

COUNCIL

Monday 11 July 2011

COUNCILLORS PRESENT: Councillors Benjamin (Lord Mayor), Armitage (Deputy Lord Mayor), Fooks (Sheriff), Abbasi, Altaf-Khan, Bance, Baxter, Brett, Brown, Brundin, Campbell, Clarkson, Cook, Coulter, Darke, Goddard, Gotch, Hazell, Humberstone, Jones, Keen, Khan, Lloyd-Shogbesan, Lygo, Malik, Mills, Morton, Pressel, Price, Pyle, Rowley, Royce, Rundle, Sanders, Seamons, Sinclair, Smith, Tanner, Timbs, Turner, Van Nooijen, Wilkinson, Williams and Wolff.

13. MINUTES

Council resolved to approve:

- (a) The minutes of the ordinary meeting held on 18 April 2011
- (b) The minutes of the Annual Council meeting held on 19 May 2011

14. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Councillors declared interests as follows:-

- (a) Councillor Van Coulter declared a personal and prejudicial interest in agenda item 9 (Addresses by the public – Address by Mark Pitt – Barton AAP and Ruskin Fields) as he was a Member of the Governing Council of Ruskin College (Minute 21(a) refers).
- (b) Councillor Mary Clarkson declared a personal interest in agenda item 9 (Addresses by the public – address by Mark Pitt – Barton AAP and Ruskin Fileds) as she was a resident in the area (Minute 21(a) refers).
- (c) Councillors Mohammed Altaf-Khan and Mike Rowley declared personal interests in agenda item 9 (Address by the public – address by Mark Pitt – Barton AAP and Ruskin Fields) as they were former students of Ruskin College (Minute 21(a) refers).
- (d) Councillor Beverley Hazell declared a personal interest in agenda item 13 (Questions on notice from members of Council – Question 6 – St. Clement's Car Park) as she was employed by the organisation which had recently purchased the Blue Boar Street offices from the Council. (Minute 25(a)(6) refers).
- (e) Councillors Alan Armitage, Elise Benjamin, Tony Brett, Stephen Brown, Jim Campbell, Colin Cook, Van Coulter, Jean Fooks, Rae Humberstone, Mark Lygo, Susanna Pressel, Bob Price, Gwynneth Royce, Gill Sanders, John Tanner, Bob Timbs, Ruth Wilkinson and Dick Wolff, declared personal interests in agenda item 15 (Motions on Notice – Motion (b) – Public Sector Pension contributions increase) as they were members of the Local Government Pension Scheme (Minute 27(b) refers).

- (f) Councillor Mark Mills declared a personal and prejudicial interest in agenda item 15 (Motions on Notice – Motion (e) – Health and social Care Bill) as his father was an employee of the Primary Care Trust. (Minute 27(e) refers).

15. APOLOGIES

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Stuart Craft, Stuart McCready, Joe McManners and Nuala Young.

16. APPOINTMENTS TO COMMITTEES

No appointments were made.

17. LORD MAYOR'S ANNOUNCEMENTS

- (a) The Lord Mayor during her first eight weeks in office said that she had received many visitors to the Lord Mayor's Parlour which had been very enjoyable.
- (b) The Lord Mayor's Parade had taken place and despite the inclement weather the day had been very enjoyable and had raised funds for her two charities.
- (c) The Lord Mayor thanked both the Deputy Lord Mayor (Councillor Alan Armitage) and the Sheriff (Councillor Jean Fooks) for deputising for her on engagements she was unable to attend.
- (d) Council stood for a minute's silence in memory of Kate Chirnside, Planning Lawyer – Law and Governance, who had passed away following a long illness.

18. SHERIFF'S ANNOUNCEMENTS

- (a) A drive of the cattle on Port Meadow had recently been held.
- (b) The Sheriff's Aunt Sally Match had taken place and the Sheriff's team had won one of the three matches.
- (c) A meeting with Natural England would be held shortly concerning Port Meadow and its management.

19. ANNOUNCEMENTS BY THE LEADER

- (a) The Leader thanked the Lord Mayor for the arrangements for the Lord Mayor's picnic, which despite the rain had been a great day.
- (b) The Leader said that despite Ang San Sui Chi, still not being allowed to leave Burma following the recent lifting of her house arrest, he was very

pleased that she had been able to record her lectures and suggested that the Council obtain recordings of these lectures.

- (c) The Leader thanked officers for their work in achieving Investors in People (IIP) accreditation and welcomed the comments of the Assessor. He hoped that the good work would continue, so as to enable achievement of the bronze, silver and gold standards and that this work linked to the continuing improvements in the reduction of sickness levels at the Council.

20. ANNOUNCEMENTS BY THE CHIEF EXECUTIVE, THE CHIEF FINANCE OFFICER AND THE MONITORING OFFICER

The Chief Executive announced that he was delighted that the Council had been awarded Investors in People National Standard following a recent two week assessment. The Assessors had examined the processes and practices relating to organisation and people development and people management. Over 70 people from across the Council had been randomly selected and interviewed and on the basis of the discussions accreditation had been awarded. This nationally recognised award would enhance the reputation of the Council and reflected the progress made particularly in recent years. The Assessor concluded that "Oxford City Council values its people extremely highly and values learning and development similarly highly". He also felt "(the Council) was made up of people who are proud of their jobs.....who are committed to performing at a high level.....and delivering outstanding service to residents, workers and visitors to Oxford". The progress was a continuous journey, the next steps would be to continue building on the strengths and develop the areas for improvement. The Chief Executive said that an action plan was being designed around these aspects.

