Refugee Status to all Afghan nationals who are in the UK and to release those detained, create safe pathways for undocumented Afghans to obtain refugee status and facilitate family reunions including from third countries.

Please ask the Local Government Association to establish a Sanctuary Taskforce. A fully resourced, just, and locally led emergency and long-term resettlement programme based on the principles of welcome, dignity, and justice is the only solution to the ongoing crisis.

I am also asking you to re-establish, Asylum Seeker and Vulnerable Migrant Coordination Group in joint leadership with the county and District Councils along the previously agreed principles of sanctuary.

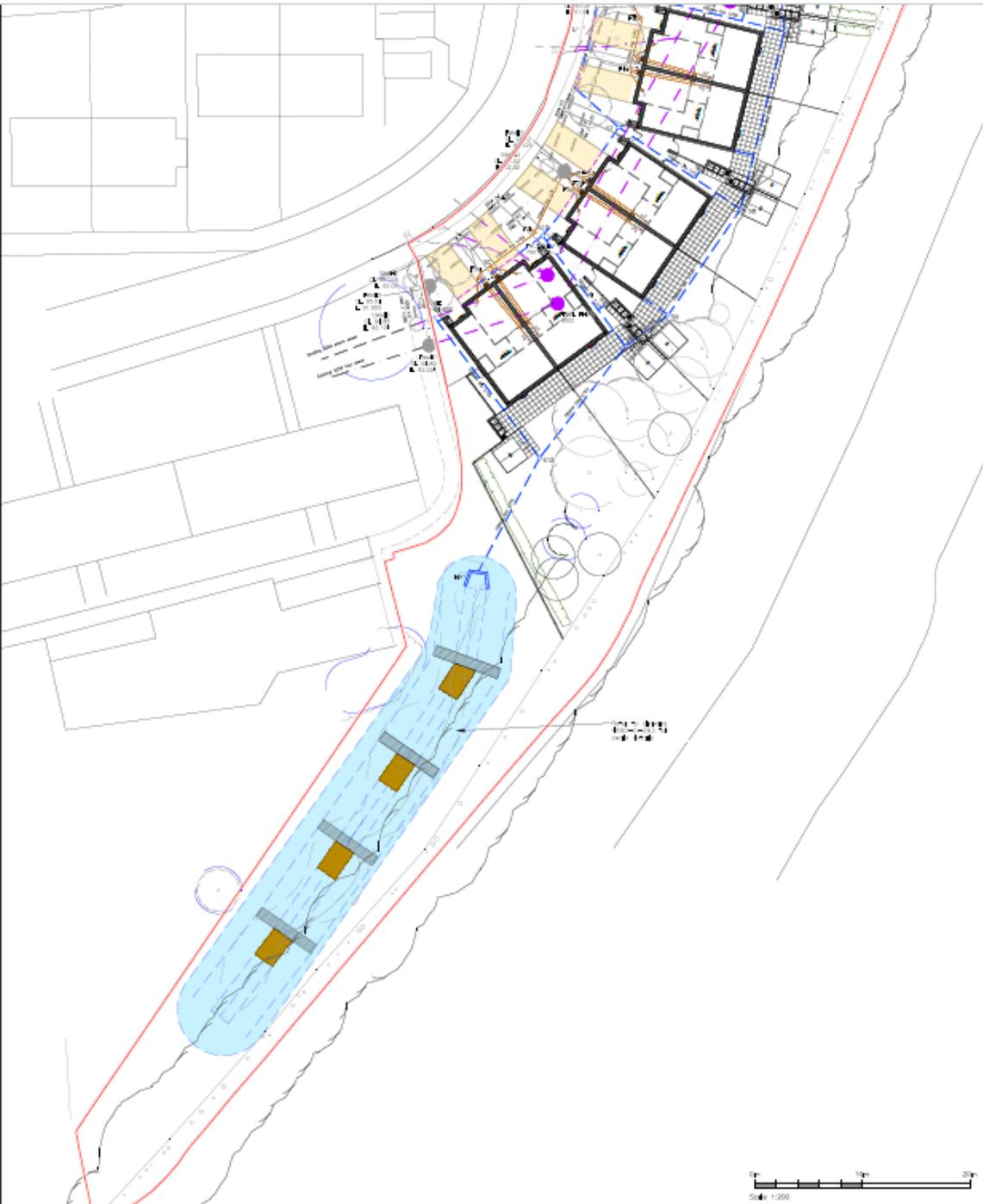
The Cabinet Member Councillor Aziz will give a verbal response

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Legend for this drawing is on the following page (55/56)
 1) Show the location of all proposed or above ground
 drains and their direction of flow. All such are
 proposed Type 1 material or better.

LEG.

- EXISTING DRAINAGE**
- Existing Drains (Paved Surface) Storm Sewer
 - Existing Drains (Paved Surface) Sewer
 - Proposed Alternative Paved Surface Storm Sewer
 - Proposed Alternative Surface Storm Sewer
 - Existing Sewer to be Abandoned
- PROPOSED DRAINAGE**
- Paved Storm Sewer
 - Surface Storm Sewer
 - 2025 Land Permissible Parking - Multi-Story Construction
 - Permitted grassed access road



1	20/05/19	Issue presented to client check items	MFD	LA
2	20/05/19	Issue design presented to suit original PMS design	MFD	LA
3	20/05/19	Issue design presented. Drainage design presented for review, construction and detail presented to RCT and Social in line of direction of client request.	MFD	LA
4	20/05/19	Issue design presented for approval	MFD	LA

Job Title

**WARREN CRESCENT
HEADINGTON**

Drawing Title

**PRIVATE DRAINAGE
LAYOUT**

Drawing No. **4890-C-240** REV D

Status: **Preliminary for Comment**

Job Number	4890	Date	May 2019
Scale	1:200 @ A3		
Drawn By	MFD	Checked By	LA



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Oxford City Council's Scrutiny Committee

Annual Report 2020/21

www.oxford.gov.uk



Participants in Scrutiny 2020/21

Alphabetical order



Councillor Mohammed Altaf-Khan



Councillor Lubna Arshad



Councillor Shaista Aziz



Councillor Nadine Bely-Summers



Councillor Tiago Corais



Councillor Hosnieh Djafari-Marbini



Councillor James Fry



Councillor Andrew Gant



Councillor Michael Gotch



Councillor Richard Howlett



Councillor Pat Kennedy



Councillor Tom Landell Mills

continued inside back cover



Oxford City Council's Scrutiny Committee

Annual Report 2020/21

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**Councillor
Andrew Gant**

Chair, Scrutiny
Committee

2

Foreword by the Chair

It is illustrative to reflect on just how unusual the last year has been by considering the fact that the Scrutiny function has delivered an entire year of work, the complete contents of this annual report, without officers or members having shared a room with one another. Emergency powers granted under Covid-related legislation allowed for the first time Council meetings to be undertaken virtually and, along with other meetings of the Council, Scrutiny transitioned to meetings via the Zoom platform, and livestreamed meetings to youtube to enable the public to watch.

Holding meetings via Zoom has precipitated some new experiences for Scrutiny, with the hitherto unknown phrase 'you are on mute' entering standard parlance, councillors developing new appendages – blue and legacy hands - and the welcoming of unscheduled participation in meetings by children and pets.

Although requiring some adaptation by all involved, the move to virtual Scrutiny has been absolutely vital. The urgency of the pandemic crisis response has required far greater change in

a far shorter time-scale than would otherwise have occurred in 'normal' circumstances. Virtual meetings have ensured that urgency has not unduly precluded scrutiny of these very significant changes. In addition to the emergency Covid response, Scrutiny has been able to shape the Council's budget-setting and bring about changes to prevent and mitigate the impact of domestic abuse through its Review Groups, to contribute to multiple strategic plans and business plans, and to input heavily into a number of topics vital for our residents, such as Citizen Engagement, the Waterways, and Air Quality.

It is a credit to the Council and its different parts – Scrutiny members, Cabinet members and officers – that amidst such a turbulent year everybody has worked together to maintain the smooth functioning of Scrutiny and the value it provides to Council decision-making. I would particularly like to thank officers who have provided reports to Scrutiny, especially in light of the extraordinary demands of their other duties over this period, our committee clerk John Mitchell, and in particular our Scrutiny officer Tom Hudson.

**Councillor Andrew Gant, Chair, Scrutiny
Committee 2020/21**



Introduction

The dominant theme of 2020 has been Covid-19 pandemic where, in March, the country entered lockdown. It is inevitable that the fundamental societal changes which have been wrought by the pandemic would be the key focus. Nevertheless, over the last year the Scrutiny function has contributed towards the positive working of the Council and achieved some significant successes. This report seeks to highlight and put on record the contribution.

About the Scrutiny Committee

Most major Council decisions are taken by the Cabinet which is made up of ten elected councillors from the controlling political group. In operating this form of decision-making arrangement, the Council is required by law to have a Scrutiny Committee made up of elected councillors who are not on the Cabinet.

The Scrutiny Committee acts as a counterweight to the Cabinet, empowering twelve cross-party 'backbench' councillors to hold the Cabinet to account for the decisions they take, and contribute to council decision-making. The Scrutiny Committee can also investigate any issue that affects the city or its residents, regardless of whether it is within the direct responsibility of the Cabinet.

The work of Scrutiny helps to provide assurance that the Council is performing well, delivering value for money, and taking the best decisions it can to improve public services and the quality of life for the residents of Oxford.

Committee meetings are scheduled almost every month and residents are encouraged to attend and address the Committee on any issues on the agenda. Generally, the Committee considers a balance of forthcoming decisions to be made by the Cabinet, and a number of other issues that are not necessarily the subject of a forthcoming decision, but merit further investigation.

The Committee agrees a work plan at the start of each year which sets out the various topics and issues that councillors have chosen to focus on. Some of these issues are delegated to themed standing panels, which meet approximately five times each year, and to topical review groups where more detailed scrutiny is required over a series of meetings.

The Scrutiny function is supported by a Scrutiny Officer. Tom Hudson was appointed to this role in August 2019 following the departure of Stefan Robinson.

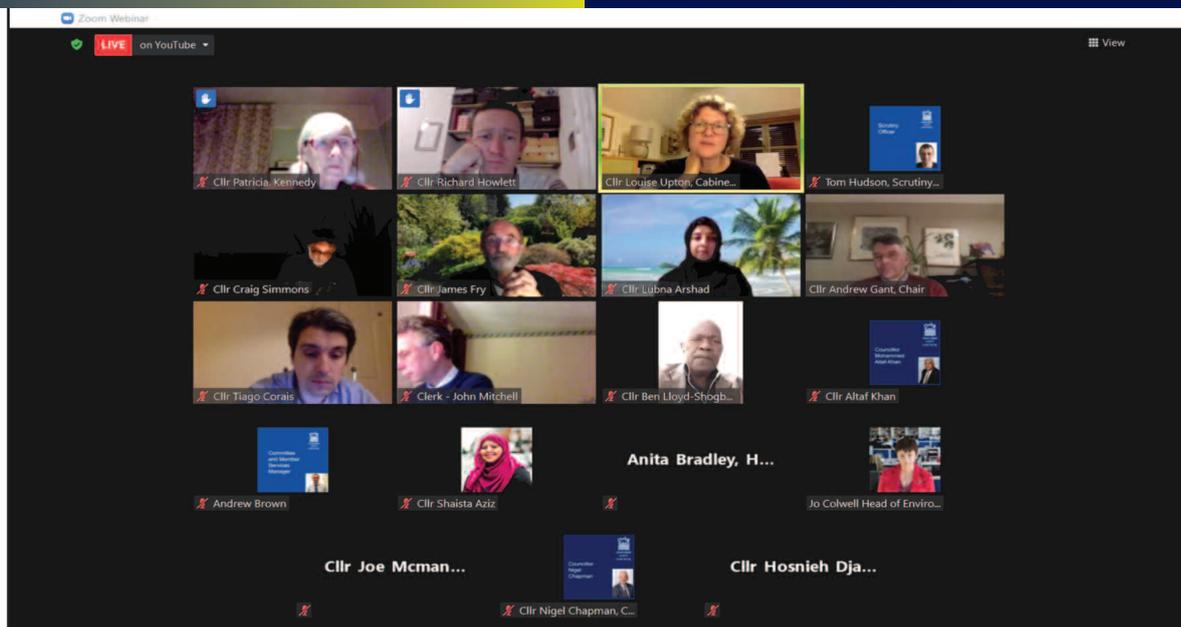
Making the case for change

Importantly, for the Committee to be effective, it must produce well-reasoned evidence based recommendations to the Cabinet concerning service improvement. The Committee has no power to require that decisions be revised, but a robust argument for change will go a long way in persuading the Cabinet to review their decisions.

