

Council



Briefing note and supplementary papers

Date: **Monday 7 October 2024**

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:

Jonathan Malton, Committee and Member Services Manager

 01865 529117

 democraticservices@oxford.gov.uk

*View or subscribe to updates for agendas, reports and minutes at
mycouncil.oxford.gov.uk.*

All public papers are available from the calendar link to this meeting once published

Briefing note

Information for councillors and additional papers to be considered.

| | Pages |
|--|---------|
| 10 Questions on Notice from Members of Council | 7 - 38 |
| <p>Questions on notice from councillors received in accordance with Council Procedure Rule 11.11(b).</p> <p>Questions on notice may be asked of the Lord Mayor, a Member of the Cabinet or a Chair of a Committee. One supplementary question may be asked at the meeting.</p> <p>The full text of questions must have been received by the Head of Law and Governance by no later than 1.00pm on Wednesday, 25th September 2024</p> <p>These, and written responses where available, will be published in the briefing note.</p> | |
| 11 Public addresses and questions that do not relate to matters for decision at this Council meeting | 39 - 46 |
| <p><i>This item will be taken at or shortly after 7.00pm</i></p> <p>Public addresses and questions to the Leader or other Cabinet member received in accordance with Council Procedure Rules in the Constitution and <u>not</u> relating to matters for decision in Part 1 of this agenda.</p> <p>Up to five minutes is available for each public address and up to three minutes for each question. Questions must be less than 200 words.</p> <p>The request to speak accompanied by the full text of the address or question must be received by the Head of Law and Governance by 5.00 pm on Tuesday, 1st October 2024.</p> <p>The briefing note will contain the text of addresses and questions submitted by the deadline, and written responses where available.</p> <p><i>A total of 45 minutes is available for both public speaking items. Responses are included within the limit.</i></p> | |
| 13 Motions on notice October 2024 | 47 - 64 |

This item has a time limit of 60 minutes.

Motions received by the Head of Law and Governance in accordance with the rules in Section 11 of the Constitution by the deadline of 1.00pm on Wednesday, 25th October 2024 are listed below.

Cross party motions are taken first. Motions will then be taken in turn from the *Liberal Democrat Group, Green Group, Independent Oxford Alliance, Oxford Community Independent Group, Oxford Independent Group, Real Independent Group, Labour Group* in that order.

Substantive amendments to these motions must be sent by councillors to the Head of Law and Governance by no later than 10.00am on Friday, 4th October 2024 so that they may be circulated with the briefing note.

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) Winter Fuel Payments (Proposed by Cllr. Chris Snowton, Seconded by Cllr. Lawrence Fouweather) [Amendment Proposed by Cllr. David Henwood, Seconded by Cllr. Ian Yeatman] [Amendment Proposed by Cllr. Simon Ottino, seconded by Anna Railton]
- b) Keep Campsfield Closed (Proposed by Cllr. Alex Powell, Seconded by Cllr. Dr. Hosnieh Djarafi Marbini)
- c) Zero Emission Zone (Proposed by Cllr. David Henwood, Seconded by Cllr. Ian Yeatman)
- d) Winter Fuel Payments (Proposed by Cllr. Ajaz Rehman, Seconded by Cllr. Dr. Amar Latif)
- e) Decent and Genuinely Affordable Housing for All (Proposed by Cllr. Alex Hollingsworth, Seconded by Cllr. Ed Turner)
- f) Protection of Carers from Exploitation (Proposed by Cllr. Jo Sandelson, Seconded by Cllr. Theo Jupp) [Amendment Proposed by Cllr. Linda Smith, Seconded by Cllr. Naomi Waite]
- g) Bus travel for asylum seekers in Oxford (Proposed by Cllr. Alex Powell, Seconded by Cllr. Dianne Regisford)

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: 7 October 2024
Report of: Head of Law and Governance
Title of Report: Questions on Notice from members of Council and responses from the Cabinet Members and Leader

Introduction

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.

Responses are included where available.

Questioners can ask one supplementary question of the Cllr answering the original question.

This report will be republished after the Council meeting to include supplementary questions and responses as part of the minutes pack.

Unfamiliar terms may be briefly explained in footnotes.

Questions and responses

| MR1: Cllr Muddiman to Cllr Rowley – Diversity in Full Council Meetings | |
|---|--|
| Question | Written Response |
| <p>We are grateful to have an excellent contribution from the City Rector at the beginning of each Full Council meeting.</p> <p>Oxford is made up of people of many different faiths and of no faith. Does the Lord Mayor agree that our great diversity should be reflected in these Chambers, by inviting representatives from different belief systems to speak at the start of each Full Council Meeting?</p> | <p>The City Rector is a historic and purely formal appointment, and the postholder is invited as part of that role to attend City Council meetings but does not take part in the deliberations, nor does the City Council have any religious affiliation.</p> <p>The idea of asking the City Rector to make a few remarks was introduced by former Councillor Craig Simmons during his period as Lord Mayor. His remarks are invariably thoughtful and are not</p> |

| | |
|--|---|
| | <p>bound to any religion.</p> <p>We work closely through the Council of Faiths to engage with people of all religions and none, and will continue to do so.</p> |
|--|---|

Cabinet Member for Partnership Working; Leader of the Council

| SB1: Cllr Malik to Cllr Brown – Flying the Palestinian Flag | |
|---|--|
| <p>Question</p> <p>Since the war at Gaza, I have repeatedly asked the council to fly the Palestinian flag in solidarity with the citizens who are suffering during this war. Additionally, we have a city twinning with Ramallah, A Palestinian city. My Question is why can't we show solidarity to Palestine as we have for Ukraine, despite the situations hold many contrasts?</p> | <p>Written Response</p> <p>As I have said previously, we have flown the City Flag at half-mast to convey our sorrow at the situation in Gaza and the events on 7 October, a year ago today.</p> |

| SB2: Cllr Malik to Cllr Brown – Devolution to Oxfordshire | |
|--|---|
| <p>Question</p> <p>How would devolution affect Oxford City Council?</p> | <p>Written Response</p> <p>While Government has invited expressions of interest, it hasn't yet set out details of what may be offered in devolution deals.</p> <p>Nevertheless, we welcome the commitment to transfer more powers out of Westminster to empower local communities, institutions, and businesses. Unlike the previous government, the new government has indicated that it would expect powers to be appropriately shared or devolved with district councils.</p> <p>Oxford and Oxfordshire are key to Government ambitions to deliver growth. Yet we face significant challenges, including the recent rejection of our local plan, the difficulties in developing</p> |

| | |
|--|---|
| | <p>because of the failures of Thames Water. All this mean that the necessary means to tackle our financial and health inequality, and the enormous pressure on housing, public services, infrastructure and the natural environment, and the increasing impacts of climate change are currently very difficult. We would welcome more powers to tackle them locally.</p> <p>We need longer-term certainty on funding to invest in infrastructure and the long-term health prevention agenda and the ability to agree priorities locally. We could deliver more with new flexibilities to make the most of our local assets, for example through tourism levies.</p> |
|--|---|

| SB3: Cllr Rehman to Cllr Brown – Flagpole | |
|---|---|
| <p>Question Can you confirm the flagpole has been fixed?</p> | <p>Written Response</p> <p>I believe I have previously clarified that it is not the flagpole that is broken, contrary to what I had originally been told. The problem is the unsafe access to the flagpole. This will be renewed as part of a project to refurbish the Town Hall roof. This project is at planning/ feasibility stage.</p> |

| SB4: Cllr Rehman to Cllr Brown - Donations | |
|---|--|
| <p>Question</p> <p>In light of the freebies being accepted by politicians like confetti. Would it be pertinent for council to publish any such activity or benefits such tickets, lunches on a monthly basis for residents to access easily?</p> | <p>Written Response</p> <p>Unlike MPs, councillors don't tend to be offered the sorts of gifts and hospitality that would certainly merit registering if offered. Individual councillor's entries in the Register of interests is available on the website against each councillor's details. I am not aware of any declarations – the value would be over £50.</p> |

ET1: From Cllr Miles to Cllr Turner – Gloucester Green Car Park

Question

Gloucester green car park is unsuitable for disabled users. Therefore, in light of the council's policy measures to reduce private car journeys into the city centre, and its reliance on car parking revenues as an income stream, what research and financial modelling has the council undertaken to identify options to repurpose this asset for alternative revenue generation purposes, such as underground secure bike parking or office space?

Written Response

Income from Gloucester Green car park is assumed throughout the MTFP. The Council is not in control of the entirety of the car park with 2 of the 3 areas being on a long lease to provide parking for the residential units above. The public car park would be complex to convert and unlikely to be viable in isolation. It would need to be considered as part of a wider project and resourced appropriately. There are alternative - deliverable - opportunities the Council is prioritising across the City.

For customers unable to use Gloucester Green car park, there are alternative opportunities for accessible parking within both Worcester Street car park and Oxpens Road car park.

ET2: From Cllr Rehman to Cllr Turner – Winter Fuel Payments

Question

With this government's disgraceful decision to cut winter fuel payments. What additional support are we able to provide to our fathers, mothers and grandparents who will now need to choose between freezing or going into energy debt?

Written Response

We recognise that this will be a serious concern for a number of residents and we are putting in place support for those that will be hardest hit by this change. We are actively promoting support for people to claim the benefits they are entitled to, notably Pension Credit, by attending events across the city and officers being present at our community Larders. We are also training front facing community leaders on the changes and how they can support anyone who presents to them for help.

We are also expecting to be allocated some Household Support Fund shortly

| | |
|--|--|
| | <p>and we can allocate a proportion of this to support people affected by the loss of the winter fuel payment. We will be working with partners to organise warm spaces again this winter. Our Home Improvement Agency support low income households and they are running a keeping warm programme for those who are eligible.</p> |
|--|--|

Cabinet Member for Zero Carbon Oxford; Deputy Leader of the Council

| | |
|---|--|
| <p>AR1: From Cllr Henwood to Cllr Railton – Weight Limit of Bridges 2</p> | |
| <p>Question</p> <p>The laden weight of a single-decker electric bus is approx. 13,750 kgs (13.75 metric tons) and laden 18,600 Kgs just over 18.6 metric tons. Fully laden electric rubbish trucks weigh a similar amount. Given that the roads in Herschel Crescent, Littlemore are collapsing and several main road bridges are limited to 7.5 tons, how will the city council collect rubbish and transport the public on infrastructure that isn't designed to carry such large load vehicles? (weight sources: https://pelicanyutong.co.uk/vehicle/e12/)</p> | <p>Written Response</p> <p>ODS' Refuse Collection Vehicles and other fleet vehicles comply with the requirements of the maximum allowable highway weight limits associated with bridges and other road structures, irrespective of their fuel source. ODS adapts services such as waste and recycling operations accordingly.</p> <p>The Councillor will be aware that Oxford City Council doesn't operate bus services - and that the County Council is both the Highways Authority, which is responsible for enforcement around weight limits on roads and bridges and, together with the bus companies, forms the Enhanced Bus Partnership – which is responsible for transporting the public.</p> <p>With regards to the specific case, A TTRO (temporary traffic regulation order) is in place on the Herschel Crescent area to protect the carriageways from double decker buses. There is an exemption for <i>“carrying out any statutory functions of a local authority”</i>. Therefore, our domestic waste rounds and highway maintenance functions are exempt from this TTRO.</p> |

AR2: From Cllr Henwood to Cllr Railton – Weight Limit of Bridges 2

Question

What precautions have been taken for two laden electric buses or two laden rubbish trucks crossing each other at the same time over a bridge designed for 7.5 tons?

Written Response

ODS' fleet vehicles comply with the requirements of the maximum allowable highway weight limits associated with bridges and other road structures.

There has been a change in the weight limit across Donnington Bridge which ODS complies with. ODS would similarly adjust its fleet movement arrangements were weight limits to change on any other bridges or road structures.

AR3: From Cllr Henwood to Cllr Railton - Weight Limit of Bridges 3

Question

Given a laden bin lorry weight up to 26 tons (laden) and single electric buses 15 tons (normal double-decker bus 12 ~14 tons and normal single-decker 11~13 tons) how is the city council going to negotiate bin collections in Blackbird Leys when the Sandy Lane West Bridge has a weight limit of 7.5 tons?

Written Response

There is no bridge on Sandy Lane West. There is a bridge linking Barns Road and Blackbird Leys Road however, there is no weight restriction on this bridge.

There has been a change in the weight limit across Donnington Bridge which ODS complies with.

AR4: From Cllr Henwood to Cllr Railton – Railway Bridge

Question

Given a laden bin lorry can weigh up to 26 tons (laden) The old stone bridge above the railway line on Sandford Road, Littlemore has a weight limit of 7.5 tons, how will the city council serve Littlemore residents living in Medhurst Way and Armstrong road with bin collections, and how will the council facilitate public transport from the future Cowley branch line to the city center when buses and bin lorries crossing strategic bridges weight between 13.5 tons and 26 tons respectively?

Written Response

There is no weight limit on the rail bridge on Sandford Road.

There has been a change in the weight limit across Donnington Bridge which ODS complies with.