21. ADDRESSES BY THE PUBLIC

Council received four addresses (texts of the addresses appended to these minutes) as follows:

- (a) Mark Pitt, a local resident submitted in advance details of his address to Council (now appended) on the Barton Area Action Plan (AAP) and Rusking Fields and addressed Council.

An explanatory note prepared by Oxford City Council officers was also submitted (now, appended).

Councillor Price, following the address reminded Council there was no decision before it at this meeting and that no decision would be taken until the autumn of 2012.

Councillor Van Coulter declared a personal and prejudicial interest as he was a Member of the Governing Council of Ruskin College. He took no part in the address and left the Council Chamber.

Councillor Mary Clarkson declared a personal interest as she was a resident in the area.

Councillors Mohammed Altaf-Khan and Mike Rowley declared personal interests as they were former students of Ruskin College.

- (b) Nigel Gibson, a local resident, submitted in advance details of his address to Council (now appended), on the proposed new competition standard swimming pool in Blackbird Leys and addressed Council. Following his address he presented a petition to Council entitled "No confidence in our Labour Council".

A note prepared by Oxford City Council officers was also submitted in response to the address (now appended).

- (c) Martha McKenzie, Oxford University Students' Union President and Daniel Stone, Oxford University Students' Union Vice-President, submitted in advance details of their address to Council (now appended), which introduced themselves to the City Council and both addressed Council.
- (d) Vim Rodrigo, a local resident, submitted in advance details of his address to Council (now appended) concerning unparished areas and new homes at rose Hill.

Vim Rodrigo was not able to attend Council to make his address due to illness and his address was taken as a written submission.

22. QUESTIONS BY THE PUBLIC

Four questions were asked by members of the public:

- (1) **Question to the Board Member, City Development (Councillor Colin Cook) from James Rowland**

Student units

"How many new student units have been built since July 2010? How many of these have been occupied? Can the figures for each university be provided, and how many net additional student units have been acquired for Oxford University and Oxford Brookes University since 2005?"

Response: The first question requires information from the Annual Monitoring Report 2011 for which data has not yet been collated or analysed. This data is likely to be available in September. The AMR 2011 is likely to be taken to the City Executive Board for approval for submission to the Secretary of State in December 2011. The City Council has no method of monitoring when student rooms are occupied so this question would be best directed to the Universities and colleges. The City Council is not itself able to monitor when the Universities acquire student accommodation. This would need to be obtained from the Universities directly. An exception would be if the acquisition resulted in the need for a planning application (such as a change of use) in which case it would appear in the data required for the AMR 2011 available in September.

(2) Question to the Board Member, Leisure Services (Councillor Van Coulter) from Charlotte Barrow

Competition Standard Swimming Pool consultation

“What’s the detailed evidence for people in Blackbird Leys wanting a new, somewhat colder 25m swimming pool at a different site, when the existing, smaller and warmer pool could be retained?”

Response: We have fully consulted and published the consultation on the proposed pool on the Council’s website. This information has continually been kept up to date. Alongside consultation other key factors in the decision making process are; Blackbird Leys pool is a stand alone facility just 482 metres from Blackbird Leys Leisure Centre, it is towards the end of its operational life and not meeting modern day standards (it is a small pool approximately 18 metres long) and it is not fully DDA accessible. The new proposed pool adjoined to the leisure centre will meet modern day guidance and be accessible to a wider user audience. The temperature of the new facility will be in line with industry standards and be able to maintain its temperature unlike Temple Cowley Pools which is unable to cope when the external temperature drops.

(3) Question to the Deputy Leader of the Council (Ed Turner) from Sietske Boeles

Council Tax Exemptions

“As from December 2010 how many properties were exempt from paying Council Tax due to being solely occupied by full time students, and:

- (1) How many of these were classified as Halls of Residence and how many of these were classified as private properties;
- (2) Has there been a decrease in student exempt Council Tax private properties since December 2009 and if not why;
- (3) Does the Council get a full re-imburement by central government for this loss of Council Tax.

Response:

Question 1 – As at December 2010 Halls of Residence = 2459. Student exceptions = 2969.

Question 2 – The number of students has increased which is documented on both the Oxford Brookes University and University of Oxford websites.

Question 3 – Under Council Tax legislation certain properties are exempt from Council Tax i.e. they don’t receive a bill. Exempt properties include student halls of residence and houses lived in only by full-time students. As such there is no Council Tax income collected and there is no re-imburement from central government for this loss.

(4) Question to the Deputy Leader of the Council (Councillor Ed Turner) from Floris van den Broecke

“A Freedom of Information (FOI) request obtained from the Oxford City Council earlier this year, revealed that the number of private dwellings exempt from paying Council Tax due to being solely occupied by students went up by nearly 600 between 2004/05 and 2010/11.