Shareholder and Joint Venture Group

In addition to the reports heard by Scrutiny and recommendations made to Cabinet, reports and recommendations also were made by the Companies Panel to the Shareholder and Joint Venture Group, which is made up of the same councillors as Cabinet but acting in a different capacity, that of shareholder. A further three reports were sent to the Shareholder and Joint Venture Group, containing seven recommendations. Two of these reports, containing six recommendations, however, were not considered in-year due to Covid-cancellations, and the other was put into

Scrutiny committee in session on-line 2021



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practice before the meeting of the Shareholder Meeting.

Call in

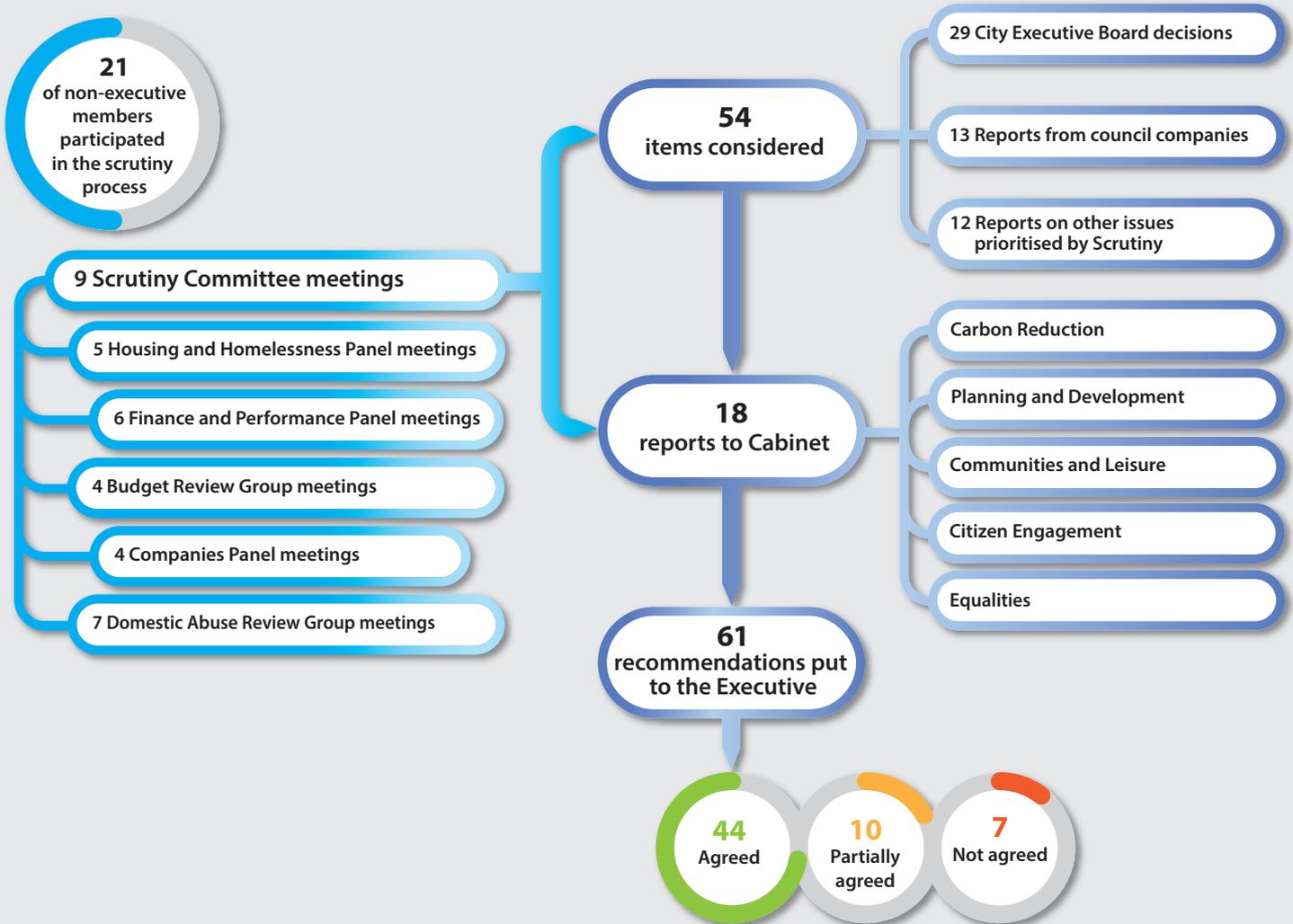
Call in is a statutory function that enables councillors to challenge decisions that have been taken before they are implemented. If a call in request from any 4 councillors or the Chair of Scrutiny is deemed valid, then the Committee will hear both sides of the argument and decide whether or not to refer the decision back to the Cabinet, individual councillors in the case of decisions about the use of ward member budgets, or officers for key decisions delegated to them, with reasons why the decision should be re-considered. During 2020/21 many important Cabinet decisions were subject to pre-decision scrutiny and there were no call-ins.

Get involved

Though pandemic precautions mean Scrutiny looks a little different to normal, for getting involved this may actually be a boost. There are many opportunities for members of the public and representatives of organisations to get involved in the work of Scrutiny. The Committee would welcome an increase in the number of people attending to speak at its meetings, which are held at 6pm on Zoom. There are multiple ways of getting involved in the work of Scrutiny:

- Attend virtual meetings of the Scrutiny Committee, standing panels and review groups or view via our youtube channel, except in instances where confidential information is to be discussed. Details of these meetings are displayed on our website.
- Speak at a meeting on any agenda item with the prior agreement of the Chair. Please email democraticservices@oxford.gov.uk and give at least 24 hours' notice.
- Suggest a topic for Scrutiny to consider by completing and submitting a Work Plan Suggestion Form.
- Raise issues with your local City Councillor and request that Scrutiny considers this as part of a 'Councillor Call for Action', a mechanism by which members of the public can have issues of concern given consideration by the Scrutiny Committee.
- Watch out for consultations, surveys and requests for evidence by registering at <http://www.oxford.gov.uk/consultation>.

Summary of scrutiny activity during 2020/21



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6 major work streams totalling 35 meetings

These figures represent a slight decrease in the number of recommendations being accepted by Cabinet (79% to 72%). Whilst useful in determining whether Scrutiny is generally making reasonable recommendations, within a range a lower batting average is not necessarily a bad sign; indeed it can be positive, with Scrutiny showing itself willing to engage in both elements of its role as a 'critical friend'. Indeed, compared to the previous year Scrutiny has made 25% fewer reports and 40%

fewer recommendations, a function of mainly considering Cabinet reports, but also potentially suggestive in combination with its reduced rate of agreement that it has tended to hold its own counsel until matters of significant importance emerged. Although a reduction in activity compared to the previous year, Scrutiny's output is in line with historical norms and compares favourably considering extraordinary circumstances under which it was delivered.

The Scrutiny Committee

Membership

Councillor Andrew Gant (Chair)
Councillor Joe McManners (Vice-Chair)
Councillor Mohammed Altaf-Khan
Councillor Lubna Arshad
Councillor Shaista Aziz
Councillor Tiago Corais
Councillor Hosnieh Djafari-Marbini
Councillor James Fry
Councillor Richard Howlett
Councillor Pat Kennedy
Councillor Ben Lloyd-Shogbesan
Councillor Craig Simmons

The Scrutiny Committee is responsible for the overall management of the Council's Scrutiny function. It decides which topics, issues and decisions will be considered and how. A provisional work plan is provided, based on agreed priorities by the Committee, but is liable to change as new issues arise and Cabinet reports are rescheduled.

The Committee also sets the remits and membership of its standing panels, which are themed sub-committees that consider all issues and decisions within their given remit.

The Committee agreed to continue with the Finance Panel and Housing Panels, which have been running for a number of years and are well established. The Finance Panel has, however, seen an extension of its remit to include performance management, becoming the Finance and Performance Panel. The Housing Panel has also had a name change, to the Housing and Homelessness Panel, which is to make its name more accurately reflect its existing remit. In early 2017, the Committee chose to set up a Companies Panel to oversee

the Council's arm's length trading and housing companies, and the Committee opted to continue this arrangement for 2020/21.

A small number of issues prioritised by the Committee can be delegated to review groups for more detailed scrutiny. Review groups actively engage with partner organisations and expert witnesses before producing substantial evidence-based reports with recommendations. This year, two review groups were held, the Domestic Abuse Review Group (full details below), as well as the annual review of the Council's budget and medium term financial strategy. As the commissioner of this work the Committee approved the reports of the review groups for submission to Cabinet.

The following is a summary of the themes and activity the main Scrutiny Committee has engaged with over the last year.

Covid Recovery

A special meeting of Scrutiny was called early in the civic year dedicated to considering the Cabinet's proposed response to Covid, and its plans to mount a Covid recovery. In a wide-ranging discussion, which took in the eligibility of language schools for rates relief, predicted levels of unemployment, lessons learnt from the 'Everyone In' policy towards rough sleepers, the suitability of home working for staff, and safe management of protest, five recommendations were made to Cabinet. These related to the need for a digital strategy, specific economic responses relating to community wealth building principles, and measures to safeguard the health and wellbeing of local residents. The topic of finances was not considered in depth, which instead was considered by the Finance Panel separately.

Strategic Plans

Scrutiny's year was bookended by reports pertaining to the Council's own Corporate Strategy. At its first meeting, it was introduced to



the draft of the 2020-24 Corporate Strategy, laying out the high level aims of the Council over the following four years. At the end of year, it looked at a report on the progress against the Council's Business Plan, annual actions to realise the aims of the Corporate Plan, and the set of new actions for the forthcoming year which would form the new Business Plan. Scrutiny's discussion over the Corporate Strategy focused on the possibility and desirability of setting targets for the future Council Strategy on the number of employers paying the Oxford Living Wage. However, it was agreed that this was not a desirable way to proceed. Instead, a number of amendments were suggested to the text of the update concerning the Council's response to the Climate Emergency, highlighting the contribution of the Climate Emergency Review Group and clarifying a measure which could easily be misinterpreted. For the Council's Business Plan, the Committee's recommendations focused on aligning the Council's activity in relation to carbon reduction with the recommendations of the Climate Emergency Review Group and the policies of the

Local Plan, the addition of a commitment towards developing the circular economy locally, and clarifying terms used in the document.

As a tier-two authority, Planning is one of the Council's key functions. The production of a Local Plan is a legal requirement, with a legal process needing to be followed as part of the adoption process. The Council had been working on the 2036 Local Plan for four years prior to the meeting and had received the support of the Inspector by the time of the Scrutiny meeting, meaning changes were unable to be made. However, acquaintance with the Local Plan is important, as each year the Committee also hears the Annual Monitoring Report, where the Council reports on its progress against the Local Plan. Although no recommendations were made in this instance, the Committee engaged in fulsome discussion on house-building targets and the impact of Covid-19, the amount of student accommodation provided by the City's universities, and plans for particular sites. Although recommendations are the primary 'currency' of Scrutiny, there is often significant

value simply in providing a platform for Cabinet members, Scrutiny members and relevant officers to discuss issues, even when recommendations are not deemed necessary.