ODS would similarly adjust its fleet movement arrangements were weight limits to change on any other bridges or road structures.

AR5: From Cllr Henwood to Cllr Railton – Osney River Bridge 1**Question**

Given a laden bin lorry weight up to 26 tons (laden) and single electric buses 15 tons (normal double-decker bus 12 ~14 tons and normal single-decker 11~13 tons) how is the city council going to deliver bin collections and public transport over the cast iron Osney Bridge?

Written Response

There is no weight limit on Osney Bridge. There has been a change in the weight limit across Donnington Bridge which ODS complies with.

ODS would similarly adjust its fleet movement arrangements were weight limits to change on any other bridges or road structures.

AR6: From Cllr Henwood to Cllr Railton – Osney River Bridge 2**Question**

What is the maximum beam load of Osney Bridge, and what is the maximum traffic load the bridge can bear?

Written Response

This question should be addressed to Oxfordshire County Council, which is responsible for the majority of highway bridges in the city, including Osney Bridge.

AR7: From Cllr Henwood to Cllr Railton – Bridge Traffic Lights**Question**

Given the maximum load the Osney Bridge can bear, will bin lorries and buses need to pass the bridge one at a time? To avoid a combination of two vehicles passing over the bridge at any one time will traffic lights be installed to mitigate the threat to the Sandy Lane, Donnington, Five-mile drive, Osney, and Sandford road bridges?

Written Response

This question should be addressed to Oxfordshire County Council which is responsible for traffic management, including the installation of traffic lights should that be required anywhere on the city's road network.

AR8: From Cllr Henwood to Cllr Railton – Bridges Risk Assessment**Question**

Will the city council kindly share the risk assessment they have conducted to mitigate damage to the city's bridges from laden bin collection lorries?

Written Response

There is no risk assessment. ODS complies with all weight restrictions on bridges and other highways structures in the city.

AR9: From Cllr Miles to Cllr Railton – Flooding in Oxford

Question

Has the council made any attempts to plan for the anticipated increases in the frequency of flooding in the city including during the autumn/winter 24/25 period, with impacts on residents and the local economy and council resources?

Written Response

The Council is supporting Oxfordshire County Council in the developing a Climate Adaptation programme. Central to this, particularly for the city, is delivery of the Oxford Flood Alleviation Scheme to help mitigate the increasing risk of flood events.

However, climate change is also leading to more regular episodes of very heavy rainfall which can lead to surface water flooding rather than fluvial flooding. This is what happened on 23 September, which saw approximately 1/5 of annual rainfall in a 24-hour period. This level of flooding overwhelms the sewer system.

The drainage network in Oxford, similar to most areas of the UK, was built when there was far less housing and more fields that would have acted as flood plains for heavy rainfall.

Householders have the primary responsibility to protect their homes from surface water flooding and there are limited things Oxford City Council can do to prevent it taking place, though it is involved in deploying targeted Sustainable Drainage System (SUDS) measures in certain locations, such as the domestic water butts being deployed on Campbell Road and measures at New Hinksey Primary School.

Typically, surface water flooding takes place too rapidly for the effective deployment of sandbags – though Members should be reminded that the neither the City nor County Councils provide sandbags to individual properties except to vulnerable residents.

As the Highways Authority, Oxfordshire County Council has responsibilities for dealing with flooding of roads, but there is little they can do when sewers under the roads are full. The suggestion made by some that road drains blocked by

| | |
|--|--|
| | <p>grass cuttings caused the flooding is factually incorrect.</p> <p>When flooding does happen, ODS and the Council have worked with partners to provide support. Our response to the January flooding was effective and undoubtedly prevented more households being affected. Nevertheless, there were learnings taken from this national-scale event.</p> <p>With last week's surface water flooding, ODS attended over 50 flooded properties in the city and worked tirelessly with Thames Water and the EA to ensure drains and gullies last week were operating to their maximum.</p> |
|--|--|

| | |
|---|--|
| <p>AR10: From Cllr Djafari Marbini to Cllr Railton - Biodiversity</p> | |
| <p>Question</p> <p>Despite Oxford City Council's commitment to biodiversity, residents have disturbing reports of the use of drilling equipment strictly prohibited (without license) within several metres of where a protected species resides.</p> <p>What reassurances can the cabinet member provide that if such reports are indeed, accurate that this contravention of the laws will be independently investigated to ensure the safety and wellbeing of wildlife within what used to be called Spindelberry Park?</p> | <p>Written Response</p> <p>A planning enforcement officer has investigated this matter, including visiting the site and reports the following:</p> <p>From a planning point of view, what has happened is the developer has erected a hoarding fence along the boundary of the site to keep the public out. They are able to do this without planning permission as 'permitted development' under Schedule 2, Part 4, Class A of the General Permitted Development Order 2015. There is no other breach of planning control. As part of erecting this fence, the developer used a piece of equipment to break up the ground slightly in order to drive in the posts of the fence.</p> <p>With regard to the licences, the developer has a licence from Natural England to relocate a protected species and our Planning Enforcement Officer found no evidence that the terms of the license were being breached.</p> <p>The developer confirmed to our Planning Enforcement Officer that they have an ecologist there on a weekly basis and they are satisfied.</p> |

| | |
|--|---|
| | The Council does not have any further powers in relation to ecology enforcement and so in general, any suspected wildlife crime should be reported to the police. |
|--|---|

| AR11: From Cllr Djafari Marbini to Cllr Railton – Gul-e | |
|---|---|
| Question Gul-e is an innovative electric vehicle (EV) charging solution created by ODS. ODS is now taking expressions of interest from local councils across the UK, individual residents, fleet operators, and private businesses. Despite this a disabled resident has reported being refused permission by Peabody to have a charger installed at their bungalow in greater leys hence having to give up their mobility electric car. Has the cabinet member considered in the first instance encouraging the councils own partnered housing associations to allow the Gul-e charger to be installed in areas such as Northfield Brook? | Written Response I would be happy to contact Peabody in relation to their tenant if you could provide me with the details. The Blackbird Leys development the Council is bringing forward with Peabody will provide 29-32 EV chargers. ODS' GULe system provides a legal solution to the issue of charging cables crossing pavements for homes that don't have offstreet parking – it is not the charger itself, which appears to be the problem here (though please forward on details). ODS is preparing to bid for the installation of c300 GULe systems across Oxford under the Government-funded LEVI scheme. |

Cabinet Member for a Safer Oxford

| LA1: From Cllr Rehman to Cllr Arshad – Far Right Protests | |
|--|---|
| Question We have witnessed far right protests and attacks on communities. The police have worked wonderfully well to make communities feel safe and secure. I would like to thank them for this. What plans have we in place with the police to keep our communities | Written Response I strongly agree with the Councillor's praise for the Thames Valley Police response in Oxford and support provided to our communities during the race riots period. Our communities in Oxford showed that the kind of violent, racist, thugs who try to terrorise our communities as seen in other parts of the country by a very small minority of criminals has no place on the streets of our city. Oxford Police supported our right to peaceful protest, engaged with the Council and our |

LA1: From Cllr Rehman to Cllr Arshad – Far Right Protests

safe?

community representatives and ultimately played a pivotal role in keeping the city, Thames Valley, safe. Alongside other Councillors, I ensured that any potential threats were thoroughly investigated, keeping Thames Valley secure.

Our ongoing collaboration with local law enforcement is guided by the Oxford Safer Communities Partnership, which identifies key priorities for community safety and works collectively to maintain Oxford as a safe, inclusive, and welcoming place to live, work, and visit.

For more information, please refer to the link below:

Oxford Safer Communities Partnership Rolling Plan 2024-25.

<https://www.oxford.gov.uk/downloads/file/1084/oxford-safer-communities-partnership-rolling-plan-2024-25>

Cabinet Member for Citizen Focused Services and Council Companies

NC1: From Cllr Kerr to Cllr Chapman – Gul-E Installed

Question

Some residents in the city have been waiting more than three years to have a Gul-E installed. While this isn't exclusively ODS' responsibility, could the portfolio holder nonetheless outline what the current limiting factors are (beyond just it being someone else's responsibility) and a likely timeline for resolution?

Written Response

ODS' GULe system provides a legal solution to the issue of charging cables crossing pavements for homes that don't have offstreet parking. However, it still requires Highways Authority approval for installation.

Oxfordshire County Council is the Highways Authority and in 2022 they piloted deployment of GULe with 26 households across Oxfordshire, including a number within Oxford. ODS has also run GULe trials in Bedfordshire, Bromley, Buckinghamshire and Solihull.

The County Council will shortly be letting a contract for the installation of c300 GULe systems across Oxford under the

| | |
|--|---|
| | Government-funded LEVI scheme. ODS will be bidding for this work, with implementation expected during 2025. |
|--|---|

NC2: From Cllr Rehman to Cllr Chapman – Apprenticeship Levy

| Question | Written Response |
|--|--|
| <p>it is noted 25% of the unused apprenticeship levy has been used. Why have we not been able to utilised these funds to help youth development in these difficult times and why have we not used/spent the remaining 50%?</p> | <p>The apprenticeship levy is used by employers to support the education and training of apprentices who have been recruited (it does not cover salary costs) or to develop workforce skills and qualifications more broadly using approved suppliers of education and training. Unused levy may be transferred to other organisations for the same purpose.</p> <p>At OCC we have prioritised the use of levy funding to support staff development and aid recruitment. This includes the development of our corporate apprenticeship cohort. We have been working with managers to improve understanding and identify opportunities for more apprenticeships in services. We are currently exploring apprenticeship cohorts from across the business in AI, Business Transformation and Change. We have committed to transfer unspent levy of £152k. 50% of this is being allocated locally by OXLEP to fit in with our OIEP pledges and is available to local small and medium-sized employers based in Oxford or Oxfordshire in the sectors of social care and education. Funding can support any age group although it most often benefits younger workers. The remaining 50% is allocated by OCC to local employers using the same criteria.</p> <p>We now have a plan with commitments for the levy account for the next 12 months and we are finalising plans for spending all the levy for the following two years.</p> |

NC3: From Cllr Henwood to Cllr Chapman – Horse Fields in Iffley 1**Question**

Questions concerning the purchase commonly known as Horse Fields in Iffley
I would like to know which councillors were involved in the purchase of Horse Fields from Donnington Trust?

Written Response

Member decisions on Oxford City Housing Limited (OCHL) company business are via the Shareholder and Joint Venture Group (SJVG).

The site was included in the 2021/22 OCHL Business Plan approved by the SJVG in December 2020, prior to the acquisition completing in February 2021.

NC4: From Cllr Henwood to Cllr Chapman – Horse Fields in Iffley 2**Question**

I would like to know which councillors sanctioned the purchase of Horse Fields

Written Response

The OCHL Shareholder Agreement for OCHL gives delegated authority to the OCHL Board to make such acquisitions if they are consistent with the provision of the agreed Business Plan.

As noted in the question above, the site was included in the 2021/22 OCHL Business Plan approved by the SJVG in December 2020, prior to completion of the acquisition of the site by OCHL in February 2021. The members who approved the Business Plan were Cllr Susan Brown, Cllr Ed Turner, Cllr Tom Hayes, Cllr Nigel Chapman, Cllr Mary Clarkson, Cllr Alex Hollingsworth, Cllr Mike Rowley, Cllr Linda Smith and Cllr Louise Upton. It is worth noting that a cabinet and council report in March 2023 (approving funds and arrangements for the City Council to purchase the future homes to be built on the site) made reference to this acquisition being made in October 2020. This was incorrect. The acquisition was completed in February 2021.

NC5: From Cllr Henwood to Cllr Chapman – Horse Fields in Iffley 3**Question**

How was the purchase made, from which accounts?

Written Response

The purchase of Horse Fields was a transaction undertaken by OCHL. The associated payments were made from the Oxford City Housing (Development) Limited Bank Account.

NC6: From Cllr Djafari Marbini to Cllr Chapman – Winter Fuel Allowance**Question**

Age UK reports that the change in winter fuel allowance could affect the health of two million pensioners. Many of my residents in Northfield Brook are already living on empty and will simply not have the money needed to stay warm. The top issue raised by residents of Northfield Brook with Citizens Advice Bureau last year was fuel debts and there is already a four-week waiting list to see an advisor at the local Agnes Smith advice centre. There is a staggering fifteen-year age life expectancy gap between Oxford's richest residents and those living in my ward, which is likely to worsen in the coming winter.

What preparatory steps have been taken to support elderly residents who will not be able to afford to heat their homes? Have more financial support been drawn up for our advice centres which will have an increased number of pensioners in financial difficulty?

Written Response

I do share Cllr Marbini's concerns about the impact of the decision to restrict the winter fuel allowance to people on Pension Credit and other benefits. There are clearly groups who are not eligible for these benefits who will struggle to pay their heating bills this winter.

As a Council, we are working hard to ensure that everyone who can claim Pension Credit gets support to do so, with a major campaign to encourage new claims. We are also reminding people that if they are eligible, it is likely that they will get reduced council tax bills as well.

The Government has extended the provision of the Household Support Fund. This is open to anyone who is struggling to pay their bills and offers one off financial support. Again, we will be promoting this widely through our outreach, our Contact centre and through our Advice Centre partners.