Why has this number of student Council Tax exempt dwellings increased despite a great number of purpose built units being constructed for students in order to free up housing for Oxford’s permanent residents?

Can the City Council please tell me why so many dwellings have been lost from the residential housing pool? This can be done for example by analysing the tax exemption certificates provided by the education establishments supplied to the Council with the number of their students who have been issued with tax exemptions certificates?”

Response: Between 2004/05 and 2010/11 there has been an increase in students which is documented on both the Oxford Brookes University and University of Oxford websites.

Under Council Tax legislation certain properties are exempt from Council Tax i.e. they don’t receive a bill. Exempt properties include student halls of residence and houses lived in only by full-time students.

23. CITY EXECUTIVE BOARD DECISIONS (MINUTES) AND SINGLE EXECUTIVE MEMBER DECISIONS (DECISION SHEET)

Council had before it (previously circulated, now appended):

- (a) Minutes of the City Executive Board held on 25 May 2011 and 22 June 2011
- (b) Decision Sheets of Single Executive Member Decisions meetings:
 - (i) Board Member, Cleaner, Greener Oxford – 16 June 2011
 - (ii) Board Member, Cleaner, Greener Oxford – 29 June 2011
 - (iii) Board Member, Finance and Efficiency – 30 June 2011

City Executive Board – 25 May 2011 - Questions

- (1) Councillor David Williams with regard to minute 4 (Fusion Annual Service Plan 2011/12) asked Councillor Tanner if he could identify the buildings that had been sold or mothballed ready for disposal as part of the 25% carbon reduction, and was this made up of selling the family jewels and if so was not a genuine reduction in carbon.

In response Councillor Tanner said he was proud of the 25% reduction and thanked officers for their hard work in achieving this. However it was only a beginning and it was right to put the Councils “own house” in order.

It was true that an element of the reduction had been achieved by disposing of vacant properties, and added that this was a valid way of reducing carbon emissions.

- (2) Councillor David Williams with regard to minute 5 (Barton – Land Development) said that he was concerned at the change in policy regarding the percentage of social housing from 50% to 40%. He asked how when a general principle had been laid down, the Council could now decide to reduce the amount of social housing on the site.

In response Councillor Turner said that the Barton development required a large amount of upfront infrastructure and that if the full Core Strategy had kicked in with 50% required, then the scheme would not have gone ahead as it would not have been viable. He added that there was no question on compromising on social rented housing and that there may in the future be the opportunity to increase the amount of intermediate accommodation.

Single Executive Member Decision meeting – 16 June 2011

Councillor David Williams raised concerns on voluntary organisations not being exempt from the control and distribution of free printed Matter policy. He also raised concerns on the process of having a meeting with only one Member and questioned the democracy of this.

In response Councillor Tanner said that he too shared the disquiet of Councillor Williams on Single Executive Member Decision meetings and added that voluntary organisations were already exempt from the policy referred to.

Single Executive Member Decision meeting – 30 June 2011

Councillor Fooks questioned the amount of spending and felt that this should have been considered by the City Executive Board.

In response Councillor Turner said that Council had approved the capital programme and this decision was putting the details on to the large sums involved. He added that this decision had been available to call-in if Members had questions/concerns on the decision, but that a call-in had not been initiated.

24. RECOMMENDATIONS AND REPORTS FROM SCRUTINY COMMITTEES

None submitted.

25. QUESTIONS ON NOTICE FROM MEMBERS OF COUNCIL

(a) Questions notified in time for replies to be provided in writing for Council

- 1. Question to the Board Member, City Development (Councillor Colin Cook) from Councillor Nuala Young**

West Barton Development

“Where did the advice that the Barton West Development could not go ahead without a reduction to 40% social housing and lower energy limits come from? Who gave this ‘professional’ advice to the Council...or was it suggested by Councillors?”

Could the portfolio holder explain what is the point of having a policy in the Core Strategy that generally upholds a 50% level of affordable housing when it is proposed that the largest development proposed in that strategy at Barton will not conform to that requirement?”

Answer: The Council sought advice from external professional property consultants, who advised that a scheme would not be viable with the delivery of 50% affordable housing, particularly having regard to the significant infrastructure costs associated, and the Council’s desire to maintain the provision of social rented accommodation. There is no suggestion that “lower energy limits” are being proposed.

The Council’s planning policies require a minimum of 50% of the proposed dwellings in any development to be affordable units, with 80% of that requirement being social rented and 20% shared ownership. The current policies provide that if a developer can very clearly evidence that a development is not viable at that level, then there is an opportunity to negotiate the social housing provision down to a level that makes the development viable.

2. Question to the Board Member, Housing Needs (Councillor Joe McManners) from Councillor Nuala Young

No.16 Tawney Street

“Is the portfolio holder aware that the Council was proposing to sell off 16 Tawney Street, a Council owned property, because they suggest it would cost too much to modernise. However this property had a substantial modernisation of the kitchen and bathroom done by a previous tenant and the reason given would seem spurious.

Could the portfolio holder provide figures to indicate how many other Council properties have been sold off over the last ten years using this criteria of ‘costing too much to modernise’.