Whilst mainly Scrutiny considers reports pertaining to the City Council, the Council does not operate on its own but works strategically with its neighbouring councils as well as the County Council. One of the fruits of this partnership working was the development of the draft Strategic Vision for Oxfordshire, which Scrutiny had the opportunity to comment on, despite being an unusual item for Scrutiny to consider owing to the fact that the underlying document was a reflection of the collective ambitions and common interests of its participant member-Councils, rather than the City Council alone. With that in mind, the recommendation made asked the Council to seek to bring greater attention to a number of key areas in future drafts, including broadening consultation amongst low-participant groups, economic, health and racial inequality, and active transport.

Supporting the Vulnerable

One of the clearest ways in which the Council intervenes to support its most vulnerable residents is through pecuniary support in the form of benefits. In a challenging environment where the Council faces cuts to its income, but where residents also face significant financial pressures the approach to those benefits is very important. Over the course of the year Scrutiny considered two reports on benefits: the Discretionary Housing Payment Policy and the Council Tax Reduction Scheme.

Concerning the first of these, the Committee was generally in favour of the proposals put forward but raised concerns around access to this support, particularly in relation to the challenges of non-English speakers, and the impact of such challenges in take-up by those eligible. The Committee made three recommendations, around increased translation support for non-

English speakers, identifying via monitoring the demographic groups not accessing the support available, and wider promotion of Discretionary Housing Payment through partners. All were agreed by Cabinet. No recommendations were made by Scrutiny concerning the Council Tax Reduction Scheme, although similar issues were explored and the Council's commitment to maintaining a 100% reduction for eligible residents was welcomed.

Though fulfilling a statutory duty, the Council's Air Quality Action Plan goes significantly beyond statutory requirements, with a goal to reach 30 micrograms of NO₂ by 2025. A significant driver in this greater ambition is the recognition that poor air quality does not impact all residents equally, with residents who are older, disabled, poorer or from ethnic minority backgrounds liable to bear the greatest burdens. This issue was considered by Scrutiny, which agreed with the intention to go beyond statutory requirements, but did note that the Council was yet to achieve the statutory level. Scrutiny primarily focused on the equalities aspect of air quality, textual clarifications and amendments, emitters outside the scope of the Clean Air Act (such as canal boats), the financial implications of the AQAP, issues on consultation and engagement, and suggestions on practical steps for the Plan on transport issues. In total, ten recommendations were made, which focused on textual clarifications with a view to the expected use by other councils wishing to follow Oxford's lead, communication around air quality issues, and specific suggestions relating to traffic. All were agreed by Cabinet. The following month Scrutiny also considered the Annual Air Quality Status Update report, a regular feature at Scrutiny, but having made a large number of recommendations a month previously no further recommendations were made. Another report was considered by the Committee in a similar area – Zero Carbon Oxford. However, whilst there was very full discussion the Committee's five recommendations were all rejected by Cabinet.



Equalities and Engagement

Each year the Council is under a statutory duty to report on its gender pay gap. The Scrutiny Committee heard this alongside a report on wider internal equalities issues and the Council's plans on addressing issues of concern, such as the number of women and BAME representatives in senior positions. The Committee strongly endorsed the Council's decision to publish information on the ethnicity pay gap, and its future plans for intersectional analysis between protected characteristics. The Committee made multiple recommendations around how better to understand the issues faced by minority members of its workforce, as well as suggestions on how to attract a more representative mix of applicants for upcoming roles.

As referenced above, each year Scrutiny considers topics for Review Groups. More topics are put forward for consideration than can be taken forward. In this year, one of the topics of great interest to members but which was not

taken forward was that of Citizen Engagement. Owing to its importance, an entire meeting of Scrutiny was dedicated to understanding how the Council engages with its citizens, and how it might improve on that engagement in order to give greater ownership to residents. The Committee delved into multiple aspects of this topic, making nine recommendations about formalising how Councillors might form part of the consultation process, groups that should be consulted with more regularly, ways to empower citizens, and suggestions on how to improve engagement overall and amongst minority communities. Cabinet accepted five recommendations fully, with the other four partially.

Scrutiny's work involves both routine reports, which tend to return to the Committee on a regular basis, and novel ones, which are one-off. It can be tempting to imagine that the scrutiny of routine reports is of lesser importance, given the layers of previous scrutiny that have already been undertaken. This year, however, showcased



the importance of revisiting topics periodically to ensure they remain suitable in light of a changing external environment. Normally, the Street Naming and Numbering policy may not be thought of as a high priority, but with the advent of the Black Lives Matter movement, there has been a growth in awareness of the pervasiveness in the present environment of an inequitable past. Statues have clearly been the primary area of discussion, but street names are also influential in shaping the tone of an area. Whilst it did not make any recommendations, Scrutiny discussed in detail about public support for change and the circumstances in which street names might be altered.

Tourism and Waterways

Scrutiny Review Groups are major pieces of work, and whilst typically they are reviewed the year after the response from Cabinet to their recommendations has been made, where there is ongoing interest the recommendations of a Review Group can act as a good template for further updates. Covid did disrupt activity in this regard, but areas of particular interest were in

relation to how the recommendations fitted with the impacts of Covid on the tourist economy, and the Committee expressed keenness to hear more about the Council's emerging City Centre Vision before the end of the year. Other issues considered included air quality issues relating to tourist coaches, toilet facilities, increasing 'tourism' by local people, and the steps being taken by employers to pay the Oxford Living Wage.

An important element of the Tourism Review Group's recommendations related to the Waterways, given their importance as a heritage, cultural and tourism asset. However, the Waterways also provide homes for people within the City, as well as being a vital environmental resource. Work in this area is coordinated by a specific Waterways Officer, and Scrutiny has tended to request a report on progress each year, as occurred this year. The main areas of discussion and recommendations were around the Council's role in driving partnership working to address the complex issues surrounding the Waterways, the availability of services for boat-



dwellers, the management of moorings, and the recognition of boats as homes within the Council's planning policy. Of the eight recommendations made, six were agreed, one partially agreed and one not agreed. The latter concerned the geographical focus of waterway development.

Business Opportunities

Although the universities and colleges in Oxford are better known for their influence as land owners in Oxford, the Council has an important role. When opportunities arise it enters into ventures which will not only support its income streams, but also realise wider goals. For reasons of commercial sensitivity little can be reported of the details of the first meeting, but Scrutiny were involved in discussions over the next phase proposals for the Oxford West End Development proposals, redeveloping the Oxpens Road area, with a view to extending the city centre to the west. It also heard proposals to make available workspaces to businesses which would reflect the trend towards greater flexibility. Discussion

over the proposals for Local Growth Funded Workspaces mainly concerned timescales for spending, the size of the market for such workspaces and whether Covid would be likely to increase entrepreneurship or decrease it, and means of safeguarding current tenants at one of the prospective sites at Cave St. A recommendation was made to clarify the area included within the Cave St development site, and that the options available could include residential use as well as commercial, which was agreed by Cabinet.

Thanks

The Committee would like to thank everyone who has played a part in the Scrutiny process this year including Scrutiny councillors, members of the Cabinet, council officers, representatives of partner organisations, expert witnesses and the public.

The Domestic Abuse Review Group

Membership:

Councillor Shaista Aziz (Chair)
Councillor Mohammed Altaf-Khan
Councillor Mark Lygo
Councillor Craig Simmons
Councillor Sian Taylor
Councillor Liz Wade



Councillor Shaista Aziz, Chair
of the Domestic Abuse Review
Group 2020/21

“The Covid-19 pandemic has rightly dominated the news over the last year, which, to date has claimed over four and a half million lives, and has seen many more people’s lives have changed forever. For too long, however, there has been what the UN refers to of the ‘global shadow pandemic of violence’ against women and girls and a parallel pandemic of domestic abuse, a crime primarily perpetrated against women.

In the UK, two women are dying every week due to violence carried out by an intimate partner or a former partner. At the same time, the criminal justice system is seeing a backlog of cases with victims and survivors of sexual assault having to wait longer than ever to access justice and support. For many the barriers and challenges to justice are insurmountable and unaffordable.

Each year the Scrutiny function undertakes two Review Groups, which are opportunities to take a much deeper dive than normally afforded at Scrutiny meetings into issues of particular importance. One of these is determined by the

Former secretary general of the United Nations, Kofi Annan is correct in saying that ‘Violence against women is perhaps the most shameful human rights violation and it is perhaps the most pervasive.’

Kofi Anna’s comment is true in that class, education, religion nor ethnicity do not insulate against domestic abuse; it pervades all sections of society. What makes it particularly shameful is that its severity is compounded by the systemic equalities that exist in society. Women are more likely to face domestic abuse, but they are also less likely to be working and earning, and therefore less able to escape their abusive environment. Members of the BAME community, particularly non-English speakers, face far more barriers in accessing and maximising the benefit of the support that is available. These challenges are far more extreme for those with no recourse to public funds who, at a national policy level, are barred from receiving support from the state that would enable them to find safety, other than for a few exceptional cases.

Sitting at a cross-roads between public health, gender and racial inequality, the way domestic abuse is approached and victims supported is a microcosm of a statutory body’s wider attitudes, and an effective litmus test for those with progressive ambitions to protect the vulnerable. Faced with rising rates of domestic abuse during the pandemic, the Domestic Abuse Review Group sought to work internally and with national level experts to understand what the Council could do to reduce the incidence, and mitigate the severity of local abuse through its own functions.”

Council’s constitution, a review of the Budget and Medium Term Financial Plan proposals. The other is open for members of Scrutiny to decide. In light of the steep increase in cases of domestic abuse nationally, Scrutiny selected as its topic



the prevention and mitigation of Domestic Abuse.

Key issues the review group sought to explore included:

- What support is available for those suffering domestic abuse?
- What can we learn from other local authorities?
- What issues arise for those fleeing domestic abuse in regards to housing; how does the Council address those needs and does it do so successfully?
- What are the specific challenges faced by members of BAME communities when facing domestic abuse?
- How can the Council leverage the money it spends on voluntary sector grants and its overall procurement to contribute towards addressing domestic abuse?
- What changes internally can the Council make to ensure that it is a supportive working environment for those experiencing domestic abuse?

In addition to Council officers briefing members, a large cast of local and national experts also supported Review Group members with their knowledge and advice. These external members were:

- Amna Abdullatif, Children and Young People's Lead (Women's Aid), Councillor at Manchester City Council
- Sobia Afridi, Trustee (Oxford Against Cutting)
- Kate Agha, Director (Oxford Against Cutting)
- Laura Clements, Head of Service: Family Solutions (Oxfordshire County Council)
- Jonathan Cruz, Team Leader (Oxfordshire Domestic Abuse Service)
- Huda Jawad, Faith and Communities Programme Manager (Standing Together Against Domestic Abuse)
- Jameelah Shodunke, Community Engagement Officer (AFiUK)

- Trish Walsh, Manager (Reducing the Risk)

In what was at times shocking and harrowing evidence, the Review Group was informed of the particular challenges faced by (overwhelmingly) women when fleeing domestic abuse, particularly in regards to the choices they are forced to make around accommodation, as well as the windows of opportunity for intervention. Major recommendations to seek that the Council implement a particular pathway for those facing or fleeing domestic abuse were made to ensure that the particular challenges that those fleeing face are allowed for and supported, and that nationally-recognised accreditation to that effect is sought.

These issues are compounded by different forms of vulnerability, often intersecting with one another – the presence of children, lack of money, coming from a BAME background, insecure immigration status, or not speaking English. Failure to escape abusive situations can be fatal. Multiple recommendations were made to make culturally-sympathetic support more widespread.