Our role is to get as many people to apply for the support available and we are doing this vigorously.

AH1: From Cllr Henwood to Cllr Hollingsworth – Workshops for Businesses**Question**

When and in what format was the last time the city council held any consultation events or workshops with representatives of businesses located in the district centre of Summertown to identify the views of business owners, managers and entrepreneurs on the local business environment challenges and opportunities?

Written Response

During 2023, the City Council undertook an engagement round in Summertown, relating to proposals to redevelop Diamond Place. We had a very low attendance from local businesses despite the Neighbourhood Forum doing a leaflet drop in the area. One of the key issues identified was that many businesses in the area are national companies such as M&S, Costa and Pret, who may be less likely to be involved at local level.

More generally, the City Council has limited resources for ongoing engagement with businesses outside the city centre, and can only do so around specific consultations, such as that for Diamond Place and the like.

AH2: From Cllr Henwood to Cllr Hollingsworth – Promoting cigarette and vape smoke-free cafe terraces**Question**

What is the council's position on promoting cigarette and vape smoke-free cafe terraces in all cafe outside seating areas?

Written Response

Council officers include a condition in all pavement licences, which requires the reasonable provision of non-smoking tables, separated from smoking tables, clearly identified and with no ash trays.

Applicants are advised to read the City Council's terms conditions; the information is available on the Council's website.

AH3: From Cllr Powell to Cllr Hollingsworth - Criteria on November 2nd fireworks decisions**Question**

Can the portfolio holder please give details of the criteria by which a decision to proceed with the 2 November 2024

Written Response

The procedure for events in South Park has two elements:

| | |
|---------------------------------------|---|
| <p>fireworks display was reached?</p> | <p>First, there is an Annual Meeting with the formal stakeholders under the terms of the Memorandum of Understanding relating to South Park – the City Council and Oxford Preservation Trust - which considers feedback on events from the previous year and agrees which applications will be accepted for future events. For a number of years the Friends of South Park have been invited to this meeting as a courtesy and as a conduit for local views. The Annual meeting usually happens in November each year, but was held later in this cycle (February 2024) because of the damage to the park caused by last year’s fireworks event. An additional meeting with the Friends of South Park was held in the same month.</p> <p>The second element is that each event then has to go through the formal consultation process to check the event management plan including traffic management plan, risk assessment, noise, medical and environmental plans, and so forth. Any concerns raised by statutory consultees such as Thames Valley Police, Oxfordshire County Council, Oxfordshire Fire and Rescue Service and others are taken into account before confirming whether or not an event can go ahead. The formal consultation for the fireworks event was held between 17 and 30 September 2024.</p> |
|---------------------------------------|---|

| | |
|--|---|
| <p>AH4: Cllr Powell to Cllr Hollingsworth - Detail on agreement regarding November 2nd fireworks</p> | |
| <p>Question Can the portfolio holder please detail how the council will ensure that all elements of the agreement between the Council and the Roundtable regarding the 2 November 2024 fireworks is adhered to?</p> | <p>Written Response The formal consultation period ended at midnight on 30 September. The City Council has reviewed responses in line with the standard process for all events before deciding whether there any</p> |

| | |
|--|---|
| | <p>objections from statutory consultees that would prevent the event from going ahead. In the light of those responses a permit has been issued for the event to go ahead, subject to some changes to the proposed event management plan around the fun fair.</p> <p>The City Council has the right to cancel any event that it has issued a permit for, without notice. To help the organisers of this and other events to be clear about when the City Council would exercise that right in the light of inclement weather or of potential damage to the ground, the Council has issued a Cancellation Protocol alongside the permit for the event. This protocol is explanatory and does not change the existing right to cancel without notice.</p> <p>As with all events, when a permit is issued, City Council staff ensure that the details of the event are clearly understood and that the applicant has appropriate arrangements in place to make sure its sub-contractors adhere to all elements of the event plan that has been permitted. City Council staff will undertake spot checks during the week leading up to the event and on the night to ensure that it is held in line with the agreed plan.</p> |
|--|---|

| | |
|--|--|
| <p>AH5: Cllr Powell to Cllr Hollingsworth - Officers present on November 2nd fireworks</p> | |
| <p>Question</p> <p>Can the portfolio holder please request that officers are present on site during the set up and take down preparations for the 2 November 2024 fireworks to ensure appropriate action is taken promptly if possible signs of damage are present?</p> | <p>Written Response</p> <p>Council officers are already due to be on site before and after the event. The responsibility for adhering to the event plan, and avoiding damage to the park, rests with Oxford Round Table, as the event organisers. The City Council is fully committed to making sure that the popular and long-running Fireworks display can go ahead while</p> |

| | |
|--|---|
| | simultaneously preventing the damage to South Park that has occurred in the last couple of years. |
|--|---|

| AH6: Cllr Powell to Cllr Hollingsworth - Limit of capacity in South Park | |
|---|--|
| Question Can the portfolio holder please confirm whether there is a limit on the set capacity of South Park in terms of people attending events and, if so, what this limit is? | Each event will have its own limit, depending on how it is structured and which parts of South Park are used. The limit for the Fireworks Event is 25,000 attendees. By way of contrast, the Radiohead show in South Park in 2001 had an audience of about 40,000, because it used the park in a different configuration. |

| AH7: Cllr Powell to Cllr Hollingsworth - South Park fireworks cancellation plan | |
|---|--|
| Question Can the portfolio holder please confirm under which circumstances the South Park Fireworks cancellation plan mentioned in his reply during the Full Council Meeting on the 15 July would be put into effect? | Written Response Cancellation would be triggered by adverse weather conditions such as high winds, but also – specifically because of the problems in recent years – if the ground conditions in South Park were such that going ahead, even with the extensive mitigation measure that the Round table are putting in place, would lead to an unacceptable risk of damage to the park. The protocol has been issued alongside the permit for the event. |

| AH8: Cllr Powell to Cllr Hollingsworth - Meetings with friends of South Park Group and residents | |
|---|--|
| Question The current consultation plans for the South Park Fireworks display seem to be being channelled through the Friends of South Park group. Can the portfolio holder please confirm what, if any, independent channels exist for members of the public to feed in their own views and questions; and will the portfolio | Written Response The consultation process for events is laid down on the City Council's website. The City Council is responsible for ensuring that the event meets all the necessary requirements of the various statutory consultees before it can go ahead. It is the responsibility of the event organiser to plan their event, including |

| | |
|---|---|
| <p>holder and relevant officers agree to meet with residents ahead of the November fireworks event to ensure that residents feel listened to and consulted as the event progresses?</p> | <p>any broader consultation beyond the statutory consultation process. If the event meets the requirements of the statutory consultees, then it can go ahead.</p> <p>In this instance the Friends of South Park, who are one of the two formal stakeholders for South Park, have also offered to act as the conduit for broader comments, which of course they can do. Should a member of the public feel one of the statutory consultees – Police, Fire Service, Ambulance Service, County Council and so forth – have failed to properly assess the event, then they should raise that directly with that organisation.</p> <p>I am aware of course that there are many members of the public who do not believe that there should not be any Fireworks event in South Park this year or ever again in the future, because of the damage done during last year’s event in particular. I am also aware that there are many thousands of residents across Oxford who would be horrified if the event were cancelled. It is not possible to meet both those conflicting demands.</p> <p>I believe that the much-revised event put forward by the Round Table is a good compromise, with enough mitigations in place to ensure that the event can happen and that South Park is not damaged in the process. I am happy to meet local people to hear their concerns, and to explain what the Round Table are proposing and how the City Council will be working to ensure that the proposed plan is delivered on the ground. The only way for any of us to be sure if the proposed plan will work as promised is for it to be implemented.</p> |
|---|---|

AH9: Cllr Rehman to Cllr Hollingsworth – Botley Road

| | |
|--|---|
| <p>Question</p> <p>Do we have grants or knowledge of grants available to businesses impacted by the Botley road bridge closure?</p> | <p>Written Response</p> <p>There are no local or national grants available for businesses impacted by the Botley Road bridge closure.</p> <p>The City Council wrote to the Valuation Office Authority on behalf of Oxford businesses on 22 November 2022. In the letter the City Council asked the VOA to consider applications for business rates relief sympathetically where the evidence provided to them shows that businesses' ability to operate has been negatively impacted.</p> <p>Several Botley Road and Frideswide Square businesses have had promotional videos filmed by the City Council and published on web and social media, which is an opportunity that the council has offered to all businesses affected by the Botley Road bridge closure.</p> |
|--|---|

| <p>AH10: Cllr Rehman to Cllr Hollingsworth - Fireworks</p> | |
|---|---|
| <p>Question</p> <p>Round table firework display looks to be going ahead, well done along with officers There will be no bonfire along with other changes. Given the funds raised for good causes are we concerned it may not as successful/appealing as previous events and has that been evaluated?</p> | <p>Written Response</p> <p>The event is organised by the Round Table, and it is up to the event organiser to judge whether or not it will be successful.</p> <p>It was quite clear that there could be no repetition of the damage caused last year (the costs of repairing which are paid for by the organisers of the event that caused it, something the Round Table will have had to take into account), and the revised plan aims to address that issue and allow the Fireworks to go ahead without causing damage to the ground in South Park.</p> |

CM1: From Cllr Smowton to Cllr Munkonge – Serco Leisure

Question

Now that the new Serco Leisure contract has been in place for 6 months, can you confirm how many regular community groups that were meeting regularly at the time of the takeover have either faced a price increase of 25% or more for their bookings, or have terminated their regular booking?

Written Response

More Leisure (Serco Leisure) have confirmed that they have not made any general price increases for community groups, or aware of any regular bookings cancelling.

The only exception to this is one regular community group who had full use of a swimming pool who were paying well below the market rates and unsustainable in the longer term. More Leisure have agreed a phasing plan for the charges with the community group, to help enable them to continue swimming.

CM2: From Cllr Coyne to Cllr Munkonge – Physiotherapy Service

Question

Eight months ago, the local physiotherapy service based in Manzil Way was relocated to Hanborough House on North Hinksey Lane in Botley. The difficulties of access to these services, which were previously available within the city, has been brought to my attention by several residents with mobility (and other) challenges who can no longer easily get to (or afford to get to) appointments and follow-up care. Was the cabinet member for Healthy Oxford informed about the decision to move from Cowley Road? Is he aware of this 're-structuring' of a vital service? How does the Cabinet member engage with the Integrated Care Board (Bucks. Oxon and Berks West) and other NHS partners to ensure equitable access for all residents to essential services like Physiotherapy. How is communication maintained between outsourced services and patients' GP services? Residents

Written Response

It is of course extremely unfortunate that the physiotherapy service which was previously located at Manzil Way is now located somewhere which is not currently easily accessible by public transport or by private car from the city.

The role of the Cabinet Member for Health on Oxford City Council is not about liaison with health services, but more about using our facilities to encourage healthy lifestyles. I do not engage directly with the Integrated Care Board. That role is taken by the Leader of South Oxfordshire District Council on behalf of the Oxfordshire councils currently.

We are concerned, as are other Oxfordshire councils about the withdrawal of the role of Place Director by the BOB ICB, which we see as a retrograde step and one which may lead

| | |
|-----------------------|--|
| are deeply concerned. | to more decisions such as these. The Oxfordshire HOSC, on which Cllr Susanna Pressel sits as a representative of this City Council has made representations on this. |
|-----------------------|--|

| CM3: From Cllr Malik to Cllr Munkonge – Electric Bikes | |
|---|---|
| Question | Written Response |
| <p>Recent news in local and national media about the Electric bikes going too fast. Many residents has been in touch with their concerns about the electric bikes going to fast in Marsh park & near by cycle path.</p> <p>Where they witnessing near misses and a collision while walking their dog & walking in the footpath in Marsh Park.</p> <p>Can Oxford city ban electric bikes using city council parks?</p> | <p>We should clearly distinguish between illegally modified e-bikes, which are effectively e-motorcycles, and the legal ones which are speed restricted to 15.5mph and have to be pedalled to engage the motor.</p> <p>The legal e-bikes are a useful, relatively new option to make it easier for more people to cycle instead of using a private car. Used carefully and conscientiously, we are happy with these sorts of bikes being used in City Council parks.</p> <p>The illegally modified e-bikes are already classified legally as motorcycles, so should not be driven without a licence and insurance on the roads, and are not allowed to be used in City Council parks.</p> |

| CM4: From Cllr Djafari Marbini to Cllr Munkonge – Serco Leisure | |
|---|---|
| Question | Written Response |
| <p>Despite reassurances at the time of the Serco handover around providing leisure activities for all and meeting the health inequalities prominent in our communities, the women’s’ swimming session in BBI pool which is very popular with around 25 women regularly attending has had and change in the time without any consultation and even more worryingly the three women lifeguards who were trained and recruited after a lengthy search and process have all now resigned.</p> <p>How will the council urgently meet the needs of our women swimmers who</p> | <p>More Leisure (Serco) are committed to providing leisure activities for all and we have secured key items such as concessionary access, free swimming for children at different times in the programme, a community fund and the commitment to work with the City Council and health partners to deliver an effective Active Communities programme to help tackle health inequalities.</p> <p>To try to best ensure that the pool programme is available for all, there has been a timetabling change for the Women’s’ swimming session at the Leys Leisure centre of a later start by 30</p> |

| | |
|--|--|
| <p>prefer and only use the women only session including our Muslim residents? What reassurances will be given that Serco processes will actually prioritise the health and wellbeing needs of our communities?</p> | <p>minutes. However, More Leisure will keep this under review to try and ensure a positive impact.</p> <p>More Leisure are sorry that the recruited female lifeguard team for the Women's session at the Leys Leisure Centre have left. Unfortunately there is an industry issue around lifeguard recruitment and retention, which the City Council and More Leisure are continuing work on.</p> <p>More Leisure have made the recruitment to these posts a priority and lifeguard course are running almost every holiday period and at weekends to maintain our pool of lifeguards. If there are any women or community groups that are interested then More Leisure would be delighted to hear from them.</p> |
|--|--|