Would the portfolio holder agree that it seems strange that developers seem able to find the money to improve these properties and sell them for a large profit but the Council seem unable to do the same.

Could the portfolio holder at least give an assurance that all the properties under this category are offered on the open market and that a variety of developers come forward to purchase the properties?”

Answer: This matter was reported to the City Executive Board on 20th May 2009. The property was sold under Right to Buy Legislation 1978 and subsequently repurchased in 1985. During this sole period the previous owner built single storey extension to the rear which housed the kitchen and bathroom. Consultants at that time recommended that the extension needed rebuilding due to poor mortar joints in the brickwork and foundation problems. There were also works needed to meet the decent homes standards. At that time the cost estimate of the work was £50,000 for works to the extension etc plus approximately £13,000 to bring the property up to Decent Homes standard. Various options had been considered, but given the level of anticipated expenditure, a decision had been made to dispose of the property on the open market.

All surplus property was offered for sale on the open market, and attracted a variety of purchasers.

It may be that the Councillor was unaware that assets from the sale of such properties were reinvested in improving the quality of the Council's housing stock, meeting the Decent Homes standard and going beyond it.

It is not surprising that investors have greater capital than Oxford City Council to undertake these works, since, if the property is subsequently rented out on the open market, the rent which can be charged is far higher. Of course, an alternative strategy would be for the Council to increase rents for such properties to 80% of the market level through the "affordable rent" process, and forego the receipt. This would mean less investment in our existing stock, and it would not provide the sort of affordable housing the administration believes is needed. However, we would welcome serious contributions which recognise the realities of the HRA financial position. We note that the Green Group has declined to propose costed amendments to the HRA budget in recent years, and has confined its interventions to complaints about the implementation of the budget, but perhaps this will change.

The Council does not retain the requested information on historic sales in a readily accessible form.

3. Question to the Board Member, Cleaner, Greener Oxford (Councillor John Tanner) from Councillor Matt Morton

Response to the Energy Conservation Act

"DCLG has repealed the Home Energy Conservation Act and in its place wants "all local authorities to play a role in the successful implementation of the Green Deal, whether as Green Deal providers in their own right, in forming partnerships with providers in their areas or in encouraging take up across communities" (March 2011).

Having earlier this year cut its external energy efficiency budget, how is the Council going to meet its Green Deal commitments?"

Answer: If and when the Coalition Government finally decides the details of its scheme we will be very pleased to get involved. Meanwhile and in any case we are working with our partners in Low Carbon Oxford to take this idea forward. It is vital that we find ways to invest in energy saving and renewable energy for Oxford's homes, both to help people cope with rising fuel prices and to help reduce the City's carbon footprint.

4. Question to the Board Member, Cleaner, Greener Oxford (Councillor John Tanner) from Councillor David Williams

Bonn incinerator

"No doubt the portfolio holder will be delighted to know that on a recent visit to Bonn our twin town in Germany I learnt that they are about to close down their incinerator built 19 years ago burning local waste materials and to convert it to a gas fired power station.

Would he agree that the move vindicates the recommendation in the so called 'Bonn Report 'on Waste Management and Recycling that burning waste was not a solution to waste management problems and that if Oxfordshire County Council went ahead with their controversial local incinerator it would very quickly become a redundant white elephant?"

Answer: Yes I'm pleased to hear about developments in Bonn. The Viridor incinerator at Ardley, commissioned by the County Council, will make Oxfordshire a rubbish dump for the rest of the country. Oxford City Council is completely opposed to the incineration of waste as a method of diverting waste from landfill.

Councillor Williams in a supplementary question asked if the portfolio holder would make late representation to the County Council on the incinerator. Both himself and Councillor Fooks had been taken to see an incinerator on a previous visit to Bonn and were informed that the facility was to be turned into a gas fired power station as the incinerator had become a 'white elephant', and that if the decision had been taken today, it would not have been built.

In response Councillor Tanner said that he would be happy to make representations and that it had been a bad day for Oxfordshire as the High Court had now given the incinerator the go ahead. He added that the incinerator would be a blot on the landscape and, in order to fulfil its capacity would have to draw in waste from outside the boundaries of Oxfordshire. He further added that this was a last century solution to a 21st century problem and that because the City Council was part of the Waste Partnership it would have to send its mixed waste to this facility.

5. Question to the Board Member, Cleaner, Greener Oxford (Councillor John Tanner) from Councillor Clark Brundin

Garden waste collection

“Would the Portfolio Holder please provide the following information:

- (1) The number of households having garden waste collected under the old arrangements with green Hessian bags (or estimate, if accurate figure is not available);
- (2) The number of households paying for the new brown wheelie bin service;
- (3) The number of households paying for the non-reusable sacks?”

Answer:

- (a) Of 58,000 properties in Oxford about 40,000 are houses and each was issued with at least one hessian sack for garden waste. About 30,000 households used these sacks for garden clippings at least once a year.
- (b) brown wheelie bins issued: 7127 paid for plus 2106 free = 9,233
- (c) paper sack sets issued: 566 paid for plus 2 free = Total 568

A total of 9,801 households are participating in the new garden waste scheme, which is a remarkable success.