The Review Group also looked at how it, as one part of a web of statutory bodies responsible for reducing the incidence and severity of domestic abuse worked with partners, mainly the County Council and the voluntary sector. It also considered what the Council, as an employer with over 500 staff, could do to ensure its HR policies were supportive of any individuals facing domestic abuse, rather than inadvertently contributing to their vulnerability by making work a non-supportive area. The key recommendation made was the adoption of a policy for managing the particular issues and needs of staff facing domestic abuse.

In total, 48 recommendations were made, relating to nine out of the ten Cabinet portfolios. Owing to the complexity of issues raised and the timing of the election a response was made by Cabinet in September 2021, with 28 recommendations agreed, and a further 11 partially so.

Housing and Homelessness Panel

Membership:

Councillor Nadine Bely-Summers (Chair)

Councillor Shaista Aziz

Councillor Michael Gotch

Councillor Sian Taylor

Councillor Liz Wade

Councillor Dick Wolff



Councillor Nadine Bely-Summers, Chair, Housing and Homelessness Panel 2020/21

“The Covid-19 pandemic has meant that we have all spent much more time in our own homes. Whilst there have been challenges for many of us - sharing our space with children and partners, and setting up to work at home – a secure home has been also been a place of sanctuary, a base to retreat to as life outside became more dangerous. Sadly, not all members of our community have had access to such sanctuary. True, and rightly, those sleeping rough on our streets have been provided with accommodation through the

‘everyone in’ programme, but Covid has placed many incomes under stress, and loosened the bonds of already-insecure tenancies. Consequently, the Housing and Homelessness Panel has paid particular attention to issues around the Private Rented Sector, and its cross-over with homelessness. The Panel has commissioned reports and presentations on the impact of the pandemic on the private rented sector, rough sleeping and hidden homelessness, and has also added value to discussions over Cabinet’s selective licensing proposals by inviting external stakeholders to share their views.

I would like to take this opportunity to commend the work of the Housing team, who have risen to the challenges of the last year commendably. I would also like to thank our external guests, representatives from ACORN, the CAB, College and County lettings agents, and the Oxford Tenants Union for sharing their knowledge us. Tony Buchanan, the tenant representative co-optee on the Panel has consistently provided insightful challenge, and my thanks are given to him for his time, freely given. The time and effort of my fellow Panel members I also wish to recognise, particularly of Councillors Mike Gotch and Sian Taylor, who have now stood down from the Council. Whilst I have stood down as Chair for the forthcoming year, I remain on the Panel, and look forward to seeing 2020/21’s strong work continue.”

Of all the areas within the Scrutiny function, the Housing Panel had the fewest Cabinet reports to consider, allowing it to explore a greater number of issues it specifically wanted to address. Approximately half the reports considered were commissioned by Scrutiny. In combination with the Cabinet reports this led to a particularly well-balanced suite of issues and reports coming to the Panel.

Although often dealt with at the main Scrutiny Committee owing to their importance to the

City, strategic housing and planning issues do also form part of the remit of the Housing Panel. In August 2020 the Panel considered the Housing Delivery Plan, a plan mandated by central government for councils under certain conditions to demonstrate how they would ensure that the required number of houses would be delivered. The Council had opted to develop such a plan of its own volition, owing to the narrow margin for error in hitting development targets. The Housing and



Homelessness Panel members were impressed at the lengths gone to in order to support development. The impact of Covid had, inevitably, slowed this work, and the Panel's one recommendation was that, following the lifting of lockdown, activities in the plan should be given new dates for completion as a way of ensuring the good work was kept on track. This recommendation was agreed by Cabinet. Later in the year, in October 2020 the Panel also considered an update report concerning central government's proposals around reform to the Planning system. As an information-only paper on how officers planned to respond to the government's consultation, the Panel made no recommendations. However, it explored in depth the potential dangers lying in the government's current proposals, particularly in relation to the ability to deliver additional social housing, maintaining environmental standards and ensuring a suitable balance of developments.

With estimates that almost half of all homes in Oxford are privately let (49.3%) conditions within the private rented sector hold an outsize importance in Oxford compared to elsewhere. In

light of this, therefore, the Housing Panel sought to hear the views of stakeholders from outside the Council, as well as from Council officers. At its first meeting of the year, in August 2020 the Panel invited Oxford Tenants Union in to the Panel to present on the impact of Covid on the private rented sector locally. They key issues were around social distancing from landlords, responsibility for rent following the departure of a housemate and with others not moving in, and management of rent arrears in light of Covid-related income reductions. In response to the briefing and following discussion the Panel made recommendations around ways to increase knowledge of tenants' rights, to support at-risk tenants by ensuring sufficient emergency accommodation in case of a spike in homelessness and using environmental health powers to ensure let homes remained habitable during any winter lockdown, and to work with landlords, tenants and government to try and address the systemic issues and pressures on the private rented sector which led to such acute outcomes for tenants. Four of the five recommendations were agreed, with the other partially so.



On the back of its discussions about the impact of Covid, the Panel requested a briefing on the Council's own attitude towards rent arrears in light of Covid. It was reassured to hear that although arrears rates were somewhat up on the previous year, they were still trending within a normal range and were ahead of the figures of two years ago. This success had largely been down to a proactive change in approach, which was reaping dividends, of softer, earlier engagement with tenants.

One of the biggest steps the Council has proposed to take to uphold standards in the private rented sector is through selective licensing, the licensing subject to meeting certain safety conditions of (almost) all premises used for private rental. When the Cabinet report came to the Panel, it provided an opportunity to hear the views of other stakeholders in the process, and the Panel heard presentations from the CAB, ACORN (the union), and College and County estate and letting agency on their responses to the proposals. Though each approached the issue from very different perspectives – raising standards of protections

for vulnerable tenants, and not being undercut by landlords unwilling to abide by basic standards – the proposals were supported by all external speakers. Panel enquiries on the subject included: the responsibilities on landlords regarding the antisocial behaviour of their tenants, whether licenses were of the landlord or of the property and the financial implications arising from that, the efforts being made by the Council to engage in consultation with those groups impacted by low housing standards but unlikely to come forward, in particular those in insecure accommodation and non-English speakers, Council staff's interaction with non-English speaking landlords, the potential to outlaw 'no DSS' policies through licensing conditions. The strongest theme of discussion, on which the only recommendation was made, was in relation to the fact that the most vulnerable – for reasons of language, fear of reprisal, unawareness or hiddenness – were the most likely not to participate in any consultation, and yet those were the people who would most benefit from a selective licensing scheme. The recommendation, that the Council take special measures to ensure that such people in the



'shadow' rental market be heard in consultation, was agreed. Support from all participants, external and internal, was partially based on the success of the Council's HMO licensing scheme, which had been shown to improve standards in the sector. The Panel also considered a report, giving its support, to renewing the scheme.

Perhaps crowded out by other events, the pandemic saw what is a remarkable achievement, the provision of housing for all rough sleepers under the 'everyone-in' policy. In November 2020, the Panel heard a commissioned report to give greater detail on the Council's activities in relation to rough sleeping since the start of the first lockdown in March. They received updates on the 'everyone in' policy, successful bids for government funding for move-on accommodation, and the development of the Severe Weather Emergency Policy. In its scrutiny, the Panel asked questions about how feedback of rough sleepers was heard, relations with neighbouring districts (where it was encouraged to hear of the progress in developing a county-wide approach and joint working), the current status of provision for

those with no recourse to public funds, the impact of providing additional homes for former rough sleepers on the overall housing stock and the practicalities of delivering the SWEP in a socially distanced way.

The Panel's biggest area of concern was for those with no recourse to public funds, who might be put off from accessing emergency accommodation for fears over whether by doing so any issues with their immigration status may be passed on to immigration officials. The Panel sought, successfully, to ensure that the Council would commit to accommodating such individuals without passing their details on to immigration officials, though this was caveated by the need to follow any future legal requirements.

Rough Sleeping is, however, only one form of homelessness, and indeed it is often the more visible form. Living in overcrowded accommodation, or sofa surfing is an experience more regularly experienced but less regularly seen. The Panel were informed that although the pandemic had meant an increase in the number of people coming forward for housing support



in the region of 20%, it was clear that there exists a pathway for those with insecure tenancies to seek help from the Council. The Panel made two recommendations to encourage the Council to take steps to learn more about the needs of the cohort of people who do not meet the threshold of homelessness, but are nevertheless living in housing situations which are sufficiently sub-optimal as to be detrimental to their wellbeing in order better to support them.

The Panel also heard the Council's proposals around its Homelessness Prevention spending in March 2021, but made no recommendations.

The only other report heard during the year was a Housing Performance update to which the Panel made three recommendations. These focused on ensuring specific vulnerable groups were not prevented from accessing emergency accommodation when rough sleeping, with assurances sought that those without recourse to public funds would be housed over winter, the number of women being housed monitored in order to ensure those fleeing domestic violence were not being under-served, and ensuring the suitability of accommodation for vulnerable users. All three recommendations were agreed.

Finance and Performance Panel

Membership:

Councillor James Fry (Chair)

Councillor Chewe Munkonge

Councillor Craig Simmons

Councillor Roz Smith



Councillor James Fry, Chair,
Finance and Performance
Panel 2020/21

“Although clearly a health crisis first and foremost, the responses required to manage the pandemic have had an astonishing economic impact, with the country experiencing its most severe contraction in 400 years. The Council has not been immune to this. Indeed, as an enterprising Council whose ‘Oxford model’ relies on successful trading in the open market to generate the income that underpins services to our residents, it has been more exposed than many others. Thankfully, previous sound

The Finance and Performance Panel has a role in overseeing and scrutinising the Council’s financial performance and budgetary proposals. The Panel monitors Council spending throughout the year, considers selected financial issues and decisions, and conducts a detailed annual review of the Council’s budget and medium term spending proposals.

The Panel conducted its annual review of the Council’s budget proposals over the New Year period, questioning senior managers about budgetary changes and testing assumptions about spending levels, income targets and

financial decisions have meant that Council has held sufficient reserves to ride out the storm and not face the same fate as other exposed Councils, such as Croydon, which effectively declared bankruptcy after their income streams were deeply impaired during the pandemic.

The post-mortem of what has happened at Croydon, following its s.141 notice, indicates however, that the Covid could not be solely blamed. Here, and at another Council making the news recently in unwelcome fashion, Liverpool, a key factor was the lack of scrutiny over financial decision-making. This highlights the crucial importance that the Finance and Performance Panel holds in its oversight of the Council’s financial decision-making for the long-term wellbeing of the Council and its residents.

In addition to its crisis response, both immediate and through the 2021/22 budget setting process, the Panel has provided this oversight through consideration of the Council’s annual Business Plan, its Procurement Strategy, Treasury Management, Capital Strategy, Commercial Property Strategy, as well as looking in greater depth at how the Council’s social value aims can be realised through the ways in which its procurement is undertaken.”

financial pressures. Underpinning its 25 recommendations were a push for greater investment in efficiency measures, particularly digital efficiency, greater clarity for the public on the amount of money being spent on areas of public concern such as green spending and rough sleeping, and clarification around the Council’s approach towards property investment. Of the 24 recommendations made to Cabinet, 12 were agreed in full, with another seven agreed partially.

The Finance and Performance Panel year began with a monitoring report setting out the



Council's forecasts of its financial situation in light of lockdown measures. Covid-19 raised expenditure, whilst reducing income streams. Largely in favour of the Council's proposed approach to halt planned additional spend and to use reserves to cover costs to the new budget, the Panel did make recommendations which were accepted around the desirability of capitalising deficits (a request that was rejected by Central Government), and the importance of maintaining funding for cycling infrastructure at a time when interest in cycling had increased substantially.