Cabinet Member for Housing and Communities

| | |
|---|--|
| <p>LS1: Cllr Miles to Cllr L Smith – GreenSquare Accord</p> | |
| <p>Question</p> <p>How many times has Green Square Accord met with Council officers and/or councillors to resolve maintenance issues of their properties within the city this municipal year to date (since May 2024)?</p> | <p>Written Response</p> <p>The maintenance of Registered Provider housing stock is a matter for the Housing Association landlord or the Regulator.</p> <p>If there are HHSRS issues then the Regulatory arm of the Council can intervene to enforce The Housing Act 2004, there have been no cases which have escalated to this level this year with GreenSquare Accord.</p> <p>Officers of the council working in Affordable Housing Supply have met once this year with Greensquare Accord at the regular strategic partnership meeting.</p> <p>I also met once informally with the Regional Localities Manager for Greensquare Accord,</p> <p>I am unable to answer for other individual</p> |

| | |
|--|--|
| | councillors who may have met representatives of GreenSquare Accord to discuss matters in their ward. |
|--|--|

| | |
|---|---|
| LS2: Cllr R Smith to Cllr L Smith – Empty properties | |
| Question The recent empty properties briefing paper showed Oxford had over a thousand empty homes (in February 2023) with 125 identified as 'long term empty'. The work to return empty properties into habitable, much needed homes is commendable. Could the cabinet member advise how many properties have had notice to improve the appearance served between February 2023 and March 2024? | Written Response 20 properties were reported for appearance with owners being contacted and site inspections carried out. Notices can be served under the Prevention of Damage by Pests Act 1949. Of the 20 properties, The Empty Homes Officer issued one Community Protection Notice (CPN). |

| | |
|---|---|
| LS3: Cllr Rehman to Cllr L Smith – New Licensing Scheme | |
| Question The new licensing scheme is great and very welcome. When do you anticipate our tenants to be afforded the same standards as private tenants and what would you say to our tenants regarding rent payments if our properties fall short? | Written Response The standards applied to the homes of Council tenants is already far stricter than in the private sector with an existing Decent Homes Standard, which incorporates all of the elements of the Housing health and safety rating system (HHSRS), and strict regulatory standards introduced by the Regulator of Social Housing. The MHCLG has announced that it will imminently (this autumn) be consulting on an updated Decent Homes Standard that would apply both to existing social housing but also to the private sector. Notwithstanding the protections already afforded by existing standards for Council tenants, tenants have recourse to disrepair claims, Right to Repair claims and the Council's complaints process, which is administered in line with the Housing Ombudsman's Code of |

| | |
|--|---|
| | <p>Complaint Handling.</p> <p>Withholding rent in lieu of outstanding repairs is not a right that tenants have in any sector, and landlords can take recovery action, including possession proceedings where arrears arise.</p> |
|--|---|

Cabinet Member for Planning

| LU1: From Cllr Malik to Cllr Upton – Oxpens Scheme | |
|---|--|
| <p>Question</p> <p>Following the objection from the environment agency regarding sewage capacity, what can we expect from the development for the Oxpens scheme? Will this delay the scheme?</p> | <p>Written Response</p> <p>The delays experienced in the planning process has delayed the progression of the scheme as it has delayed the application going forward for consideration at Planning Committee. OxWED as applicant are working with the Local Planning Authority and the Environment Agency to find a way to enable the scheme to move forward to decision and onto delivery. The objection from the EA does not only affect the Oxpens scheme it affects and will ultimately delay development proposals across the city and beyond. Please see previous statement from the Leader available at: Statement on the state of Oxford's sewage treatment system and related planning objections Oxford City Council</p> |

| LU2: Cllr Malik to Cllr Upton – 5G in Oxford | |
|---|--|
| <p>Question</p> <p>How is the Council working with authorities and service providers to ensure that users across Oxford have access to a stable and continuous 5G connection outdoors?</p> | <p>Written Response</p> <p>The City Council is part of the County Council's Digital Infrastructure Programme Partnership Board. And the County Council has invited all City</p> |

| | |
|--|---|
| | Council members to an update on Oxfordshire Connectivity, including 5G, on Tuesday 22 October. I encourage you to attend this briefing. |
|--|---|

| LU3: Cllr Morris to Cllr Upton: – Donnington Bridge Road Closure | |
|---|--|
| <p>Question Donnington Bridge Road has recently been closed to heavy vehicles, while engineering inspections take place, and as a result, two crucial bus routes have been adversely affected, cutting off residents from traveling easily by bus between the east and south of the city. Has the cabinet member been in communication with the County Council and relevant bus companies about finding solutions for these residents, such as a temporary mini shuttle bus service?</p> | <p>Written Response I is for the County Council to work with the bus companies to identify and agree any mitigations. I have been in correspondence with the bus companies to explore options. I am happy to say that after pressure from two local Labour councillors and local residents, the County have moved quickly and a limited service, the 46A, over Donnington Bridge will be starting in mid-October.</p> |

| LU4: Cllr Powell to Cllr Upton – Speeding reduction infrastructure | |
|--|---|
| <p>Question Residents of Morrell Avenue have repeatedly called for new speeding reduction infrastructure to address the huge volume of speeding happening on their street. Does the cabinet member agree that speeding is a serious risk to the health and safety of residents and will then join me in encouraging the County Council to act more quickly in addressing the concerns raised by many residents?</p> | <p>Written Response Speed limits, enforcement and changing roads to make them safer - all of these are County Council responsibilities which support their Vision Zero policy. Their commitment is to reduce deaths and serious injuries on Oxfordshire's roads to zero by 2050, with targets of a 25 per cent reduction by 2026 and 50 per cent by 2030. I agree that the County Council should listen to residents and do more to ensure that people drive safely within speed limits on Oxford's roads. I will raise this at my next meeting with the County Council's highways cabinet member.</p> |

| LU5: Cllr Rawle to Cllr Upton – Notice of Donnington Bridge closure | |
|--|--------------------------------|
| <p>Question The closure of Donnington Bridge to</p> | <p>Written Response</p> |

| | |
|--|---|
| <p>heavy vehicles was communicated to residents with less than 24 hours notice, and following initial inspections that took place earlier this year. Has the cabinet member had conversations with County Council about how it balances the need to take quick action upon recommendations from engineers, at the same time as providing reasonable notice to residents about as many upcoming disruption?</p> | <p>I share your residents' frustration at the short notice of this bridge closure. However it is entirely the responsibility of the County Council, as the highway authority to make judgements about the safety of the public and to weigh this up with other factors which may be multiple and complex.</p> |
|--|---|

| LU6: Cllr Robinson to Cllr Upton – Monitoring impact of e-bikes/scooters | |
|--|--|
| <p>Question What discussions, if any, has the portfolio holder had with the County Council about the monitoring of the impact of trial e-bike/scooter schemes on walking and wheeling in Oxford?</p> | <p>Written Response</p> <p>I have discussed the e-scooter and e-bike schemes in Oxford with the County Council highways cabinet member since the e-scooter trial launched in February 2021. The City Council has supported these additional options as helpful alternatives to the private car for short journeys. At the same time, it is important that these new travel options are used safely and conscientiously, and they are parked in a way that doesn't cause obstruction, particularly for people walking and wheeling on pavements. This has been a frequent and ongoing topic of discussion at our Inclusive Transport & Movement Focus Group.</p> <p>In contrast to the regulated e-scooter hire trial, the recent arrival of e-bike hire schemes in the city has not been as well managed. There is a lack of legislation to control e-bike hire schemes and not all operators engage constructively with the County Council. I have had conversations with County officers and councillors about trying to do whatever is possible to minimise the negative impacts of the e-bike hire schemes.</p> |

| |
|---|
| LU7: Cllr Djafari Marbini to Cllr Upton – Football Pitches |
|---|

| Question | Written Response |
|--|---|
| <p>What specific plans does the council have currently for the development of the local football pitches and green areas in blackbird leys and greater leys?</p> | <p>Sports pitch provision and green areas are an incredibly important part of our city, the protection and enhancement of which are covered by our planning policies.</p> <p>The development of local football pitches is picked up within the Council's Playing Pitch Strategy which sets out the approach to ensuring the city has a good supply of well-managed, maintained and efficient playing pitches and other outdoor sports facilities which meet identified needs and encourage residents to have an active lifestyle.</p> <p>The strategy highlights that where development which would adversely affect pitch provision is proposed, then adequate replacement (equivalent or improved) should be secured. This is in line with government policy guidance for the protection of playing field land.</p> <p>The Council also has a Green Spaces Strategy which is designed to protect and enhance green spaces across the city. Both strategies support the wider planning policies for the Council.</p> <p>As you will be aware there are numerous regeneration projects currently either underway or being proposed across Blackbird Leys and Greater Leys. Officers from across the council actively engage with all key stakeholders at the various stages of each of the projects that are being delivered.</p> <p>The regeneration scheme for Blackbird Leys is providing a substantial amount of new public space in the district centre although this will not be sports pitch provision. The scheme also covers the relocation of some sports equipment including goalposts and outdoor gym</p> |

| | |
|--|---|
| | provision from Knights Road open space to Fry's Hill to ensure this equipment can still be utilised by the local community. |
|--|---|

LU8: Cllr Djafari Marbini to Cllr Upton - Sandy Lane Football Field

| | |
|--|---|
| <p>Question Sandy Lane football field is a much loved and used community space with numerous teams meeting there regularly including under 9, under 10 and girls football teams as well as at least 6 other football clubs. The weekly matches also take place here along with other clubs. Members of the general public use the area regularly for other uses such as dog walking, exercise etc. These are all a crucial element of the health and wellbeing of local adults and children. The loss of this space would have a devastating consequence for many in the area.</p> <p>Regarding Sandy Lane Football Field, What considerations have been given to the impact of loss of this green space on the physical and mental well-being of residents, particularly in terms of recreational opportunities and access to nature, and what steps are being taken to address these?</p> | <p>Written Response</p> <p>The Sandy Lane Recreation Ground has a site allocation for housing in the Oxford Local Plan 2036, adopted in June 2020. The site policies in the plan reference numerous policy requirements from the site, including the re-provision of any football pitches as necessary. Other Local Plan policies relate to green spaces and biodiversity improvements required from any development.</p> <p>Any development proposals to be brought forward on this site would be looked at in the context of the Council's Playing Pitch Strategy which seeks to ensure the city has a good supply of well-managed, maintained and efficient playing pitches to meet identified needs, as well as the Green Spaces Strategy, which is designed to protect and enhance green spaces across the city..</p> <p>Development will require a planning application, and at that time all relevant considerations will be consulted on and assessed.</p> |
|--|---|

LU9: Cllr Rehman to Cllr Upton – Botley Road

| | |
|--|--|
| <p>Question The Botley bridge is now closed for another year. At what point did the council know this is the situation?</p> | <p>Written Response</p> <p>Officers were informed on 7th May 2024 and I was informed on 8th May. A meeting with relevant cabinet members from both the City and County Council was subsequently held on 9th May. At this meeting NR made it clear that this information was provided to us in confidence while they looked to mitigate this issue and develop options. At this</p> |
|--|--|

| | |
|--|--|
| | point both councils emphasised the need to get this information out into the public domain as quickly as possible. |
|--|--|

| LU10: Cllr Rehman to Cllr Upton – Electric Hackney Carriages | |
|---|--|
| <p>Question In light of the further years delay and the devastating impact on the taxi trade. Would this council re consider its decision and extend by a further year the introduction of Electric Hackney carriages?</p> | <p>Written Response</p> <p>The proposal for an extension of the final stage of the emission standards policy for Hackney Carriage Vehicles was presented to the General Purposes Licensing Committee in February 2024, this matter was fully considered, and it was agreed a one-year delay was appropriate when balancing the emission standards policy with the challenges faced by the hackney trade.</p> <p>A proposal to extend the policy for a further year was proposed at the Full Council Meeting in March 2024. Council was provided with the full report considered by the General Purposes Licensing Committee and were provided with additional representations from City of Oxford Licenced Taxicab Association (COLTA). The proposal was put to a vote and the one-year policy extension was passed.</p> <p>Since March 2024, there has been no new information or significant changes to suggest the council should re-consider further extensions to the final stage of the Emissions Standards Policy for Hackney Carriage Vehicles.</p> |

| LU11: Cllr Muddiman to Cllr Upton – Active Cities | |
|---|--|
| <p>Question During the excellent Healthy New Towns project in Bicester, a 5 km circular blue line, (via various green spaces), was painted onto pavements. It was extremely successful in nudging residents to increase their physical activity. Does the portfolio holder agree</p> | <p>Written Response</p> <p>We work closely with colleagues in other Oxfordshire districts and are aware of the positive impact that the Blue Line, as well as schemes such as the Kidlington Zoo Trails and Abingdon Nature Trails, have had on supporting activity. At Oxford City</p> |

| | |
|--|--|
| <p>that we should have a similar initiative in Oxford?</p> | <p>Council, we have worked with partners to create various digital routes shown here Walks in Oxford - routes and maps Oxford City Council</p> <p>City Council officers are also currently exploring the various advantages and disadvantages of different types of walking trails and should external funding be identified, we will also be looking at this alongside other potential options.</p> |
|--|--|

This page is intentionally left blank

To: Council

Date: 7 October 2024

Report of: Head of Law and Governance

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.