Councillor Brundin in a supplementary question said that the take-up was less than a third and asked if the new scheme with such a small take-up was actually viable.

In response Councillor Tanner said that he deplored the introduction of charges on any services, but the council had been forced into this through the spending cuts. He said that there seemed to be a misunderstanding of the £35 charge. The saving was the withdrawal of the present collection lorry. The new system had a lorry which only went to the properties which had subscribed to a brown bin, thus making the service quicker.

6. Question to the Deputy Leader of the Council (Councillor Ed Turner) from Councillor Nuala Young

St. Clements Car Park

“Could the Portfolio Holder confirm that the former Blue Boar Street Offices of the Council have been sold for many millions of pounds to an Evangelical Christian Community.

Given the fact that the local authority has received such large scale capital could he confirm that there is more to come with the sale of other properties and that as a consequence the need to make money from St. Clements Car Park project has dissolved?"

Councillor Beverley Hazell declared a personal interest as she was employed by the organisation which had recently purchased the Blue Boar Street offices from the Council.

Answer: It is confirmed that the property was recently sold to the Universities and Colleges Christian Fellowship, and the International Fellowship of Evangelical Students as joint purchasers. The purchase price was £3.255m.

There are a number of sources of capital financing, including capital receipts, prudential borrowing and direct revenue funding. Our proposed capital programme for 11/12 is GF £23.8m and HRA £11.2 the current programme allows for funding of £8.7m on GF and £2.6 on HRA in 11/12 from prudential borrowing which has a direct revenue impact, so we will wish to minimise this. Capital receipts will reduce the need for prudential borrowing and hence the financial pressure on General Fund revenue.

7. Question to the Deputy Leader of the Council (Councillor Ed Turner) Councillor David Williams

Hoarding money

"Could the Portfolio holder confirm that Council reserves are now well in excess of £5.2million and that despite the crocodile tears he knew in February that we would be in this position of having bloated balances?"

Answer: The Council's General Fund working balance is in line with the Medium Term Financial Strategy presented to and agreed by Council in February 2011. The councillor will recall that the administration presented four-year budget proposals, and that balances reduce steadily over that period. It is not helpful to look at just the first year in abstract. I would also remind the councillor that we are losing close to a quarter of our central government grant in the first year alone, and that unfounded suggestions of 'hoarding money' risk detracting from the scale of central government's attack upon public services in Oxford, and in particular upon local government. The truth is that these government funding cuts have been hard for the Council to bear and have necessitated significant sacrifices on the part of our workforce and the people of Oxford.

As at the 31st March 2011 the General Fund working balance (subject to audit) stands at £4.4m as per the budget plan. The budget approved by Council for 2011-12 provides for a further £0.8m to be transferred into balances in year. Hence the balance at the 31st March 2012 is projected to be £5.2m. Over the subsequent 3 years of the Medium Term Financial Strategy (2013-

15) the General Fund working balance is budgeted to reduce to £3.7m.

There is an underlying pressure of £0.6m in subsequent years which if not addressed will erode the General Fund working balance further.

The Council's earmarked reserves, (those held for specific purposes and including the Insurance Fund) increased by £1m in 2010/11. This is predominantly a consequence of a windfall VAT reimbursement of about £800k and an underspend on the 2010/11 budget. An earmarked reserve to support capital expenditure has therefore been created, which reduces the scale of borrowing to fund the capital programme.

All reserves held will be reviewed as part of the annual refresh of the Medium Term Financial Strategy which will take place in the autumn.

Councillor Williams in a supplementary question said that the Council should not be in a position of having bloated reserves of £5.2m and asked the Portfolio Holder for a commitment that there would not be a spending spree in Labour controlled Wards prior to the 2012 local elections.

In response Councillor Turner said that a four year budget had been set and within this there were inbuilt pressures in each of the years, otherwise the Council would have to make all of the cuts in one go. These reserves would be drawn down over the coming four years and in year four, the level of reserves would be at the minimum level required. He further added that the Administration would not be allowed to go on a "spending spree".

8. Question to the Board Member, Finance and Efficiency (Councillor Ed Turner) from Councillor David Williams

Partners who go bankrupt

"Could the Portfolio Holder list the names and the number of partners and contractors (such as Capital Shopping and ISIS) who have gone into liquidation or simply withdrawn from the 'partnership' during their relationship with the City Council over the last 10 years.

As Labour have been in control for the bulk of that time could the Portfolio holder explain why this authority has such a poor track record when it comes to evaluating potential partners and contractors? Would the portfolio holder agree this stream of partner contractors going into liquidation or pulling out is a symptom usually associated with local government in the third world?"

Answer: The Council does not specifically retain the type of information requested in the first question. I find the final question

rather tasteless and am surprised that the councillor is so unaware of the impact of the recession upon the UK's construction sector.

However, over the past 12 months two construction companies engaged on capital schemes have gone into administration, they are: Rok and Isis Projects Limited. The Council has reviewed its procedures as a consequence. It should be noted however, that due to the slow economic recovery market conditions remain difficult and in procurements for contracts covering several months or years it is impossible to guarantee that the contractor will remain financially robust throughout the period.