More so than in other areas the Finance and Performance Panel tends to consider similar reports on an annual basis, scrutinising the same areas of financial performance in different circumstances. Consideration was given to the Business Plan, Capital and Treasury Management strategies, as well as a number of Quarterly Performance Reports amidst very unusual circumstances. Most reports were noted without recommendation, the exception being concern that that the Council satisfy itself leaseholders were not being overcharged for services.

New issues that were given consideration included the Council's plans for the site of the old Boswell's department store, and more importantly, its wider strategy around commercial property following the government's decision to alter the purposes for which PWLB loans, a key source of borrowing to fund the Council's Commercial Property Strategy. The Panel welcomed a greater focus of strategy towards local regeneration, as it had previously recommended. No recommendations were sent to Cabinet on either report, although much of the discussion on Commercial Property was integrated into the Budget Review Group report.

In addition to what is spent, and why, the Panel also understands that how the Council spends its money can have a significant impact on the City and its residents. A report was commissioned to present the Council's largely successful, if relatively nascent, efforts to integrate social value considerations into its procurement processes.

Companies Panel

Membership:

Councillor James Fry (Chair)

Councillor Tom Landell Mills

Councillor Chewe Munkonge

Councillor Craig Simmons



Councillor James Fry, Chair,
Companies Panel 2020/21

“Oxford City Council participates in the open market with what is a dual purpose: to generate surpluses through trade which pay for the services which benefit our residents, but also to do this in a way which furthers the Council’s wider objectives. Oxford is one of the least affordable places to live in the country, with house price to wage ratios outstripping even London, making the provision of affordable housing a particularly

The Companies Panel was established in 2017 to scrutinise the decisions of the Shareholder and Joint Venture Group for the Council’s two wholly-owned groups of companies; Oxford Direct Services and Oxford City Housing Limited and its subsidiaries. Since then, its remit has expanded to accept progress reports on the Council’s participation in the development undertaken through Barton Park LLP, and the regeneration of the west end of the city centre through the Council’s equal partnership with Nuffield College, referred to as OxWED, or Oxford West End Development.

The Shareholder and Joint Venture Group is the members of Cabinet acting as the owner of the Council’s companies. Due to the commercial

high priority, and much of the Council’s commercial activity is therefore centred around housing development, house building, and maintenance. These are all areas of the economy which have been particularly disrupted by the pandemic via challenges of access due to lockdowns, staff absences and recruitment challenges, and shortages of raw materials. Although hard to disaggregate its effects, Brexit also has contributed to the acutely challenging trading environment for these companies.

Much of the work of the Panel this year, therefore, has been seen through this prism, with the Panel seeking to ensure reasonable and considered responses to the immense pressures created by the pandemic. The Panel has also, however, worked on other areas, giving its views on strategic approaches to the Council’s OxWED joint venture with Nuffield College in order to maximise not only returns to the Council, but wider social, environmental and regenerative benefits, as well as overseeing the transfer of the first properties from developers at Barton Park to the Council for affordable housing.”

nature of information before the Panel, much of the Panel’s work is undertaken in private session and is only provided in outline detail here.

Over the course of the year the Panel heard quarterly updates from the different companies, weighing the responses to the pandemic, including giving consideration to revised business plans. Most of the companies suffered staff turnover, some in key areas, but were able to achieve the development of improved governance structures, issues which the Panel oversaw. For Barton Park, with the furthest progress of the companies’ projects, focus was given to issues such as traffic, connectivity and leisure. The Panel was involved in discussions with OxWED, which is a project at a much earlier



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stage with the ability to influence future strategy. Panel recommendations were fairly rare. Those that were proposed tended to be about exploring more environmentally friendly approaches to the planned activities of the companies, or approaches creating greater social value, rather than disagreements over overall strategy.

The year ahead

The end of the 2020/21 civic year was marked by all-out elections, creating considerable changes in personnel and roles across the Council, including Scrutiny. After five years Councillor Andrew Gant has stood down as Chair of the Scrutiny Committee and from the Committee itself, and is succeeded in the role by Councillor Liz Wade. That Scrutiny's views are so valued is in

no small part down to Councillor Gant's leadership, dedication and geniality. Likewise, vice-Chair Joe McManners decided not to stand for election again and has been replaced by Councillor Nigel Chapman. Councillor Chapman is one of three members of last year's Cabinet to join Scrutiny, the others being Councillors Linda Smith and Marie Tidball. Continuity is provided by returning members Councillors James Fry, Hosnieh Djafari-Marbini and Tiago Corais, with Councillor Dick Wolff joining the main Scrutiny Committee. The Committee also welcomes four newly appointed members, Councillors Paula Dunne, Christopher Snowton, Imogen Thomas and Naomi Waite and hopes that their fresh perspectives and concerns will enable Scrutiny to continue asking useful questions.

Partially owing to the number of new faces, Scrutiny has expanded the number of members on its Finance and Performance and Companies Scrutiny Panels from four to six, allowing both experience and exposure for new members to coexist. Finance and Performance Panel will continue to be chaired by Councillor James Fry,



with a largely unchanged remit from last year. The Panel will again undertake a detailed annual review of the Council's budget proposals early in the New Year and will monitor financial and other performance and decisions through the year.

Whilst Finance and Performance Panel is largely unchanged, alterations to the Council's governance of its companies have necessitated significant changes to the format of how the Scrutiny function operates in relation to those companies, if not the purpose. Members of the Companies Scrutiny Panel are now invited to participate as non-voting members of the Shareholder and Joint Venture Group meetings, with the Companies Scrutiny Panel typically acting as a forum for discussion of issues to raise and coordination of questioning. These changes equate to a reduction in duplication of officer time, and more direct communication between Scrutiny and the Executive, which are both beneficial. Further, changes to the Council's Constitution relating to the governance changes mentioned do mean that the Companies

Scrutiny Panel can, unlike previously, commission and consider reports on issues relating to the Council's companies should it wish to do so.

The Housing and Homelessness Panel is the remaining Panel to have been established by the Scrutiny Committee for the year ahead. It will be Chaired by Councillor Linda Smith with an unchanged remit from last year. One innovation, however, is that the Panel will be looking at different elements of a particular theme at each meeting, with a final report at the end of the year, effectively a mini-Review Group. The issue being considered is tenant involvement, how the Council involves its tenants in decision making and how it might empower them further in making decisions about their home environments.

Scrutiny has also selected its topic for its annual Review Group, which is to be on child poverty, a topic particularly pushed for by Councillor Hosnieh Djafari-Marbini. Because of the particularly close relationship to issues for which the County Council is responsible discussions are

taking place as to whether it is possible to organise a joint review, producing a more holistic and joined-up response.

Aside from changes to membership of the Committee and remits to the Scrutiny Panels, Scrutiny will have to navigate the transition to working in a post-lockdown environment. For the Scrutiny Committee itself, the failure of central government to pass legislation allowing remote meetings to continue means it will meet in person. Like the experience of countless others, Scrutiny will not simply be returning to the status quo ante from before the pandemic. The Scrutiny Panels are not subject to the legal requirement to meet in person, and a hybrid solution is expected, with Finance and Performance Panel meeting in-person, whilst Companies Scrutiny Panel and Housing and

Homelessness Panel will continue to meet virtually.

In recognition of the exceptional demands placed on the Council during the pandemic last year Scrutiny did not add to the workloads on officers by commissioning reports on topics it considered important. Whilst the Council still faces challenges, the situation is less acute, enabling Scrutiny to consider a number of topics through commissioned reports. Issues that are expected to be looked at by the Scrutiny function over the course of this year include: Tourism and the Covid recovery, reviews of actions taken arising from the Domestic Abuse Review Group and the Climate Emergency Review Group, the Waterways, Housing's contribution to carbon reduction, and the procurement process.

Participants in Scrutiny 2020/21 (continued)



Councillor Mark Lygo



Councillor Ben Lloyd Shogbesan



Councillor Joe McManners



Councillor Chewe Munkonge



Councillor Craig Simmons



Councillor Roz Smith



Councillor Sian Taylor



Councillor Liz Wade



Councillor Dick Wolff



Oxford City Council's Scrutiny Committee

Annual Report 2020/21

Contact us

E: democraticservices@oxford.gov.uk

T: 01865 252191

Scrutiny Officer, St. Aldate's Chambers,
109 St. Aldate's, Oxford, OX1 1DS





To: Council
Date: 4 October 2021
Title of Report: **Motions and amendments received in accordance with Council Procedure Rule 11.18**

Councillors are asked to debate and reach conclusions on the motions and amendment listed below in accordance with the Council's rules for debate.

The Constitution permits an hour for debate of these motions.

Introduction

This document sets out motions received by the Head of Law and Governance in accordance with Council Procedure Rule 11.18 by the deadline of 1.00pm on 22 September 2021 as amended by the proposers.

All substantive amendments sent by councillors to the Head of Law and Governance by publication of the briefing note are also included below.

Unfamiliar terms are explained in the glossary or in footnotes.

Motions will be taken in turn from the Liberal Democrat, Green, Independent, and Labour groups in that order.

Introduction

- a) A social enterprise lettings agency for Oxford (proposer Cllr Wade, seconder Cllr Landell Mills) [amendment, proposer Cllr Turner]
- b) A Partnership between Local Government and National Government to tackle Climate Change (proposer Cllr Wolff, seconder Cllr Jarvis) [amendment, proposer Cllr Hayes, seconder Cllr Brown]
- c) John Radcliffe Hospital parking (proposed by Cllr Haines, seconded by Cllr Malik) [amendment, proposer Cllr Hollingsworth]
- d) Afghanistan and refugees (proposer Cllr Djafari-Marbini)
- e) E-Scooters and active travel (proposer Cllr Gant, seconder Cllr Smowton) [amendment, proposer Cllr Hayes, seconder Cllr Brown]
- f) Oxford Stadium (proposer Cllr Pegg, seconder Cllr Dunne) [amendment, proposer Cllr Brown]
- g) EU Nationals deserves to be treated with respect (proposer Cllr Bely-Summers, seconder Cllr Corais)
- h) Opposition to the Government's Planning White Paper (proposed by Cllr Gant)

- i) Opposition to the Health and Care Bill (proposer Cllr Jarvis)
- j) End Fire and Rehire (proposer Cllr Mundy, seconder Cllr Dunne)
- k) COP26 (proposer Cllr Dunne, seconder Cllr Mundy)

a) A social enterprise lettings agency for Oxford (proposer Cllr Wade, seconder Cllr Landell Mills) [amendment, proposer Cllr Turner]

Liberal Democrat Group member motion

Motion amended by proposer: this is the new substantive motion for debate.

This Council is concerned that the Government's RSAP funding for housing the homeless may not continue. ^[1]

At best, Government funding for house purchase in Oxford is inadequate given the high cost of housing here, which can entail residents being offered places to live in areas where housing is cheaper but they know nobody. So it is more urgent than ever to find homes for the homeless in the private rented sector, preferably close to the city centre.

The Council already does its best to place vulnerable residents in the private rented sector, but this has proved to be a difficult and time-consuming task for officers because landlords will often reject benefit claimants and are even less likely to accept those with behavioural or addiction or mental health problems.

This Council notes the research work done by Aspire, in particular with Home Turf Lettings and Homes for Good, into the possibility of setting up a social enterprise lettings agency in Oxford.

Home Turf Lettings (HTL),^[2] a social enterprise lettings agency in Bristol. This is a not-for-profit lettings agency under the wing of a parent charity, DHI. Ongoing social support both to Landlords and to Tenants is provided by City Council care providers, by DHI and by other charities. 41% of lettings are to homeless families, 40% to Rough Sleepers and people in hostels, 16% to people who have had addiction treatment and are considered 'ready' to move on with their lives. HTL aims to have their tenants living near the city centre so that they can still be in contact with their street community.

Another model can be seen in Homes For Good,^[3] a different but very successful company in Glasgow, which has recently received £2.4m lottery funding to roll out its model across the UK. This is a company limited by guarantee, it is a social lettings agency, not a social enterprise lettings agency. It is an ethical business, not a charity. It has in-house tenancy officers dedicated to Tenants' care and so to the sustainability of placements. The lease model they seek is for years rather than months.