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

1. Address from Mr. Greg Owen – Spindleberry Nature Reserve
2. Address from Chaka Artwell – Discrimination against non-internet users
3. Address from Georgie Steele – Support for Motion 13f (Protection of Carers from Exploitation)
4. Address from Sushila Dhall, Refugee Resource – Support for Motion 13b (Keep Campsfield Closed)
5. Address from Emma Jones, Asylum Welcome – Support for Motion 13b (Keep Campsfield Closed)
6. Address from Bill MacKeith, CKCC – Support for Motion 13b (Keep Campsfield Closed)

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

1. Address from Mr. Greg Owen – Spindleberry Nature Reserve

I'm a resident of Greater Leys and a member of a new group of volunteers The Friends of Spindleberry Nature Reserve. My question is to the Cabinet Member for Planning. It concerns the Knights Road Site allocated as residential in the Local Plan 2036. It is part of the Blackbird Leys redevelopment project on which the Council is partnered with Peabody. The site is under construction and includes part of Spindleberry Nature Park. I don't know why the Council designated part of our Nature Reserve for residential use and I don't know why they have given sole responsibility for it in perpetuity to Peabody. Especially as the Council still own it. I do know residents have concerns about it. In my case informed by my familiarity with the planning permission and the associated documents and conditions. Condition 9 and it's approved Construction Environmental Management Plan dictates that two Biodiversity Exclusion Zones were to be established inclusive of this part of the Nature Reserve. On Page 6 paragraph 2.2.2 bullet point 2 it denies contractors access to these fenced off areas during the construction phase unless associated with the new planting. In the summer I had fears that changes would happen in this area and the public would not be informed so I sought assurance from the planning officer, the Council's regeneration manager and Peabody's development manager that only work by dint of the planning permission and conditions would occur. I got it via emails. But things are different enough now within the Exclusion Zones to raise reasonable concerns. I have the following examples. The reptile and sediment fencing to protect the slow worms, the Exclusion Zones and brook which the CEMP dictated to be in place prior to commencement has never been installed. Fencing for these Zones has occurred out of sequence. New fences have recently appeared that were scheduled for erection prior to commencement. Huge tree bows in the Spindleberry Zone have been cut down and logs stacked by the contractor. Not for ecological reasons or for safety but to make way for the new fence. They must have entered the Zone. An earth work has been constructed within this Exclusion Zone. I know what it is for but it's presence contradicts the access restrictions. Will the Member for Planning give a detailed explanation of how the continuing works and access to the Biodiversity Exclusion Zones conforms to the planning permission and conditions which can only be varied by written consent?

2. Address from Chaka Artwell – Discrimination against non-internet users

Will Oxford City Elected Councillors, and ODS's stop the direct, and indirect discrimination against the 5,000 homes, who do not enjoy access to the internet, do not have a smartphone, and have never needed to use a QR code?

Oxford City Council's discrimination against cash users, and against people without access to the internet is an unlawful form of direct, and indirect discrimination.

For this Labour-led Council, which celebrate its Politically Correct, "diversity Inclusion and equality," (DIE) creed, why are the paid Councillors so tolerant of discrimination against cash users, and people without access to the internet?

As you are aware, the Governor of the Bank of England reports five million Subjects of His Majesty do not have current accounts, and use cash for transactions; which equates with 5,00 homes in Oxford.

It is completely illegal, and ethnically wrong for the elected Councillors to tolerate this discrimination.

The discrimination takes the form of people being unable to contact their Elected Councillors; who in the case of Barton, do not live on the estate, and do not have surgeries. As I have stood as a candidate in local elections, Barton people ask me for assistance for issues which ought to be address to the paid Councillor.

However, as many of these people are of senior years, and without access to the internet, they are effectively disenfranchised.

The whole ethos of Local Government Councillors is destroyed by Elected Councillors hiding behind the internet, as the only means of communication; communication which often does not even receive a reply.

Smart carparking meters discriminate. ODS has removed its public reception at Cowley Marsh and Horspath repair centre.

Post Office pay-point Council tax payers suffer discrimination as transaction are not instant, and summons have been issued as a result.

How MANY Council-Tax summons have been issued by the Council, to people using the slower cash pay point system?

Councillors being local, available, and accessible are the traditions of England's Protestant and Catholic people.

Will Oxford City Council require its publicly paid councillors to reveal their postal address for people without access to the internet; as claiming the Town Hall for communication does not work?

Will Oxford City Council investigate how many Council-tax summons has been issued to cash pay-point users?

Will Oxford City Council instruct ODS to re-open its public reception office at Cowley Marsh and Horspath?

Will Oxford City Council please mandate its paid Councillors to make publicly known when their surgeries are held-this is especially important when Councillors do not live in their elected area.

Will the Council require Councillors to reveal how many enquiries from the public, they have meaningfully responded too; as is courteous of paid Elected Councillors?

Will Oxford City Council require its Elected Councillors to reply to all who have contacted them, as one would expect of publicly paid Councillors?

Lastly, will Oxford City Council examine its policies, and prevent its policies from discriminating against cash users?

3. Address from Georgie Steele – Support for Motion 13f (Protection of Carers from Exploitation)

I'm Georgie Steele, a carer and a theatremaker living with my family close to Oxford. I have two sons, now aged 19 and 17, who have a degenerative muscle-wasting condition DMD and are wheelchair users. They have limited use of their hands and cannot transfer, for example from their wheelchairs to a bed, without using a hoist. For the last ten years we have needed to employ carers for them, and increasingly as their condition advances and as they become adults, we their parents are not physically able to do their care, and it isn't appropriate that we should.

Over the last thirteen years we have been funded through Direct Payments for an increasing number of hours to pay for care. The problem has been finding carers, which has from the beginning been a time-consuming and demoralising struggle, as not many British people are willing to take up the job of being a carer. Despite our many efforts advertising locally and across Oxfordshire as well as online, we generally either couldn't find anyone or were let down by unreliable or unscrupulous people whom we had allowed into our home to do our children's personal care. (There were a few heroic exceptions!)

So we resorted to using various agencies to supply (generally) migrant carers. The agency carers were usually competent at caregiving, and were thoughtful and lovely people. However, they were often exhausted, late and needing to take time off due to illness, necessitating replacement carers being sent.

This was difficult for us as a family because if our sons' carers are late then that seriously affects our day as well, as when our older son was in the middle of doing his A levels and needed to be on time for school. Often we would have to step in and begin the care routine, and this meant we couldn't get to work on time. It is also difficult, time-consuming and distressing for our sons to have to explain the nuances of their personal care (which is highly complicated and individualised) to different, often exhausted, people every day.

What was even more distressing was discovering the reasons for the carers' lateness and absence. They were reluctant to explain why this was but we gradually understood that they were being systematically exploited, and were effectively indentured labourers. One carer told us how some days he needed to arrive for work at another client's (rural) home at 6am. Public transport was not available at that time or to that location but even so his sponsors refused to pay for a taxi but insisted that he got there himself. He then spent all his wages for that job paying for the taxi himself. Carers were often placed in poor housing with damp and infestations, and most of their earnings were taken to pay for this substandard accommodation. Many carers were sliding into destitution.

We wanted to challenge the agency about this but were repeatedly entreated by the carers not to say anything to their sponsors as they were terrified of losing their sponsorship. They had been told, don't complain about anything or we'll send you home.

Also, they know that if their sponsoring agency were to be investigated and then shut down, they would be in the position of having to find another sponsor.

Trying to find another sponsor would be an absurdly brief race against time, just 60 days. One of our carers found another sponsor but their existing agency refused to sign the papers to release him. If carers can't find a sponsor, they have to return home and face repaying an enormous debt of the money they borrowed in order to come here. (Sponsors charge them on average more than £10,000 as a recruitment fee).

Despite paying income tax and national insurance contributions, migrant care workers can't access most public funds. This means that if they're not given enough hours at work, if they're dismissed, or if they leave their job without another lined up, they're likely to struggle financially.

It is hard enough to leave your home and family and go to a foreign country, but then to experience such treatment as this is often goes near to breaking people. Many migrants here often slide into destitution. We saw one overworked and underpaid migrant carer who collapsed in the street and was taken to hospital, only to be told after one day that they must return to work, with no sick pay. This same person had reason to believe that they had a potentially life-threatening medical condition, but was not able to go to the GP because their sponsors refused them any time off.

So we have a badly-treated essential workforce on a constant verge of collapse, not able to provide reliable care for the most vulnerable people in our society. Not to deal with this is to leave yet another Social Care timebomb ticking: it's not just cruel, it's incredibly shortsighted and unwise.

So please can we improve visa conditions so migrant carers know they can find a better sponsor more easily if their current one exploits them?

It's a great privilege for me that migrant carers are prepared to leave their homes, their children and their own country, to come far

away to my home and help look after my children: it's a great shame on us all that they have to do so under such conditions.

4. Address from Sushila Dhall, Refugee Resource – Support for Motion 13b (Keep Campsfield Closed)

Refugee Resource stands in firm opposition to the re-opening of Campsfield Detention Centre. At Refugee Resource, we see the damage done to vulnerable people when they are imprisoned for indefinite periods having committed no crime, and having come to the UK seeking safety and sanctuary. Oxford City Council, being a Council of Sanctuary, continues to demonstrate a commitment to human rights and dignity; and strongly stating opposition to imprisoning people at Campsfield is part of upholding these values, which align with ours.

Immigration removal centres such as Campsfield, are well-documented sites of violence, hostility and degradation, with no place in a modern society that claims to respect human rights. Detention centres have long been sources of unnecessary harm, fear and trauma. As a trauma informed therapeutic organisation Refugee Resource has had to work with those affected by detention to help them heal after the damaging impacts of indefinite imprisonment and the threat of deportation to places where their human rights have been seriously breached, and from where they have fled, losing everything. Reopening Campsfield would represent a significant step backward for the UK's asylum system.

What the UK needs is not more detention, but humane reform of its asylum policies. This includes creating safe and legal routes for those fleeing persecution to claim asylum in the UK. Instead of expanding detention units such as Campsfield, the government should focus on humane solutions that respect the dignity and rights of all individuals. Safe routes to the UK, a fair and open asylum system without long waits, sometimes for more than a decade, a phone line to caseworkers that does not involve long delays, and caring case worker interactions would form part of these much-needed reforms.

In addition, negative portrayals of asylum seekers, and policies that stigmatise and demonise asylum seekers only serve to deepen societal divisions and fuel the far-right. It is critical that we reject these harmful narratives and work toward a more inclusive, compassionate approach to migration.

In solidarity with Oxford City Council, Refugee Resource adds our voice to your call on the government to:

- Abandon its plans to reopen Campsfield.
- Take immediate steps to reduce the use of detention in the asylum process.
- Introduce more humane migration policies, starting with safe and legal routes to the UK for asylum seekers.

Refugee Resource reiterates its strong opposition to the reopening of Campsfield; urges the government to prioritise the protection of human rights over policies that perpetuate fear, harm and division.

5. Address from Emma Jones, Asylum Welcome – Support for Motion 13b (Keep Campsfield Closed)

Yarl's Wood. Brook House. Harmondsworth. These names are notorious for a reason—immigration detention centres are synonymous with cruelty.

At Asylum Welcome, we stand with those impacted by the Hostile Environment, including the detention system. Our opposition to reopening Campsfield is evidence-based and shaped by our own experiences providing a visiting service there from 1993 to 2018.

Despite government claims, most detainees held at Campsfield will eventually be released into the community. Many will endure long periods of detention, even without a realistic prospect of deportation. Charlie Taylor, the chief inspector of prisons, revealed in a damning report earlier this year that around 60% of detainees at Harmondsworth were eventually released, and we have no reason to believe the new Campsfield will be any different.