The position with Capital Shopping Centres is entirely different and a consequence of the company opting to assign its leasehold interest to Crown Estate. Capital Shopping Centres cited a change in their business model as the principal reason for their withdrawal. As a result, the Council novated the benefit of the development agreement to Crown Estate. Crown Estate have subsequently entered into a 50:50 joint venture with Land Securities; this matter is amply set out in papers of the Council's City Executive Board, and I am very happy to investigate if the councillor has not received them.

Councillor Williams in a supplementary question asked if the portfolio holder would agree that the response did not actually answer the question. He asked for actual facts and figures on how much these failures had cost the Council and the rate of failures.

In response Councillor Turner said that the Council's Procurement Team had undertaken outstanding work on reducing costs to the Council. He added with regard to the Westgate Centre, that many shopping centre schemes had not gone ahead because of the recession and Capital Shopping Centres had not gone bankrupt.

9. Question to the Board Member, Finance and Efficiency (Councillor Ed Turner) from Councillor Jean Fooks

Customer Services Area – Inspection of Planning Applications

“Accepting that the intention in the new Customer Services area is to restrict public access to planning applications to looking at plans on screens, will there be enough space in the new offices for planning officers, building control officers and sometimes the public to look at large plans when necessary?”

Answer: The new Customer Service Centre will have a separate large table to enable the public to look at large plans. In addition, there would be six interview rooms that also have tables that could be utilised. One of these rooms is particularly large (fifteen square metres). This room will also have a large television screen that will be available to view large plans, and there will be a bank of six self service computers, three of which will have twenty two inch screens available to view plans. Finally, there is display space

designed into the Customer Service Centre so that planning models can be viewed.

Councillor Fooks in a supplementary question asked if a large space not just for the public, but for officers as well, be provided as a screen would not be enough.

In response Councillor Cook said that this would be the case.

10. Question to the Board Member, Finance and Efficiency (Councillor Ed Turner) from Councillor Jean Fooks

Review of new Customer Services Area

Can the Board member assure Council that the new Customer Services area will be monitored after six months to see what changes , if any, are needed to the layout and public access to planning applications?"

Answer: The service provided by the Customer Service Centre will be constantly monitored, from customer and officer feedback. We shall be implementing a system where customer feedback is provided at the point of service delivery, customers being able to record their experience at a kiosk in the Customer Service Centre. Internal reviews will be performed after two weeks, eight weeks and three months. The Customer Service Centre is designed to be flexible, within the limits of the space available in the building.

11. Question to the Leader of the Council (Councillor Bob Price) from Councillor Matt Morton

Cowley Road Carnival

Would the Portfolio holder join with me in expressing our disappointment that the Cowley Road Carnival will not be held on Cowley Road again this year?

`Would he acknowledge that the primary reason why the carnival has retreated to South Park to stage what in effect is the old Fun in the Park Festival of yesteryear is lack of money. This being the case would he agree that there is a strong case for a much larger central donation of funds from the City Council especially as the perennial funder, the East Area Parliament has been abolished?"

Answer: The character of the Carnival is clearly affected by its location. Sunday's event was seen as a great success by the organisers from Cowley Road Works both in the quality of the entertainment and the level of community participation in the parade. It also covered its costs of about £75k. In recent years, the bulk of the funding for the Carnival was supplied by the City and County Councils from corporate budget heads, but in the wake of the savage reductions in grant income from the Tory/Lib Dem coalition, these budget heads are no longer available. The City Events team is now funded only for the two major civic occasions;

Xmas Light Night and the Lord Mayor's parade/picnic. In 2012, a specific additional allocation has been made for the Olympic Torch Relay and associated evening event.

The Carnival Trustees are considering the scope for attracting additional funding from local businesses and community groups for future years with the support of Saira Khan and we are in close touch with them in support of these initiatives.

There was also a special allocation for May Day and this will be incorporated as a core event.

Councillor Morton in a supplementary question said that organisations etc. had regretted that the Carnival had not been in Cowley Road, but it was still a wonderful event. He asked if the Portfolio Holder could suggest a form of organisation that could organise the event in a way that the local community wanted and importantly access funding for example from European Union funds.

In response Councillor Price said he too would like to see the Carnival back in Cowley Road and even though the event was not organised by the City Council Events Team, the Team did provide advice to the organisers. He added that there was an issue of funding and he was disappointed at the lack of support from local businesses, but hoped that this funding would increase in future years. He further added that for the 2012 Carnival the City Council Events Team may be able again provide advice not just on the organisation, but also on ways of identifying and bidding for national funding.

Councillor Price acknowledged the support of BMW Mini for the 2011 Carnival as they had stepped in at the last minute, when it looked like the Carnival would not take place. He also said that with the 2012 London Olympic torch Relay coming to Oxford it may be possible to link the two events.

**12. Question to the Leader of the Council (Councillor Bob Price)
Councillor David Williams**

A Humiliating Grace at the University of Oxford

“Would the Leader of the Council join with me in congratulating the Dons at the University of Oxford in making history by passing a motion of no confidence in the Universities Minister David Willets during a debate on the National Coalition Government's Higher Education policies?”