Homes For Good reports that, as a result of Covid, a number of PRS Landlords have been more willing to consider supported housing Tenants because (a) they — Landlords and Tenants — will be supported throughout, and (b) LHA rates are consistent so there are no failed payments/voids.

As a result of its research, Aspire has begun a social enterprise pilot, under which four Oxford residents have already secured accommodation.

Council requests the Leader and Chief Executive to

- call on the Secretary of State for MHCLG to ensure continued funding under the RSA Programme through 22/23 and onwards
- bring a report to Cabinet with an assessment *of the success of the Aspire pilot study at the end of its first year in July 2022*

1. https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/994775/RSAP_2021-24_Prospectus.pdf Rough Sleeping Accommodation Programme: most of the remaining capital funding (£140.9m) is available for 21/22 “with a small amount available to deliver homes in the first half of 22/23.”
2. <https://www.hometurflettings.co.uk/>
3. <https://homesforgood.org.uk/>

Amendment proposed by Cllr Turner

To add the words in bold italic and remove the words struck through

Amend:

1st paragraph: 3rd sentence

So it is more urgent than ever to find homes for the homeless in the private rented sector, ~~preferably close to the city centre~~ ***within or as close to Oxford as possible.***

2nd paragraph:

...mental health problems , ***and in particular because Local Housing Allowance rates are inadequate in Oxford.***

Council requests the Leader and the Chief Executive to

- **[first point unchanged]**
- ***provide an update to Cabinet indicating the success of the Aspire pilot study at the end of its first year in July 2022***

If the amendment is agreed, the amended motion would read:

This Council is concerned that the Government’s RSAP funding for housing the homeless may not continue. ^[1]

At best, Government funding for house purchase in Oxford is inadequate given the high cost of housing here, which can entail residents being offered places to live in areas where housing is cheaper but they know nobody. So it is more urgent than ever to find homes for the homeless in the private rented sector, *within or as close to Oxford as possible.*

The Council already does its best to place vulnerable residents in the private rented sector, but this has proved to be a difficult and time-consuming task for officers because landlords will often reject benefit claimants and are even less likely to accept

those with behavioural or addiction or mental health problems *and in particular because Local Housing Allowance rates are inadequate in Oxford.* .

This Council notes the research work done by Aspire, in particular with Home Turf Lettings and Homes for Good, into the possibility of setting up a social enterprise lettings agency in Oxford.

Home Turf Lettings (HTL),^[2] a social enterprise lettings agency in Bristol. This is a not-for-profit lettings agency under the wing of a parent charity, DHI. Ongoing social support both to Landlords and to Tenants is provided by City Council care providers, by DHI and by other charities. 41% of lettings are to homeless families, 40% to Rough Sleepers and people in hostels, 16% to people who have had addiction treatment and are considered 'ready' to move on with their lives. HTL aims to have their tenants living near the city centre so that they can still be in contact with their street community.

Another model can be seen in Homes For Good,^[3] a different but very successful company in Glasgow, which has recently received £2.4m lottery funding to roll out its model across the UK. This is a company limited by guarantee, it is a social lettings agency, not a social enterprise lettings agency. It is an ethical business, not a charity. It has in-house tenancy officers dedicated to Tenants' care and so to the sustainability of placements. The lease model they seek is for years rather than months.

Homes For Good reports that, as a result of Covid, a number of PRS Landlords have been more willing to consider supported housing Tenants because (a) they — Landlords and Tenants — will be supported throughout, and (b) LHA rates are consistent so there are no failed payments/voids.

As a result of its research, Aspire has begun a social enterprise pilot, under which four Oxford residents have already secured accommodation.

Council requests the Leader and Chief Executive to

- call on the Secretary of State for MHCLG to ensure continued funding under the RSA Programme through 22/23 and onwards.
- *provide an update to Cabinet indicating the success of the Aspire pilot study at the end of its first year in July 2022.*

b) A Partnership between Local Government and National Government to tackle Climate Change (proposer Cllr Wolff, seconder Cllr Jarvis) [amendment, proposer Cllr Hayes, seconder Cllr Brown]

Green Group member motion

Motion amended by proposer: minor changes to the words underlined

Background

In 2018, at COP24, the UK Government signed up to having 'domestic institutional arrangements, public participation and engagement with local communities' so that localities can play their part in delivering the UKs 'Nationally Determined Contributions' in the Paris Climate Agreement.

In May 2021 Alok Sharma MP, President of COP26 said that collaboration would be a key objective of the climate summit

“Governments, business and civil society (sometimes called ‘non-state actors’ and including local government) need to work together to transform the ways we power our homes and businesses, grow our food, develop infrastructure and move ourselves and goods around”

Despite these agreements and statements there is still no formal relationship allowing joint partnership working between Local and National Government on climate action.

This Council

1. asks the Leader to add its voice to calls by the Local Government Association, the Association of Directors of Environment, Economy, Planning and Transport and others for a joint local & national government Task Force to plan action to reach ‘net zero’ emissions. Such a partnership can set appropriate regulations, benchmarks and targets and create the much needed long-term funding mechanisms to enable local communities and economies to decarbonise whilst remaining resilient and sustainable.
2. asks the Leader to write to Alok Sharma MP, President for COP26 , the Prime Minister and the Leadership Board of the LGA informing them of our support for a joint Local/National Government Climate Change Partnership Taskforce and asking for one to be established before the opening of the COP26 Summit in order to honour the commitment it made there.

Amendment proposed by Cllr Hayes

To add the words in bold italic and remove the words struck through

Amend:

In May 2021 ~~Alok Sharma MP, President of~~ **the** COP26 **President** said that collaboration would be a key objective of the climate summit.....

Add after ‘.....climate action’

Local government is nearest to our communities and, as Oxford City Council’s record shows, perhaps most clearly with our Citizens’ Assembly on Climate Change, councils play a critical role in our communities.

Oxford is set to become a net zero city by 2040 or earlier—ten years ahead of the national legal target. We set this ambition because we care about our city and all who live within it, both now and in the future. We have the toughest air quality standard in the country. We set this ambition because we care about the health of everyone in our city. Our actions to realise these targets are widely recognised as best practice and we proactively share examples of our work with Government to influence policy, powers, and funding.

Add new points 1, 2, 4 to the resolution, moving original 1 and 2 to 3 and 5 and inserting

This Council

1. ***Reaffirms and expands its 2019 climate emergency declaration to declare a climate and ecological emergency to guide all future decision-making.***

2. ***Calls on Oxfordshire County Council to demonstrate the power of local government at the time of COP26 by fleshing out their public commitment to full and permanent pedestrianisation of Broad Street with a timetable for action that includes further consultation (building on the large amount of convening and consulting by the City Council) and implementation of a scheme in time for the summer of 2022.***
4. ***continues to work in partnership with local councils and through networks such as UK100.***

In point 3 of the resolution: **amend** 'asks the Leader to **continue** to add its **her** voice...

If the amendment is agreed, the amended motion would read:

Background

In 2018, at COP24, the UK Government signed up to having 'domestic institutional arrangements, public participation and engagement with local communities' so that localities can play their part in delivering the UKs 'Nationally Determined Contributions' in the Paris Climate Agreement.

In May 2021 the COP26 President said that collaboration would be a key objective of the climate summit.

"Governments, business and civil society (sometimes called 'non-state actors' and including local government) need to work together to transform the ways we power our homes and businesses, grow our food, develop infrastructure and move ourselves and goods around"

Despite these agreements and statements there is still no formal relationship allowing joint partnership working between Local and National Government on climate action.

Local government is nearest to our communities and, as Oxford City Council's record shows, perhaps most clearly with our Citizens' Assembly on Climate Change, councils play a critical role in our communities.

Oxford is set to become a net zero city by 2040 or earlier—ten years ahead of the national legal target. We set this ambition because we care about our city and all who live within it, both now and in the future. We have the toughest air quality standard in the country. We set this ambition because we care about the health of everyone in our city. Our actions to realise these targets are widely recognised as best practice and we proactively share examples of our work with Government to influence policy, powers, and funding.

This Council

1. *Reaffirms and expands its 2019 climate emergency declaration to declare a climate and ecological emergency to guide all future decision-making.*
2. *Calls on Oxfordshire County Council to demonstrate the power of local government at the time of COP26 by fleshing out their public commitment to full and permanent pedestrianisation of Broad Street with a timetable for action that includes further consultation (building on the large amount of convening and consulting by the City Council) and implementation of a scheme in time for the summer of 2022.*

3. asks the Leader to *continue* to add *her* voice to calls by the Local Government Association, the Association of Directors of Environment, Economy, Planning and Transport and others for a joint local & national government Task Force to plan action to reach 'net zero' emissions. Such a partnership can set appropriate regulations, benchmarks and targets and create the much needed long-term funding mechanisms to enable local communities and economies to decarbonise whilst remaining resilient and sustainable.
4. *continues to work in partnership with local councils and through networks such as UK100.*
5. asks the Leader to write to Alok Sharma MP, President for COP26, the Prime Minister and the Leadership Board of the LGA informing them of our support for a joint Local/National Government Climate Change Partnership Taskforce and asking for one to be established before the opening of the COP26 Summit in order to honour the commitment it made there.

c) John Radcliffe Hospital parking (proposed by Cllr Haines, seconded by Cllr Malik) [amendment, proposer Cllr Hollingsworth]

Independent Group member motion

Council reaffirms its decision on 7 October 2019 where it agreed:

Council resolves to continue to work with the management of Oxford University Hospitals Trust as a matter of urgency to help them to undertake a review of the approach to sustainable transport at all the Trust's sites including the John Radcliffe hospital, including a review of the Trust's approach to the allocation of car parking capacity so as to allow for an increased proportion of parking at the sites for the disabled, patients and visitors, and for the operational needs of critical medical staff as part of a comprehensive masterplan for all the Trust's sites in Headington including the John Radcliffe hospital, to promote a sustainable approach to transport to those sites as part of the Local Transport Strategy 5.

Reason:

It is grossly unfair on people who are sick and the friends and family of those wanting to urgently visit people in hospital to allow the current situation to continue. A comprehensive shift to more sustainable transport approaches would:

- Reduce the congestion on local roads, freeing up the road network to other traffic including buses and ambulances;
- Reduce the pollution inhaled by cyclists, pedestrians and local residents from vehicles queuing with engines running;
- Reduce lost time and missed appointments which cost the health service a fortune;
- Make it easier for staff to access the hospital, helping to reduce staff shortages;
- In addition the hospital trust have taken away fifteen parking spaces and they continue to build on the site;
- Currently there are 743 parking spaces, 832 beds and the hospital serves roughly 655,000 people.

A petition: 'To build a multi-storey car park at the John Radcliffe hospital' circulating has now received nearly 5000 signatures on change.org, with around 1300 on paper.

I hope this motion can be carried to allow us to resolve this long standing issue for now and in to the future, and to alleviate some of the problems that the public so clearly and desperately need resolving.

Amendment proposed by Cllr Hollingsworth

To add the words in bold italic and remove the words struck through

[no changes to the first part]

In the section headed **Reason:**

Delete point 5:

~~In addition the hospital trust have taken away fifteen parking spaces and they continue to build on the site;~~

Amend the last two paragraphs:

While this Council notes that a A petition: 'To build a multi-storey car park at the John Radcliffe hospital' circulating has now received nearly 5000 signatures on change.org, with around 1300 on paper, ***this Council believes that overwhelming evidence shows that increasing car parking makes traffic congestion worse rather than improving it, and urges the Trust to explore genuinely sustainable solutions to its transport challenges, rather than being distracted by schemes that can only make the situation worse.***

~~I hope this motion can be carried to allow us~~ ***This Council urges that the Trust works with the City and County Councils*** to resolve this long standing issue for now and in to the future, and to alleviate some of the problems that the public so clearly and desperately need resolving.