Immigration detainees are not being held in punishment for a criminal offence and yet the system places overwhelming emphasis on confinement and security, with little focus on welfare. Detention centres are operated for profit by private companies, complaints of bullying and racism are rife, and healthcare services are often drastically under-resourced. We know that survivors of torture, trafficking, and sexual abuse are routinely detained, contrary to official guidance. Again, we have no reason to believe Campsfield will be different.

Legal representation becomes far more difficult within detention, leaving detainees even more isolated from justice. And unlike in any other European country, the UK has no time limit on detention, meaning people can be held indefinitely—sometimes for months or years—without knowing when they might be released. This is a shocking abuse of human rights, and – as I hope you will agree – contrary to everything we like to think of ourselves as a country.

Unsurprisingly, this leads to a cycle of trauma, self-harm, and tragically, suicide attempts. From January to May 2024, there were 285 incidents of self-harm across the UK's detention centres, meaning self-harm incidents occurred almost twice a day.

At Asylum Welcome, we believe in a compassionate, fairer approach. We welcomed the closure of Campsfield following the two Shaw Reviews, after which the then Conservative government appeared to accept that immigration detention must be drastically reduced. The Brook House Inquiry, published last year, exposed a “toxic culture” and “credible evidence” of breaches of human rights law and recommended widespread changes, including a 28-day time limit. We support community-based alternatives to detention that have been successfully piloted in recent years.

We urge you all to back the motion and to raise Oxford’s voice to Keep Campsfield Closed. Thank you.

6. Address from Bill MacKeith, CKCC – Support for Motion 13b (Keep Campsfield Closed)

Like other levels of local government, parish and county, the City has long had a policy of calling for the closure and opposing the reopening of Campsfield.

The adoption of the City of Sanctuary status has reinforced that position.

Behind the unnecessary suffering imposed on those detained by the policy, and the local opposition to detention from many parts of the local community, from trade unions to religious organisations, from student to human rights organisations, there is the question of national policy.

The only reason given by the previous government for the reopening of Campsfield, near Oxford and Haslar, near Portsmouth, immigration detention centres was a need for more detention places arising from the Rwanda flights plan. With the passing of that plan, there is absolutely no ‘need’ for them to be reopened.

Despite this, and despite no mention in the Labour manifesto of increasing detention, the incoming government has endorsed the plan to reopen Campsfield and Haslar near Portsmouth saying this is in order to deport more people.

This is a failed policy and government should do better.

It is also the wrong response to the anti immigrant and anti Muslim riots.

The government should be opening up safe ways for asylum seekers to each he country, not taking lessons from right-wing leaders in other countries and macho talk of smashing the smugglers.

The Shaw reviews of the mid 20-teens and a broad movement in civic society resulted in the previous government adopting an immigration detention reform programme in 2016 to detain fewer people for shorter periods and to pursue community based alternatives to detention.

The very least we should do is call for from the new government is to revert to this reform programme, which indeed led to the closure of Campsfield, Haslar and other detention centres.

Immigration detention is needlessly cruel as attested by the protest of detainees, the Brooke House inquiry report and the Panorama programme. Furthermore, 2/3 to 3/4 of detainees are released to live in the community. In the words of the Chief Inspector of UK Borders, it makes you wonder what the detentions were for in the first place.

Immigration detention is extremely expensive. The cost of running Campsfield and Haslar for six years would be £400,000,000 ([procurement notice September 2022](#)). This huge amount should be saved and spent elsewhere. This sum excludes the cost of new-build on both sites.

The argument that extra capacity is needed to deport more people is one that need to be challenged because what is called the detention estate is rarely anywhere near filled to capacity. The women's detention centre at Hassockfield in Durham for example has never been even half filled since it opened in 2018.

In the opinion of the UNHCR, alternatives to detention pilots have been shown to work, and the previous programme of 4 pilots should be continued. The possibility of Oxford hosting such a pilot should be pursued.

Campsfield, which used to be surrounded on 3 sides by open fields, now borders directly onto a new flagship Oxford university science park – not a good look – I would say incompatible - for a University laying claim to be a university of sanctuary.

A £70 million contract with Galliford Try to refurbish the old buildings for 160 residents is due to be completed by 24 December. The contract should be discontinued. The Home Office is well able to do this as demonstrated by the £60 million written off when the government recently cancelled the project to use RAF Scampton in Lincolnshire to house asylum seekers.

I commend the motion 'Keep Campsfield Closed' and urge you to vote for it.

To: Council
Date: 7 October 2024
Report of: Head of Law and Governance
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 25 September 2024, 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 Oxford Alliance, Oxford Community Independents, Oxford Independent Group, Real Independent, Labour groups in that order.

Introduction

- a) Winter Fuel Payments (Proposed by Cllr. Chris Smowton, Seconded by Cllr. Lawrence Fouweather) [Amendment Proposed by Cllr. David Henwood, Seconded by Cllr. Ian Yeatman] [Amendment Proposed by Cllr. Simon Ottino, seconded by Anna Railton]
- b) Keep Campsfield Closed (Proposed by Cllr. Alex Powell, Seconded by Cllr. Dr. Hosnieh Djarafi Marbini)
- c) Zero Emission Zone (Proposed by Cllr. David Henwood, Seconded by Cllr. Ian Yeatman)
- d) Winter Fuel Payments (Proposed by Cllr. Ajaz Rehman, Seconded by Cllr. Dr. Amar Latif)
- e) Decent and Genuinely Affordable Housing for All (Proposed by Cllr. Alex Hollingsworth, Seconded by Cllr. Ed Turner)

- f) Protection of Carers from Exploitation (Proposed by Cllr. Jo Sandelson, Seconded by Cllr. Theo Jupp) [Amendment Proposed by Cllr. Linda Smith, Seconded by Cllr. Naomi Waite]
- g) Bus travel for asylum seekers in Oxford (Proposed by Cllr. Alex Powell, Seconded by Cllr. Dianne Regisford)

a) Winter Fuel Payments (Proposed by Cllr. Chris Smowton, Seconded by Cllr. Lawrence Fouweather) [Amendment Proposed by Cllr. David Henwood, Seconded by Cllr. Ian Yeatman] [Amendment Proposed by Cllr. Simon Ottino, seconded by Anna Railton]

Liberal Democrats Group Motion

Council notes the recent resolution by the Labour Government to end universal winter fuel payments and restrict eligibility to only those in receipt of Pension Credits and other benefits.

Though many agree that universal Winter Fuel Payments are not necessary, Council is deeply concerned that many pensioners on lower incomes will now not receive the payments.

In Oxford the number of pensioners affected by the change in eligibility criteria is 15,285. That means 88.9% of pensioners currently eligible for winter fuel payments will no longer be able to claim the payment from this winter onwards.¹²

Council believes that a better, and cost-neutral, way to recover the cost of the universal payment would be to levy an appropriately sized tax on pensioners who either receive the highest incomes, have the greatest wealth, or both. This would mean the benefit is in effect withdrawn where there is positive evidence that they have the means to pay, rather than negative evidence drawn from non-registration for Pension Credit or other benefits.

Council is also concerned by the low take up of pension credit with only 63% of those eligible nationwide receiving them — and over 880,000 pensioners not doing so.³ Council recognises the role we have to play to increase awareness of benefits such as Pension Credit to ensure people are aware of the support they are entitled to.

Council further notes that the Energy Price Cap is due to rise by 10% in October, which combined by the removal of Winter Fuel Payments will push thousands of local pensioners into fuel poverty.

Council resolves to request that the Leader of the Council write to:

¹ <https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/winter-fuel-payment-statistics-for-winter-2022-to-2023>

² <https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/dwp-benefits-statistics-february-2023>, (on Stat-Xplore), table

“Pension Credit - Data from May 2018”

³ <https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/income-related-benefits-estimates-of-take-up-financial-year-ending-2022/income-related-benefits-estimates-of-take-up-financial-year-ending-2022>

- the Chancellor of the Exchequer calling for the policy on linking Winter Fuel Payments to Pension Credit receipt to be revised, attaching a copy of this motion, and
 - both Oxford MPs requesting their support regarding the same.
-

Independent Oxford Alliance Group Amendment

Council notes the recent resolution by the Labour Government to end universal winter fuel payments and restrict eligibility to only those in receipt of Pension Credits and other benefits.

Though many agree that universal Winter Fuel Payments are not necessary, Council is deeply concerned that many pensioners on lower incomes will now not receive the payments.

In Oxford the number of pensioners affected by the change in eligibility criteria is 15,285. That means 88.9% of pensioners currently eligible for winter fuel payments will no longer be able to claim the payment from this winter onwards.⁴⁵

~~Council believes that a better, and cost-neutral, way to recover the cost of the universal payment would be to levy an appropriately sized tax on pensioners who either receive the highest incomes, have the greatest wealth, or both. This would mean the benefit is in effect withdrawn where there is positive evidence that they have the means to pay, rather than negative evidence drawn from nonregistration for Pension Credit or other benefits.~~

Council is also concerned by the low ~~take-up~~ **up-take** of pension credit with only 63% of those eligible nationwide receiving them — and over 880,000 pensioners not doing so.⁶ Council recognizes the role we have to play to increase awareness of benefits such as Pension Credit to ensure people are aware of the support they are entitled to.

Council further notes that the Energy Price Cap is due to rise by 10% in October, which combined ~~by change to~~ **with** the removal of Winter Fuel Payments will push thousands of local pensioners into fuel poverty.

Council resolves to request that the Leader of the Council write to:

- the Chancellor of the Exchequer calling for the policy on linking Winter Fuel Payments to Pension Credit receipt to be revised, attaching a copy of this motion, and
 - both Oxford MPs requesting their support regarding the same.
-

If amended the Motion would read

⁴ <https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/winter-fuel-payment-statistics-for-winter-2022-to-2023>

⁵ <https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/dwp-benefits-statistics-february-2023>, (on Stat-Xplore), table "Pension Credit - Data from May 2018"

⁶ <https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/income-related-benefits-estimates-of-take-up-financial-year-ending-2022/income-related-benefits-estimates-of-take-up-financial-year-ending-2022>

Council notes the recent resolution by the Labour Government to end universal winter fuel payments and restrict eligibility to only those in receipt of Pension Credits and other benefits.

Though many agree that universal Winter Fuel Payments are not necessary, Council is deeply concerned that many pensioners on lower incomes will now not receive the payments.

In Oxford the number of pensioners affected by the change in eligibility criteria is 15,285. That means 88.9% of pensioners currently eligible for winter fuel payments will no longer be able to claim the payment from this winter onwards.⁷⁸

Council is also concerned by the low take-up of pension credit with only 63% of those eligible nationwide receiving them — and over 880,000 pensioners not doing so.⁹ Council recognizes the role we have to play to increase awareness of benefits such as Pension Credit to ensure people are aware of the support they are entitled to.

Council further notes that the Energy Price Cap is due to rise by 10% in October, which combined by change to with the removal of Winter Fuel Payments will push thousands of local pensioners into fuel poverty.

Council resolves to request that the Leader of the Council write to:

- the Chancellor of the Exchequer calling for the policy on linking Winter Fuel Payments to Pension Credit receipt to be revised, attaching a copy of this motion, and
- both Oxford MPs requesting their support regarding the same.

Labour Group Amendment

Council notes the recent resolution by the Labour Government to end universal winter fuel payments and restrict eligibility to only those in receipt of Pension Credits and other benefits.

Council notes the commitments of the Labour Government including to the triple lock mean:

- That the full state pension is set to rise by 4% - £460 a year in April 2025
- The state pension is due to increase by more than a £1000 a year over this Parliament
- Plans for clean homegrown energy will cut bills for good
- Millions of homes will be upgraded with insulation and low-carbon heating

Though many agree that universal Winter Fuel Payments are not necessary, Council is deeply concerned that many pensioners on lower incomes, **but not in receipt of Pension Credit**, will now not receive the payments.

⁷ <https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/winter-fuel-payment-statistics-for-winter-2022-to-2023>

⁸ <https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/dwp-benefits-statistics-february-2023>, (on Stat-Xplore), table

“Pension Credit - Data from May 2018”

⁹ <https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/income-related-benefits-estimates-of-take-up-financial-year-ending-2022/income-related-benefits-estimates-of-take-up-financial-year-ending-2022>

In Oxford the number of pensioners affected by the change in eligibility criteria is 15,285. That means 88.9% of pensioners currently eligible for winter fuel payments will no longer be able to claim the payment from this winter onwards.¹⁰¹¹

~~Council believes that a better, and cost-neutral, way to recover the cost of the universal payment would be to levy an appropriately sized tax on pensioners who either receive the highest incomes, have the greatest wealth, or both. This would mean the benefit is in effect withdrawn where there is positive evidence that they have the means to pay, rather than negative evidence drawn from non-registration for Pension Credit or other benefits.~~

Council believes that the basis for the receipt of all benefits should in general be related to the individual's need and the payments of all taxes should in general be related to the individual's ability to pay.

Council further believes that the threshold for the receipt of any benefit should be staggered rather than immediate, so that any individual with means just above the threshold should not be relatively worse off.

Council is also concerned by the low take up of pension credit with only 63% of those eligible nationwide receiving them — and over 880,000 pensioners not doing so.¹² Council recognises the role we have to play to increase awareness of benefits such as Pension Credit to ensure people are aware of the support they are entitled to.