Would he agree that if Labour had won the election judging by comments from Peter Mandelson the Universities Minister until 2010 the same grace would have been passed on a Labour Minister for they would have followed exactly the same policies?”

Answer: I doubt that Mr Willetts will regard the motion passed by Congregation as a humiliation since the Coalition's policy for higher education is explicitly intended to remove government funding from teaching and to reduce support for research in order to stimulate private institutions which provide lower quality instrumentalised forms of post secondary education. The Coalition's policies are designed to reduce the proportion of GDP spent on higher education to well below the OECD average, in contrast to the last Labour Government which consistently restored the unit of resource and raised the level of participation to around 45% of the age cohort. A re-elected Labour Government would have maintained those policies.

Councillor Williams in a supplementary question asked if the Portfolio Holder would agree that the last line of his response was highly dubious.

In response Councillor Price said that he did not and that while there may have been changes to the funding regime, there had not been changes to the voucher scheme, nor would they (the previous Labour Government) have gone for a set number of places at a set fee.

13. Question to the Leader of the Council (Councillor Bob Price) from Councillor Nuala Young

Harwell Radiation Monitoring and Fukushima

"Is the portfolio holder aware that the Harwell Atomic Research Centre monitoring in Oxfordshire picked up an increased level of airborne background radiation 5 days after the nuclear meltdown at the Japanese Fukushima nuclear plant on 11th March 2011 ?

Is the portfolio holder concerned at the global impact of this meltdown, confirmed now by the Japanese authorities as the worst nuclear accident ever to have taken place and the fact that the plant continues to emit airborne radiation eventually finding its way to Oxford and all other cities across the world?

Would he agree that the Fukushima meltdown is more evidence that a new generation of nuclear power stations is not a wise investment and that the UK should be taking the road of the German Government of an end to nuclear and large scale investment in cheap and safe renewable energy sources ?

Would the Leader of the Council seek to contact Harwell Monitoring Centre to establish clearly the level and nature of the radiation threat to Oxford and if the present increased levels have been sustained?"

Answer: The Health Protection Agency has confirmed that the levels of background radiation detected locally after the Fukushima incident did not constitute a material risk.

Trace levels of iodine 131 ranged from 80-94 micro becquerels per cubic metre/minute, caesium 134 from 38-46mbs and caesium 137 from 38-42 mbs. Tellerium 132 was not detectable.

The evidence that can be drawn from Fukushima incident on the safety and resilience of nuclear power plants is two-fold: a) it is unwise to construct such plants immediately above a known major earthquake fault line; and b) even in such a hazardous location, the more modern Fukushima Daini plant, that is located immediately adjacent to the damaged Fukushima Daiichi plant and was affected by the same earth tremor and same tsunami wave, went into emergency cold shutdown and survived.

As George Monbiot expressed it in an article last week, 'using a plant built 40 years ago to argue against 21st century power stations is like using the Hindenburg disaster to contend that modern air travel is unsafe'. And it remains the case that France has generated 80% plus of its electricity from nuclear power for the past 30 years without incident.

If one starts from the premise that the greatest threat facing humanity at present is the acceleration of global warming, the reaction of the German government can only be seen as a disaster, pushing , as it eventually will, an extra 40 million tonnes of CO2 a year into the atmosphere. A rational response to the Fukushima incident, as to the earlier Chernobyl and Three Mile Island cases, is to increase the pace of technical innovation in fourth generation systems that will run on the waste produced by current technologies, to increase the risk based design requirements for new nuclear stations and, of course, to increase investment in renewables.

14. Question to the Leader of the Council (Councillor Bob Price) from Councillor David Williams

Oxford votes yes for electoral reform

"Would the Portfolio holder join with the Green Party in congratulating the people of Oxford in voting YES in the recent referendum on electoral reform and would he agree that although the vote was lost nationally this is not the end of the debate related to making our voting system more proportional and democratic.

Could he confirm that divisions amongst Labour Party leading figures and poor leadership was the primary cause of the failure of the national referendum to endorse electoral reform and that when it matters the majority of Labour MPs put their own security of tenure before democracy?"

Answer: The result of the referendum on the Alternative Vote system was primarily a consequence of the massive unpopularity of the Liberal Democrat Party after a year of their coalition partnership with the most right wing government that the UK has ever experienced. A system which that party championed, and

which was seen as potentially benefiting a group of politicians who were perceived to have systematically reneged on their principles and key policy pledges was not likely to recommend itself to the UK electorate. Neither did it recommend itself to the many people who would wish to see a proportional representation system, since they would agree with Mr Clegg that it was a 'miserable compromise'.

Councillor Williams in a supplementary question asked if the Portfolio Holder would agree that the feeling for democracy in Oxford was rejuvenated by the AV Campaign and that the desire for democracy was strong and this would be shown at the next elections.

In response Councillor Price said no.

15. Question to the Leader of the Council (Councillor Bob Price) from Councillor Dick Wolff

The No.4 Bus

"Was the City consulted about the re-routing of buses such as the no 4? Does he agree with the decision to cut off thousands of people in the west of the City from the rail station and the east of the City? Will the Leader be writing to the Oxford bus companies about this and the numerous other reductions in services that are being announced alongside the welcome news of the cross ticketing?"