If the amendment is agreed, the amended motion would read:

Council reaffirms its decision on 7 October 2019 where it agreed:

Council resolves to continue to work with the management of Oxford University Hospitals Trust as a matter of urgency to help them to undertake a review of the approach to sustainable transport at all the Trust's sites including the John Radcliffe hospital, including a review of the Trust's approach to the allocation of car parking capacity so as to allow for an increased proportion of parking at the sites for the disabled, patients and visitors, and for the operational needs of critical medical staff as part of a comprehensive masterplan for all the Trust's sites in Headington including the John Radcliffe hospital, to promote a sustainable approach to transport to those sites as part of the Local Transport Strategy 5.

Reason:

It is grossly unfair on people who are sick and the friends and family of those wanting to urgently visit people in hospital to allow the current situation to continue. A comprehensive shift to more sustainable transport approaches would:

- Reduce the congestion on local roads, freeing up the road network to other traffic including buses and ambulances;

- Reduce the pollution inhaled by cyclists, pedestrians and local residents from vehicles queuing with engines running;
- Reduce lost time and missed appointments which cost the health service a fortune;
- Make it easier for staff to access the hospital, helping to reduce staff shortages;
- Currently there are 743 parking spaces, 832 beds and the hospital serves roughly 655,000 people.

While this Council notes that a petition: 'To build a multi-storey car park at the John Radcliffe hospital' circulating has now received nearly 5000 signatures on change.org, with around 1300 on paper, this Council believes that overwhelming evidence shows that increasing car parking makes traffic congestion worse rather than improving it, and urges the Trust to explore genuinely sustainable solutions to its transport challenges, rather than being distracted by schemes that can only make the situation worse.

This Council urges that the Trust works with the City and County Councils to resolve this long standing issue for now and in to the future, and to alleviate some of the problems that the public so clearly and desperately need resolving.

d) Afghanistan and refugees (proposer Cllr Djafari-Marbini) Labour Group member motion

The Council notes with deep sadness the unfolding humanitarian crisis in Afghanistan. Our thoughts are with the people of Afghanistan who have been subject to decades of violence over multiple generations and with our neighbours who are fearing for their loved ones.

The end of the 20-year war on terror has brought into sharp focus the ongoing humanitarian disaster in a country ravaged by decades of conflict. There have been ever-rising rates of poverty and childhood malnourishment, millions internally displaced (in no small part due to the US drones programme) and minorities fleeing persecution from the Taliban. In Oxfordshire this has included spouses of British citizens and family members of UK nationals including those of the persecuted Hazara community.

This has needed an urgent humanitarian response from the UK, in particular as a partner in the occupation. The recent breach of Afghan interpreters' data many of whom are left behind is indicative of what we know from our local Afghan community – that the government is falling woefully short of its responsibility to provide sanctuary to those in need, not least our British nationals and sub-contracted Afghan partners.

We are proud to be a City of Sanctuary; we have resettled 30 refugee families since 2015 through the [Vulnerable Persons Resettlement Scheme](#). Since the Taliban have taken over in Afghanistan, our diverse communities across Oxford/shire have come together to respond with kindness in the knowledge that no one chooses to migrate from a beloved home.

Oxford City and Oxfordshire County Councils work tirelessly with refugee organisations including Asylum Welcome to prepare to support Afghan refugees to build new lives here and to assist those living in temporary accommodation. Cherwell District Council has sourced 10 houses and here in the city we are actively seeking and working with private landlords to allow us to use government funding. This will offer much needed homes so that some families can start rebuilding their lives.

Millions in the global south* are forced to flee due to conflict, persecution, and extreme poverty. The present crisis has further exposed the lack of safe routes to sanctuary and the cruel nature of this government's Nationality and Borders Bill. Compassionate leadership is needed now more than ever to ensure that *all* people seeking safety have access to a dignified life.

We therefore call on our Council leader to:

1. Ask the Home Secretary to withdraw the Borders Bill, grant permanent Refugee Status to *all* Afghan nationals who are in the UK and release those detained, create safe pathways for undocumented Afghans to obtain refugee status and facilitate family reunions including from third countries.
2. Ask the Local Government Association to establish a Sanctuary Taskforce. A fully resourced, just, and locally led emergency and long-term resettlement programme based on the principles of welcome, dignity and justice is the only solution to the ongoing crisis.
3. Re-establish the Refugee, Asylum Seeker and Vulnerable Migrant Coordination Group in joint leadership with the County and District Councils along the previously agreed principles of sanctuary.

**often inexactly referred to as 'the developing world'*

**e) E-Scooters and active travel (proposer Cllr Gant, seconder Cllr Smowton)
[amendment, proposer Cllr Hayes, seconder Cllr Brown]**Liberal Democrat
Group member motion

- (1) In late 2020 the County Council took early steps towards an ETRO (emergency traffic regulation order) legalising the use of e-scooters on the public highway, within certain carefully controlled and defined limits. The County's plans identified a number of objectives for the proposed trial:
 - i. Support safe commuting to work and education as an alternative whilst social distancing measures are in place,
 - ii. Reduce private car use and reduce congestion,
 - iii. Contribute towards the reduction in air pollution and carbon emissions,
 - iv. Test perceptions and attitudes towards new mobility solutions, and
 - v. Deliver a safe and accessible alternative travel mode which complements the public transport offer, but which addresses short term capacity constraints on the network.
- (2) Following elections in May 2021 the new Oxfordshire Fair Deal Alliance administration at County Hall set out its priorities for transport policy, stating:
- (3) "We will create a transport network that makes active travel the first choice for short journeys and invests in public transport to significantly reduce our reliance on car journeys. In areas of planned housing growth, we will prioritise active and public transport over road capacity for cars. We will accelerate our support for communities in implementing 20mph zones."
- (4) This Council thoroughly endorses those objectives.
- (5) Council therefore resolves to fully and publicly back the stated ambition of the County Council by:**

- supporting all modes of transport that allow our residents alternatives to the car, including the county's e-scooter trial;
- working to reduce and where possible eliminate car parking spaces in new developments;
- working harder through policy development and the planning system to ensure adequate provision of active travel elements in new developments in order to avoid demands from new residents for expensive and time-consuming retro-fits at a later date, and, more importantly, to provide them with better places to live;
- and asks the Chief Executive to write to her counterpart at the County Council communicating the substance of this motion.

Amendment proposed by Cllr Hayes

To add the words in bold italic and remove the words struck through in these paragraphs (numbers refer to original above):

(1) The ~~County's~~ plans identified a number of objectives for the proposed trial:.....

(2) ~~Following elections in May 2021~~ The new Oxfordshire Fair Deal Alliance administration at County Hall ~~set out its priorities for transport policy, stating~~ **has said:**

(4) This Council thoroughly endorses **and where appropriate seeks to implement** those objectives.

(new 4a) ***This Council supports implementation of the eScooter trial within limits, some of which were defined by our Inclusive Transport forum. This Council's advocacy led to the trial extending to district centres as a priority.***

(new 4b) ***This Council welcomes very recent changes secured by this council to the city centre trial while being mindful of the challenges of implementation.***

(5) Council ~~therefore~~ resolves to **continue** fully and publicly ~~back the stated ambition of the County Council by~~

supporting a transport network that makes active travel the first choice and invests in public transport to significantly reduce reliance on car journeys by working with the County Council to:

- ~~supporting all modes of transport that allow our residents alternatives to the car, including the county's e-scooter trial;~~
- ***Make all forms of active travel a high priority including eScooting***
- ***Increase provision of cycle parking in the city and district centres in 2021 with hundreds of cycle racks.***
- ***Bring forward urgent measures to support bus services.***
- ***Urgently improve bus infrastructure, simplify and discount fares, and enhance vehicle specifications.***
- ***Support alternative modes of transport to the car, including the e-scooter trial with careful controls and effective promotion to demographics barely using it to achieve modal shift.***

- **Support reallocation of car parking spaces in County Council car parks to eScooter parking to make better use of limited city centre space and discourage car use.**
- **Agree to the City Council having a significant decision-making role about future eScooter decisions, including making the trial permanent and on what terms.**
- ~~working to~~ Reduce and where possible eliminate car parking spaces in new developments where active travel is a viable option;
- ~~working harder through policy development and the planning system to~~ Ensure adequate provision of active travel elements in new developments in order to avoid demands from new residents for expensive and time-consuming retrofits at a later date, and, more importantly, to provide them with better places to live;

Council asks the Leader ~~and asks the Chief Executive~~ to write to her counterpart at the County Council communicating ~~the substance of~~ **this** motion.

If the amendment is agreed, the amended motion would read:

In late 2020 the County Council took early steps towards an ETRO (emergency traffic regulation order) legalising the use of e-scooters on the public highway, within certain carefully controlled and defined limits. The plans identified a number of objectives for the proposed trial:

- i. Support safe commuting to work and education as an alternative whilst social distancing measures are in place,
- ii. Reduce private car use and reduce congestion,
- iii. Contribute towards the reduction in air pollution and carbon emissions,
- iv. Test perceptions and attitudes towards new mobility solutions, and
- v. Deliver a safe and accessible alternative travel mode which complements the public transport offer, but which addresses short term capacity constraints on the network.

The new Oxfordshire Fair Deal Alliance administration at County Hall *has said:* "We will create a transport network that makes active travel the first choice for short journeys and invests in public transport to significantly reduce our reliance on car journeys. In areas of planned housing growth, we will prioritise active and public transport over road capacity for cars. We will accelerate our support for communities in implementing 20mph zones."

This Council thoroughly endorses *and where appropriate seeks to implement* those objectives.

This Council supports implementation of the eScooter trial within limits, some of which were defined by our Inclusive Transport forum. This Council's advocacy led to the trial extending to district centres as a priority.

This Council welcomes very recent changes secured by this council to the city centre trial while being mindful of the challenges of implementation.

Council resolves to *continue fully and publicly supporting a transport network that makes active travel the first choice and invests in public transport to significantly reduce reliance on car journeys by working with the County Council to:*

- *Make all forms of active travel a high priority including eScooting*
- *Increase provision of cycle parking in the city and district centres in 2021 with hundreds of cycle racks.*
- *Bring forward urgent measures to support bus services.*
- *Urgently improve bus infrastructure, simplify and discount fares, and enhance vehicle specifications.*
- *Support alternative modes of transport to the car, including the e-scooter trial with careful controls and effective promotion to demographics barely using it to achieve modal shift.*
- *Support reallocation of car parking spaces in County Council carparks to eScooter parking to make better use of limited city centre space and discourage car use.*
- *Agree to the City Council having a significant decision-making role about future eScooter decisions, including making the trial permanent and on what terms.*
- Reduce and where possible eliminate car parking spaces in new developments where active travel is a viable option;
- Ensure adequate provision of active travel elements in new developments in order to avoid demands from new residents for expensive and time-consuming retrofits at a later date, and, more importantly, to provide them with better places to live;

Council asks the Leader to write to her counterpart at the County Council communicating *this* motion.

f) Oxford Stadium (proposer Cllr Pegg, seconder Cllr Dunne) [amendment, proposer Cllr Brown]

Green Group member motion

Council notes plans by Kevin Boothby (reported in the Oxford Mail: 17th June 2021) to bring greyhound racing back to Oxford Stadium following the acquisition of a 10-year lease from owners Galliard Homes.

Council notes that the last greyhound racing took place in the Stadium in December 2012.

Council notes that Galliard Homes have previously (2013 - application number 13/00302/FUL) submitted a planning application to re-develop the site for housing but that this was never approved by the Council.

Council notes that there has been an informal assessment of the site by British Cycling who have stated it would be suitable as velodrome combined with a BMX and learn-to-ride facility with ample space for other community uses.