Council further notes that the Energy Price Cap is due to rise by 10% in October, (though noting this is from a cap of £1524, a far cry from the Jan 2023 peak of £4279) which combined by the removal of Winter Fuel Payments will push thousands of local pensioners into fuel poverty.

Council notes the good work already done by City Council officers to promote the take up of Pension Credit and calls on all Members to actively promote the take up of Pension Credit with any vulnerable constituents.

Council resolves to request that the Leader of the Council write to:

- the Chancellor of the Exchequer calling for the policy on linking Winter Fuel Payments to Pension Credit receipt to be revised, attaching a copy of this motion, and
- both Oxford MPs requesting their support regarding the same.

If agreed, the motion would read

Council notes the recent resolution by the Labour Government to end universal winter fuel payments and restrict eligibility to only those in receipt of Pension Credits and other benefits.

¹⁰ <https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/winter-fuel-payment-statistics-for-winter-2022-to-2023>

¹¹ <https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/dwp-benefits-statistics-february-2023>, (on Stat-Xplore), table "Pension Credit - Data from May 2018"

¹² <https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/income-related-benefits-estimates-of-take-up-financial-year-ending-2022/income-related-benefits-estimates-of-take-up-financial-year-ending-2022>

Council notes the commitments of the Labour Government including to the triple lock mean:

- That the full state pension is set to rise by 4% - £460 a year in April 2025
- The state pension is due to increase by more than a £1000 a year over this Parliament
- Plans for clean homegrown energy will cut bills for good
- Millions of homes will be upgraded with insulation and low-carbon heating

Though many agree that universal Winter Fuel Payments are not necessary, Council is deeply concerned that many pensioners on lower incomes, but not in receipt of Pension Credit, will now not receive the payments.

In Oxford the number of pensioners affected by the change in eligibility criteria is 15,285. That means 88.9% of pensioners currently eligible for winter fuel payments will no longer be able to claim the payment from this winter onwards.¹³¹⁴

Council believes that the basis for the receipt of all benefits should in general be related to the individual's need and the payments of all taxes should in general be related to the individual's ability to pay.

Council further believes that the threshold for the receipt of any benefit should be staggered rather than immediate, so that any individual with means just above the threshold should not be relatively worse off.

Council is also concerned by the low take up of pension credit with only 63% of those eligible nationwide receiving them — and over 880,000 pensioners not doing so.¹⁵ Council recognises the role we have to play to increase awareness of benefits such as Pension Credit to ensure people are aware of the support they are entitled to.

Council further notes that the Energy Price Cap is due to rise by 10% in October, (though noting this is from a cap of £1524, a far cry from the Jan 2023 peak of £4279) which combined by the removal of Winter Fuel Payments will push thousands of local pensioners into fuel poverty.

Council notes the good work already done by City Council officers to promote the take up of Pension Credit and calls on all Members to actively promote the take up of Pension Credit with any vulnerable constituents.

Council resolves to request that the Leader of the Council write to:

- the Chancellor of the Exchequer calling for the policy on linking Winter Fuel Payments to Pension Credit receipt to be revised, attaching a copy of this motion, and
- both Oxford MPs requesting their support regarding the same.

¹³ <https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/winter-fuel-payment-statistics-for-winter-2022-to-2023>

¹⁴ <https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/dwp-benefits-statistics-february-2023>, (on Stat-Xplore), table "Pension Credit - Data from May 2018"

¹⁵ <https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/income-related-benefits-estimates-of-take-up-financial-year-ending-2022/income-related-benefits-estimates-of-take-up-financial-year-ending-2022>

b) Keep Campsfield Closed (Proposed by Cllr. Alex Powell, Seconded by Cllr. Dr. Hosnieh Djarafi Marbini)

Green Group Motion

Council Notes:

1. In November 2022, this council debated and passed a motion in response to reports that the then government was seeking to re-open Campsfield House for use as an immigration removal centre.¹⁶
2. The motion passed in 2022 condemned the proposed re-opening of the centre and called for the city to be a safe space for refugees.
3. On 21 August 2024, the Home Secretary Yvette Cooper confirmed the current government's plans to re-open Campsfield House.¹⁷
4. Cooper's announcement has been heavily criticised by numerous migrants' rights groups including Asylum Welcome,¹⁸ Detention Action,¹⁹ The Refugee Council,²⁰ and Amnesty International UK.²¹
5. Summer 2024 saw violence and intimidation from far-right activists, some of which targeted - or threatened to target - organisations supporting refugees and asylum seekers - including those within Oxford.
6. Both Oxford City Council²² and Oxfordshire County Council²³ have committed themselves to the values of the City of Sanctuary programme, pledging to work for the creation of a safe and welcoming environment for those seeking sanctuary.

Council Believes:

1. Oxford and this council have a proud history of supporting and welcoming refugees and opposing detention. Maintaining our opposition to the re-opening of Campsfield House is an important part of this.
2. The recent steps to end the cruel Rwanda Plan and stop the state of permanent limbo²⁴ created by the Illegal Migration Act 2023 are to be welcomed,²⁵ but do not go far enough in restoring the legal right to asylum.
3. Expanding detention and increasing deportations represents a worrying indication as to the government's intended direction of travel, one which is incompatible with the promise this city has made to stand up for the rights of those seeking sanctuary.

¹⁶ <https://mycouncil.oxford.gov.uk/documents/g7379/Public%20minutes%20Monday%2028-Nov-2022%2017.00%20Council.pdf?T=11>

¹⁷ <https://news.sky.com/story/immigration-detention-centres-to-re-open-in-removals-drive-13200380>

¹⁸ <https://www.asylum-welcome.org/labour-campsfield/>

¹⁹ <https://www.independent.co.uk/news/uk/home-news/home-office-immigration-detention-migrant-b2599540.html>

²⁰ <https://www.independent.co.uk/news/uk/home-news/home-office-immigration-detention-migrant-b2599540.html>

²¹ <https://www.standard.co.uk/news/politics/james-cleverly-yvette-cooper-home-secretary-government-amnesty-international-b1177697.html>

²² <https://www.oxford.gov.uk/news/article/183/oxford-city-council-makes-commitment-to-city-of-sanctuary-status>

²³ <https://news.oxfordshire.gov.uk/oxfordshire-is-a-county-of-sanctuary/#:~:text=Migrants%2C%20including%20refugees%20and%20asylum,as%20a%20place%20of%20sanctuary>

²⁴ <https://www.ippr.org/media-office/home-office-chaos-leaves-up-to-55-500-asylum-seekers-stuck-in-perma-backlog>

²⁵ <https://www.legislation.gov.uk/uksi/2024/815/made>

4. The UK's asylum system needs major overhaul, including through the opening of safe and legal routes for people to claim asylum.
5. It has been extensively documented that immigration removal centers are sites of violence which have no place in a democratic, rights respecting, society.²⁶
6. As such, Campsfield House should not be re-opened, and the government should be moving to shrink, not expand, the UK's detention estate.
7. Rhetoric and policies that demonise and stigmatise asylum seekers have a contributory role in driving division in our society and fuel the far-right.

Council Resolves:

1. To reiterate this council's opposition to the re-opening of Campsfield House.
2. To request that the Leader of the Council write to the Home Secretary calling on her to:
3. Abandon plans to re-open Campsfield House.
4. Outline plans to reduce, rather than increase, the number of people held in detention.
5. Begin to introduce a more humane migration policy - including through the establishment of safe and legal routes for people to claim asylum.

²⁶ <https://www.who.int/europe/news/item/04-05-2022-immigration-detention-is-harmful-to-health---alternatives-to-detention-should-be-used>; <https://www.rainbowmigration.org.uk/news/lgbtqi-people-still-at-serious-risk-of-harm-in-immigration-detention/>

c) Zero Emission Zone (Proposed by Cllr. David Henwood, Seconded by Cllr. Ian Yeatman)

Independent Oxford Alliance Group Motion

In February 2024, Oxfordshire County Council committed to spending £5.2m²⁷ developing plans to expand Oxford's existing Zero Emission Zone (ZEZ). Although previously agreed in principle as part of the Central Oxfordshire Travel Plan²⁸, Oxfordshire County Council has not yet committed to proceeding with the ZEZ expansion.²⁹

Each year, Oxford City Council produces an Air Quality Annual Status Report (AQASR)³⁰. The report includes a detailed account of NO₂ pollution levels, across numerous monitoring stations in Oxford and surrounding areas in the preceding year. The report also includes a commentary and analysis of themes relating to NO₂ pollution in Oxford, such as the impact of the current ZEZ and Low Traffic Neighbourhoods on NO₂ pollution levels.

Given the current development work taking place by Oxfordshire County Council in relation to the planned ZEZ expansion, it could be useful to draw on the insights collected as part of the AQASR publication process to produce an in-depth analysis of NO₂ pollution levels in the planned ZEZ expansion zone.

Oxford City Council's policy on NO₂ pollution is that the local annual mean NO₂ target for Oxford should be 30 µg/m³ by 2025³¹, which reflects "step two" of the WHO's updated interim target for NO₂.

Oxford City Council notes that Oxford is currently in the process of taking delivery of numerous new electric buses, which have the potential to significantly reduce pollution in and around Oxford city centre³².

The Council:

- Believes it would be useful for Oxford City Council to publish a (non-statutory) supplement to its already-published 2023 AQASR. This supplement would help provide the public with the council's baseline analysis of NO₂ pollution levels in the planned ZEZ expansion zone, reusing existing data.
- Further believes that subsequent AQASRs should also include an in-depth analysis of NO₂ pollution levels in the planned ZEZ expansion zone.
- Collectively, these analyses would assist Oxford City Council in deciding whether – in the council's view – the ZEZ expansion remains objectively justified as a policy that the City Council should continue to endorse.

²⁷

<https://mycouncil.oxfordshire.gov.uk/documents/s70023/Section%205.4%20Capital%20Programme%20Council%20Feb%2024.pdf>

²⁸ <https://mycouncil.oxfordshire.gov.uk/ieDecisionDetails.aspx?AllId=26981>

²⁹ www.oxfordshire.gov.uk/residents/roads-and-transport/connecting-oxfordshire/city-centre-zez#:~:text=A%20small%20pilot%20ZEZ%20became,assessments%2C%20engagement%20and%20formal%20consultation

³⁰ www.oxford.gov.uk/air-quality-data/air-quality-annual-status-reports

³¹ www.oxford.gov.uk/air-quality-management/air-quality-action-plan

³² www.oxford.gov.uk/news/article/1394/oxford-launches-major-all-electric-city-bus-fleet

The Council therefore request that Cabinet ask those officers responsible for producing the Oxford City Council's AQASR to:

- Publish a supplement to 2023 AQASR (within three months of the date of this motion), which includes a detailed data table setting out the verified average NO₂ pollution levels between 2019 and 2023, for each pollution monitoring station within the proposed ZEZ expansion zone.
- To provide equivalent data in the 2024 AQASR, and in future years.
- To ensure this data is accompanied by a detailed analysis of recent NO₂ pollution trends within the planned ZEZ expansion zone, where reasonably possible, including an analysis of whether NO₂ pollution within the proposed ZEZ expansion zone have yet fallen to Oxford City Council's 30µg/m³ by 2025 target.

Council also asks Cabinet to consider not taking any decision about revenue and cost sharing arrangements with Oxfordshire County Council beyond the one agreed for the pilot (should they come forward) until the initial ZEZ pollution analysis has been completed.

d) Winter Fuel Payments (Proposed by Cllr. Ajaz Rehman, Seconded by Cllr. Dr. Amar Latif)

Oxford Independent Group Motion

This council is shocked and angered a Labour government would even contemplate a financial attack on pensioners just as we approach winter. The cost-of-living payments also ending this will have a devastating on some of most vulnerable in our society. Those who have given service their whole lives to this country, are being abandoned at the time of need.

This council writes to the Prime minister and Home secretary requesting the winter fuel payment to be re instated.

e) Decent and Genuinely Affordable Housing for All (Proposed by Cllr. Alex Hollingsworth, Seconded by Cllr. Ed Turner)

Labour Group Motion

The last fourteen years of Conservative Government, with chronic underinvestment in affordable and social housing and retreat in the face of opposition to housebuilding have left this country in the grip of a housing crisis.

Across the UK the shortage of housing and uncontrolled increases in private sector rents have led to ballooning costs for temporary accommodation. Those costs are so large that they are not just a threat to other council services, which will have to be cut to meet the bill, but they are putting the very existence of some local authorities in doubt.

In Oxford, despite the best efforts of our officers, costs for temporary accommodation have risen five-fold to over £4m, out of a total Council budget of £28.6m.

The watering down of Local Plan housing targets by Rishi Sunak, under pressure from wealthy NIMBY interest groups, means that far too many councils have been able to dodge their responsibility both to those in need now and to future generations by failing to plan for the homes that are so desperately needed.

Pressures on the budgets of housing associations and cuts to housing budgets in the name of 'austerity' mean that developers are finding it increasingly difficult to find buyers for the affordable homes they are supposed to build, meaning the developments simply aren't starting.

- This Council therefore asks that the Leader of the Council writes to the Government to convey that:
- This Council believes that decent and affordable housing for all, where you want to live, is a right and not a privilege.
- This Council therefore applauds the new Government for its immediate reversal of cuts to housing numbers in Local Plans, and welcomes the return of strategic level planning to ensure that those Plans are delivered, particularly in Oxfordshire
- This Council welcomes the Government's approval of the long-overdue reservoir near Abingdon, something necessary to support the provision of new homes.
- This Council further welcomes the Government's commitment to the ending of Section 21 'no fault' evictions, which are a primary cause of the current levels of homelessness.
- This Council calls on the Government to implement as soon as possible powers to control and regulate the short-term let sector to prevent the shift of landlords from the private rented sector to the short term let sector
- This Council calls on the Government to continue to take action to ensure that investment in power, water and sewerage that has already been paid for by customers is delivered with immediate effect
- This Council calls on the Government to review the funding and borrowing rules as they apply to social housing, to ensure that this city, and this country, sees the expansion of social housing construction as soon as possible

f) Protection of Carers from Exploitation (Proposed by Cllr. Jo Sandelson, Seconded by Cllr. Theo Jupp) [Amendment Proposed by Cllr. Linda Smith, Seconded by Cllr. Naomi Waite]

Liberal Democrats Group Motion

This council has no confidence in the employee protection offered to migrant care workers in Oxfordshire and in the UK, and believe that visa design is driving exploitation.³³ Sponsorship agencies have been able to get away with exploiting these carers by demanding large sums of money (often thousands of pounds) in exchange for arranging the carers' journey to the UK, housing them (often in disgraceful conditions) and arranging work. Carers often find they are not given the number of hours work promised and are forced to use food banks to survive.³⁴ Many migrant carers have borrowed large sums from loan companies in their own country in order to pay the sponsorship fees, and are then trapped in the UK as they cannot return home without paying the money back. When migrants raise their concerns and needs with their sponsors they are threatened with being returned to their countries.³⁵

The consequences are many. Migrant carers doing much needed work are forced to live in poverty with very stressful working conditions causing bad health and inability to work.³⁶ For example, one Oxfordshire family with disabilities reported that their carer X from Ghana needed to arrive for work at a client's (rural) home at 6am. Public transport was not available but sponsors refused to pay for a taxi, so he spent all his wages paying for one himself.

Carers' clients are also affected, if carers become ill and are unable to work. This means their client either has no carer or numerous different cover carers to be instructed in the client's individual care needs. It can lead to clients' families being unable to cope so the client must go into residential care, at great emotional cost to the client and their family, and at great financial cost to Social Services. The Joseph Rowntree Foundation found that "despite need for care far outstripping current provision, care providers are losing business due to ongoing staff shortages. A Care England study³⁷ found in 2023 that 44% of providers it surveyed had turned down new admissions and 18% had to close services altogether due to ongoing staff shortages."³⁸

Council believes the following steps should be taken to improve migrant carers' situation.

1. Simplify visa applications: The 60-day time limit needs to be extended so that carers don't lose their visa if they haven't found a new sponsor.

2. Grant access to public funds: Introduce a safety net whereby care workers can access public funds.

³³ CAB; Restrictive Visas 11/03/24

³⁴ Citizens Advice Benefits and Work 11/03/2024

³⁵ Citizens Advice 2024

³⁶ Joseph Rowntree Foundation 26/07/2024

³⁷ <https://www.careengland.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2024/02/Care-England-End-to-End-Workforce-Solution.pdf>

³⁸ <https://www.jrf.org.uk/care/our-acceptance-of-low-pay-in-social-care-costs-us-more-than-we-think#:~:text=Despite%20need%20for%20care%20far,due%20to%20ongoing%20staff%20shortages.>

3. Provide flexible work visas: Support migrant care workers with work visas that are simply amendable to reflect changing work situations. Currently the UK's labour market enforcement system is complicated, confusing and in dire need of reform.

Council resolves to request that Cabinet Member Cllr Chewe Munkonge write to Wes Streeting, Secretary of State for Social Care, calling on him to drive these actions forward promptly.

Labour Group Amendment

This council has no confidence in the employee protection offered to migrant care workers in Oxfordshire and in the UK, and believe that visa design is driving exploitation.³⁹ Sponsorship agencies have been able to get away with exploiting these carers by demanding large sums of money (often thousands of pounds) in exchange for arranging the carers' journey to the UK, housing them (often in disgraceful conditions) and arranging work. Carers often find they are not given the number of hours work promised and are forced to use food banks to survive.⁴⁰ Many migrant carers have borrowed large sums from loan companies in their own country in order to pay the sponsorship fees, and are then trapped in the UK as they cannot return home without paying the money back. When migrants raise their concerns and needs with their sponsors they are threatened with being returned to their countries.⁴¹

The consequences are many. Migrant carers doing much needed work are forced to live in poverty with very stressful working conditions causing bad health and inability to work.⁴² For example, one Oxfordshire family with disabilities reported that their carer X from Ghana needed to arrive for work at a client's (rural) home at 6am. Public transport was not available but sponsors refused to pay for a taxi, so he spent all his wages paying for one himself.

Carers' clients are also affected, if carers become ill and are unable to work. This means their client either has no carer or numerous different cover carers to be instructed in the client's individual care needs. It can lead to clients' families being unable to cope so the client must go into residential care, at great emotional cost to the client and their family, and at great financial cost to Social Services. The Joseph Rowntree Foundation found that "despite need for care far outstripping current provision, care providers are losing business due to ongoing staff shortages. A Care England study⁴³ found in 2023 that 44% of providers it surveyed had turned down new admissions and 18% had to close services altogether due to ongoing staff shortages."⁴⁴

³⁹ CAB; Restrictive Visas 11/03/24

⁴⁰ Citizens Advice Benefits and Work 11/03/2024

⁴¹ Citizens Advice 2024

⁴² Joseph Rowntree Foundation 26/07/2024

⁴³ <https://www.careengland.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2024/02/Care-England-End-to-End-Workforce-Solution.pdf>

⁴⁴ <https://www.jrf.org.uk/care/our-acceptance-of-low-pay-in-social-care-costs-us-more-than-we-think#:~:text=Despite%20need%20for%20care%20far,dueto%20ongoing%20staff%20shortages.>

Council believes the following steps should be ~~taken~~ **considered** to improve migrant carers' situation. 1. Simplify visa applications: The 60-day time limit needs to be extended so that carers don't lose their visa if they haven't found a new sponsor. 2. Grant access to public funds: Introduce a safety net whereby care workers can access public funds. 3. Provide flexible work visas: Support migrant care workers with work visas that are simply amendable to reflect changing work situations. Currently the UK's labour market enforcement system is complicated, confusing and in dire need of reform. Council resolves to request that Cabinet Member Cllr Chewe Munkonge write to Wes Streeting, Secretary of State for Social Care, calling on him to ~~drive these actions forward~~ **consider these actions** promptly.

If agreed, the motion would read:

This council has no confidence in the employee protection offered to migrant care workers in Oxfordshire and in the UK, and believe that visa design is driving exploitation.⁴⁵ Sponsorship agencies have been able to get away with exploiting these carers by demanding large sums of money (often thousands of pounds) in exchange for arranging the carers' journey to the UK, housing them (often in disgraceful conditions) and arranging work. Carers often find they are not given the number of hours work promised and are forced to use food banks to survive.⁴⁶ Many migrant carers have borrowed large sums from loan companies in their own country in order to pay the sponsorship fees, and are then trapped in the UK as they cannot return home without paying the money back. When migrants raise their concerns and needs with their sponsors they are threatened with being returned to their countries.⁴⁷

The consequences are many. Migrant carers doing much needed work are forced to live in poverty with very stressful working conditions causing bad health and inability to work.⁴⁸ For example, one Oxfordshire family with disabilities reported that their carer X from Ghana needed to arrive for work at a client's (rural) home at 6am. Public transport was not available but sponsors refused to pay for a taxi, so he spent all his wages paying for one himself.

Carers' clients are also affected, if carers become ill and are unable to work. This means their client either has no carer or numerous different cover carers to be instructed in the client's individual care needs. It can lead to clients' families being unable to cope so the client must go into residential care, at great emotional cost to the client and their family, and at great financial cost to Social Services. The Joseph Rowntree Foundation found that "despite need for care far outstripping current provision, care providers are losing business due to ongoing staff shortages. [A Care](#)

⁴⁵ CAB; Restrictive Visas 11/03/24

⁴⁶ Citizens Advice Benefits and Work 11/03/2024

⁴⁷ Citizens Advice 2024

⁴⁸ Joseph Rowntree Foundation 26/07/2024

England study⁴⁹ found in 2023 that 44% of providers it surveyed had turned down new admissions and 18% had to close services altogether due to ongoing staff shortages.”⁵⁰

Council believes the following steps should be considered to improve migrant carers' situation. 1. Simplify visa applications: The 60-day time limit needs to be extended so that carers don't lose their visa if they haven't found a new sponsor. 2. Grant access to public funds: Introduce a safety net whereby care workers can access public funds. 3. Provide flexible work visas: Support migrant care workers with work visas that are simply amendable to reflect changing work situations. Currently the UK's labour market enforcement system is complicated, confusing and in dire need of reform. Council resolves to request that Cabinet Member Cllr Chewe Munkonge write to Wes Streeting, Secretary of State for Social Care, calling on him to consider these actions promptly.

⁴⁹ <https://www.careengland.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2024/02/Care-England-End-to-End-Workforce-Solution.pdf>

⁵⁰ <https://www.jrf.org.uk/care/our-acceptance-of-low-pay-in-social-care-costs-us-more-than-we-think#:~:text=Despite%20need%20for%20care%20far,due%20to%20ongoing%20staff%20shortages.>

g) Bus travel for asylum seekers in Oxford (Proposed by Cllr. Alex Powell, Seconded by Cllr. Dianne Regisford)

Green Group Motion

1. There are an increasing number of asylum seekers being accommodated within the city, particularly in a hotel near to the Kassam Stadium.⁵¹
2. Those asylum claimants who are in receipt of statutory support according to section 95 of the Immigration and Asylum Act 1999 receive average weekly financial support equating to just £8.86 per week for those in accommodation.⁵²
3. Oxford City Council has signed up to the values of the City of Sanctuary scheme undertaking a commitment to ensure that Oxford is a safe and supportive environment for sanctuary seekers.⁵³
4. Oxfordshire County Council has also signalled its intention to become a County of Sanctuary, showcasing its own commitment to creating a safe and supportive environment for people seeking sanctuary.⁵⁴
5. Numerous charities and organisations have drawn attention to the harms that hotel accommodation poses for asylum seekers: such as isolation from communities and resources.⁵⁵ This makes it even more important that support is accessible.
6. That the financial costs of travel within Oxford City make it more difficult for asylum seekers to access and engage with available sources of support.
7. That asylum seekers have recently made representations regarding the need for free bus passes to Oxfordshire County Council.⁵⁶

Council Believes:

1. That Local Authorities, at both District and County Council level, have a moral and ethical duty, to the extent to which the law allows, to advocate for and protect all residents residing within their territorial area regardless of immigration status.
2. That access to support services should be open to all asylum seekers and should not be prohibited by transport costs.
3. As a City of Sanctuary, Oxford City Council has a responsibility to act in a manner that promotes the safety, security and well-being of sanctuary seekers.

⁵¹ <https://www.oxfordmail.co.uk/news/23116955.kassam-stadium-hotel-used-house-refugee-sparking-row/>

⁵² <https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/1999/33/section/95>

⁵³ <https://www.oxford.gov.uk/news/article/183/oxford-city-council-makes-commitment-to-city-of-sanctuary-status>

⁵⁴ <https://news.oxfordshire.gov.uk/oxfordshire-is-a-county-of-sanctuary/#:~:text=Migrants%2C%20including%20refugees%20and%20asylum,as%20a%20place%20of%20sanctuary>

⁵⁵ https://helenbamber.org/sites/default/files/2024-06/Suffering%20and%20squalor_Final_June%202024.pdf; <https://www.refugee-action.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2023/03/Hostile-Accommodation-Refugee-Action-report.pdf>

⁵⁶ <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/articles/cx77z1d57ydo>

4. As an aspiring County of Sanctuary, Oxfordshire County Council has a responsibility to act in a manner that promotes the safety, security and well-being of sanctuary seekers.

Council Resolves:

1. To request that the Leader of Oxford City Council write to the Leader of Oxfordshire County Council asking for them to facilitate the use of all buses within the Oxford City area without cost for those seeking asylum.
2. To request that the Leader of Oxford City Council issue a public statement supporting the provision of free bus travel to all asylum seekers residing within the City limits.
3. To publicly record the Council's support for the provision of free bus travel to all asylum seekers within Oxford City.
4. To request that the Leader of Oxford City Council write to the Secretary of State for the Home Department and the Secretary of State for Transport for the United Kingdom requesting the provision of free bus passes be provided for all asylum seekers resident in England, noting that transport for other parts of the UK is a devolved matter.