Council also notes that greyhound racing has been heavily criticised by animal welfare organisations such as the League Against Cruel Sports, Alliance Against Greyhound Racing, People for the Ethical Treatment of Animals (PETA) who believe that dogs should not suffer or die for entertainment or for the profit of the dog racing industry.

The Greyhound Board of Great Britain's (GBGB) own data confirms that in 2019 there were 4970 greyhound injuries & 710 deaths (14 per week).

Despite Legislation aimed at improving the welfare of greyhounds, including the Animal Welfare Act (2006), The Welfare of Racing Greyhounds Regulations 2010, there is still ample evidence of the dangers to greyhounds bred for racing (see [1, 2]). The latter Government report into the effectiveness of the 2010 Regulations cast doubt on many aspects of the sport, making several important recommendations which have NOT been made law.

The Council considers itself to be a caring Council which seeks the highest standards of welfare for all animals.

It therefore:

- **Agrees to publicly oppose the reintroduction of greyhound racing in Oxford.**
- **Asks Cabinet to request a report from the Executive Director (Development) which explores alternative uses for the site in collaboration with the site owner and operator.**
- **Should the greyhound racing go ahead and the operator is not licensed by the Greyhound Board of Great Britain, the Council agrees to use its powers to ensure the welfare and safety of racing dogs and agrees to consider developing a licensing policy on greyhound racing.**

[1] *The State of greyhound racing in Great Britain: a mandate for change*, League of Cruel Sports (2014)

[2] *'Greyhound Welfare'. Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (EFFRA) Committee (2016)*

Amendment proposed by Cllr Brown

To remove the second action point after

It therefore:.....

- ~~Asks Cabinet to request a report from the Executive Director (Development) which explores alternative uses for the site in collaboration with the site owner and operator.~~

If the amendment is agreed, the amended motion would read:

[preamble unchanged]

It therefore:

- Agrees to publicly oppose the reintroduction of greyhound racing in Oxford.
- Should the greyhound racing go ahead and the operator is not licensed by the Greyhound Board of Great Britain, the Council agrees to use its powers to ensure the welfare and safety of racing dogs and agrees to consider developing a licensing policy on greyhound racing.

g) EU Nationals deserves to be treated with respect (proposer Cllr Bely-Summers, seconder Cllr Corais)

Labour Group member motion

Council notes:

- That following the UK's departure from the EU there are significant new entry restrictions for EU nationals seeking to come to the UK;
- That at the 2011 census, over 12,000 Oxford residents were born in an EU member state apart from Ireland and the UK;

Council believes:

- That nationals from EU member states are, along with many other migrant communities, an important part of Oxford's diverse and vibrant society;
- That EU nationals, their families, friends and visitors deserve to be treated with respect;
- That in law, EU nationals have the right to receive visitors, yet there is disturbing evidence of hostile treatment of such visitors at the UK border, and that this is causing great distress to those affected, and uncertainty amongst people in Oxford more widely;
- That this is further evidence of the government's discredited "hostile environment" policy [1] being continued.

Council resolves:

- **To ask the Council Leader to write to the Home Secretary urging a much more sensitive approach to those visiting the UK from EU countries at the UK border, and protesting at the poor treatment visitors have received since the start of 2021;**
- **To request this letter is shared with representative organisations in Oxford, relevant embassies, and through the Council's social media channels.**

[1] <https://www.gov.uk/government/speeches/speech-by-home-secretary-on-second-reading-of-immigration-bill>

<https://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/0/theresa-may-interview-going-give-illegal-migrants-really-hostile/>

h) Opposition to the Government's Planning White Paper (proposed by Cllr Gant)

Liberal Democrat Group member motion

Oxford City Council believes planning works best when developers and the local community work together to shape local areas and deliver necessary new homes; and therefore, calls on the Government to protect the right of communities to object to individual planning applications.

Oxford City Council also calls on the Leader of the Council to write to the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government to ask them to uphold this vital principle.

i) Opposition to the Health and Care Bill (proposer Cllr Jarvis) Green Group member motion

This Council notes the government has presented its Health and Care Bill to parliament to reform the delivery of NHS and public health services. This legislation would:

- Reorganise the NHS around “Integrated Care Systems” (ICS), new bodies within the health service with boards comprising organisations involved in service delivery – including for-profit private companies.
- Abolish the requirement for compulsory competitive tendering for NHS services, as set out in Section 75 of the 2012 Health and Social Care Act.

This Council believes that the move towards ICS is an unnecessary and unwanted reorganisation of the health service.

This Council believes that allowing private companies to sit on ICS boards – bodies with decision making powers over how NHS money is spent and the care patients receive – is an anathema to the principles of the NHS as a publicly provided, publicly funded and publicly run health service, representing a clear conflict of interest.

This Council believes that revoking Section 75 of the 2012 Health and Social Care Act without also ending private sector involvement in the health service will remove one of the few checks and balances on outsourcing and privatisation presently in operation, leading to contracts being given without competition or tender to private companies and without the ability for in-house bids.

This Council calls for the Leader of the Council to:

- **Write to the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care to demand the withdrawal of the proposed legislation and express opposition to the inclusion of private companies on ICS boards, as well as to the revocation of Section 75 of the 2012 Health and Social Care Act unless all private delivery of NHS services is also revoked.**
- **Write to Oxfordshire County Council’s Cabinet Member for Public Health and Equalities requesting a commitment from the County Council Cabinet to oppose the imposition of ICS and to advocate for the exclusion of any representatives of private companies on local ICS boards.**

j) End Fire and Rehire (proposer Cllr Mundy, seconder Cllr Dunne) Labour Group member motion

The practice of Fire and Rehire, which can also be referred to as dismissal and reengagement, has come to public attention in recent years. This involves an employer dismissing staff and reoffering their roles under inferior conditions, usually to effectively change the contract of employment. The currently legal practice has been increasingly threatened by employers. The prevalence and impact of Fire and Rehire has been researched by the Advisory, Conciliation and Arbitration Service (Acas) [1]. Though not new, there is suggestion that the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic has spurred an increase in its use. Others have told Acas that the pandemic is being used “opportunistically as a smokescreen to diminish workers’ terms and conditions”. This has impacted a range of employees, many of whom have been key workers such as factory, utilities, and retail workers. These are people who have kept working and kept our country going during the pandemic and lockdowns.

According to TUC research [2] nearly 1 in 10 workers have been told to re-apply for their jobs on worse terms and conditions or face the sack. Working-class people (12%)

are nearly twice as likely as those from higher socio-economic groups (7%) to face Fire and Rehire. For black and ethnic minority workers (15%) the rate is nearly twice the rate of white workers (8%).

Here, and across the country, Fire and Rehire is increasing the precariousness of work and financially and mentally compromising people who work hard to put food on the table and pay their bills. It is shackling our trade unions and making it impossible for them to fight for a fair deal for their members.

According to the National Union of Journalists (NUJ), our city's own newspapers The Oxford Mail and The Oxford Times threatened to Fire and Rehire NUJ members over bank holiday pay. In August the NUJ agreed a deal to end the dispute, but they could not get Fire and Rehire taken off the table in negotiations with the newspapers' owners Newsquest Media Group. [3]

In Oxfordshire, workers at the Jacob Douwe Egberts coffee factory in Banbury were threatened with Fire and Rehire earlier this year. The profitable factory succeeded in settling an agreement with Unite the Union in August. [4]

Oxford City Council resolves:

- **To publicly oppose any future use or threat of Fire and Rehire by employers in our City.**
- **For the review of future contracts, contract renewals and procurement to seek to include a commitment for employers to not use or threaten Fire and Rehire, as part of their social clause.**
- **For our City Council Leader to add her voice to that of our MPs Anneliese Dodds and Layla Moran in supporting new national legislation to ban Fire and Rehire.**
- **For our City Council Leader to write to Business Secretary Kwarsi Kwarteng, urging him to support Barry Gardiner's *End Fire and Rehire Private Members Bill* [5] and back the workers of our country.**

1 <https://www.acas.org.uk/fire-and-rehire-report/html>

2 "Fire and rehire" tactics have become widespread during pandemic – warns TUC January 2021

<https://www.tuc.org.uk/news/fire-and-rehire-tactics-have-become-widespread-during-pandemic-warns-tuc>

3 <https://www.nuj.org.uk/resource/oxford-mail-and-times-use-fire-and-rehire-tactic-to-end-bank-holiday-working-payments.html>

<https://www.holdthefrontpage.co.uk/2021/news/daily-journalists-facing-fire-and-rehire-after-rejecting-pay-change-union-says/>

4 <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-england-oxfordshire-58078221>

5 Employment and Trade Union Rights (Dismissal and Re-engagement) Bill

<https://www.parliament.co.uk/bills/2021-22/employmentandtradeunionrightsdissmissalandreengagement>

k) COP26 (proposer Cllr Dunne, seconder Cllr Mundy)

Labour Group member motion

This Council notes that:

- The global scientific consensus is that humans have caused an unprecedented increase in global temperatures, and we are heading towards mass extinction of entire ecosystems if we do not change our actions today [1].

- We have witnessed rising temperatures, floods, wildfires, and other extreme weather events happening more frequently around the world. Insects, animals, and natural habitats have been in decline because of the crisis we are in.
- The climate crisis is not just an environmental issue but is a social justice issue as the people who are least responsible for the crisis in the global south are the same people who will be hit hardest by its impacts.
- The main causes of the climate crisis are increased emissions from the fossil fuel sector, the agriculture sector and the waste sector which highlights the need for stronger mitigation in all these areas [2].
- The UK's agricultural land use and practices are a central driver for habitat and biodiversity loss, making this one of the world's most nature-depleted countries [3]. In the UK, we also eat more than twice the global average of meat and dairy products which is a huge contributor to global warming.
- The UK will soon be hosting COP26. The current government has not done enough to address the climate crisis and must do more immediately, particularly around agriculture which so often gets overlooked in climate change discussions.
- In January 2019, Oxford City Council declared a climate emergency and have been taking steps since to help prevent climate catastrophe, but more must be done locally, and we will need more powers and funding from national government as well.
- The necessary change to confront the climate crisis needs to tackle existing inequalities and to be democratic, led from the community with workshops, more citizen assemblies and youth summits.
- Zero carbon citizens and more importantly zero carbon institutions and businesses in the city are essential to decarbonising Oxford. Climate action from the city needs to be equitable based on contribution to the crisis (e.g., challenging large businesses and institutions in the city who are contributing the most to the crisis [4]).

This Council agrees to:

- **Look within the City Council operations to see where more work can be done to divest from fossil fuels such as**
 - **the transport of goods from around the world to Oxford,**
 - **local government pension fund investments**
- **Publicly call out institutions and businesses who continue to participate in fossil fuel activity, plastic waste, and unsustainable farming, including through associated partnerships such as pensions and suppliers.**
- **Ask the relevant Cabinet Member to work with officers to set-up working groups in the council to collaborate with existing community groups, climate activists and co-operatives to establish a revolutionary and systemic approach to reducing carbon emissions in the city.**
- **Ask the Leader to write to the Secretary of State for Business, Energy, and Industrial Strategy to provide funding to local governments for the nine concrete, radical changes of the Green New Deal to our current economic, social, and political model [5].**

1

https://www.ipcc.ch/report/ar6/wg1/downloads/outreach/IPCC_AR6_WGI_Press_Conference_Slides.pdf

2 <https://iopscience.iop.org/article/10.1088/1748-9326/ab9ed2>

3 <https://www.rspb.org.uk/globalassets/downloads/documents/conservation-projects/state-of-nature/state-of-nature-uk-report-2016.pdf>

4 <https://www.theguardian.com/environment/2021/apr/20/oxford-university-receives-11m-from-fossil-fuel-firms-report-finds>

5 <https://www.labourgnd.uk/gnd-explained>

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