Answer: No; the bus companies keep the City Council well informed about their decision but do not consult us even informally on routing decisions.

I will happily raise these points with the companies and with the County Council which is the transport authority for the City.

(b) Questions notified by the deadline in the Constitution (replies given orally at Council)

16. Question to the Board Member, City Development (Councillor Colin Cook) from Councillor Jean Fooks

Planning Policy CP15, Energy Efficiency

"Can the Board Member confirm that Policy CP15, Energy Efficiency, in the Local Plan 2001-2016 does still apply to development in Oxford? Could he explain why the provisions in this policy i.e. developments will be assessed against the following criteria:

- (a) The use of appropriate materials, siting, form, orientation and layout of buildings to maximise the benefits of passive solar (or natural) heating, cooling, lighting and natural ventilation:

- (b) The use of soft landscaping, including tree planting, to increase summer shading and reduce heat loss in winter; and
- (c) The use of energy efficient, renewable-energy technology, whether new or traditional, for heating, cooling, power and lighting.

do not appear to be followed in the way planning applications are being assessed at present? Why are none of these criteria regularly mentioned in the reports to Planning Committees?"

Response: No. Local Plan policy CP15 has been superseded by Core Strategy Policy CS9"

Councillor Fooks in a supplementary question asked why the Council was renegeing. In response Councillor Cook said, firstly it is worth highlighting that carbon emissions are already being reduced through the progressive tightening of the Building Regulations. The current administration is committed to Zero Carbon buildings and has confirmed that they will be continuing to strengthen Part L of the Building Regulations. Zero Carbon for residential buildings will become the industry standard by 2016, and for non-residential buildings by 2019.

Policy CS.15 of the Oxford Local Plan has now been replaced by Core Strategy Policy CS9. This is an important policy and reducing the impacts of climate change is a key plank of the Core Strategy. Policy CS9 is in two distinct parts. The second part maintains a continued support for the NRA which applies to all qualifying developments and has been a successful tool for mitigating climate change. Qualifying developments comprise of 10 or more residential units or non-residential developments of 2,000m² and over, or a pro-rata combination of the two. The headline from the NRA is the 20% renewable energy which is provided on-site.

The first part of Policy CS9 states that "All developments should seek to minimise their carbon emissions". This is a policy which encourages and supports the minimisation of carbon emissions as part of development proposals. The policy continues "Proposals for development are expected to demonstrate how sustainable design and construction methods will be incorporated". Again, this encourages inclusion of energy efficiency measures through design, layout orientation, landscaping and use of materials, although they are not all necessarily directly applicable in all planning proposals and as such there is no specific requirements to be referred to in every report. Indeed details of some of these elements of the proposal are required by conditions on the planning permission. Where relevant, one

or more of these criteria are some of the material considerations that are weighed in the balance and officers use them in assessing planning proposals. I shall ask officers to consider making reference to them in committee reports, where directly relevant and appropriate.

17. Question to the Board Member, Leisure Services (Councillor Van Coulter) from Councillor Dick Wolff

QUEST Assessments and the SALIX Funds

“Blackbird Leys Leisure Centre, Ferry Leisure Centre, Hinksey Outdoor Pool and Oxford Ice Rink will be completing QUEST assessments in the 2011/12 operational year. Why has City Leisure not submitted Temple Cowley Pools for this assessment?

Could the Portfolio Holder also indicate why Temple Cowley Pools were not entered for SALIX funded energy efficiency projects as other leisure centres seem to have been.

In addition could the Portfolio Holder give an assurance that this was not part of some devious plan to make Temple Cowley look inefficient in terms of its energy usage compared with other sites and thereby create another justification to push ahead with Labour’s massive waste of ratepayers money in building a new pool at Blackbird Leys and closing Temple Cowley”?

Response: We are committed to continually improving the service standards across all our leisure centres and with our partner Fusion Lifestyle have made marked improvements in this area.

We are due to receive a report at the City Executive Board on the 21st of July on the proposed competition standard pool at Blackbird Leys Leisure Centre which in turn would result in the closure of Temple Cowley Pools. As such it would not be the best use of resources to put Temple Cowley Pools through a quality audit.

SALIX energy funding is in essence a loan where the monies are paid back from the savings generated . While we have previously made several adaptations to Temple Cowley to improve its energy efficiency the potential closure means that SALIX would only be used if opportunities with a very short pay back were identified.

Councillor Wolff in a supplementary question asked what opportunities had been considered for a quick and immediate payback.

In response Councillor Coulter said that it was a simple economic proposition. Various options were considered and

the payback would not work. He expected that a report would be submitted to the City Executive Board on 21 July 2011.

18. Question to the Board Member, Leisure Services (Councillor Van Coulter) from Graham Jones

Competition Pool canvassing

“Will the Portfolio Holder please detail the canvassing of opinion by individual Councillors about the proposals to build a competition pool at Blackbird Leys and to close Temple Cowley Pool, which were referred to on the report to the City Executive Board on 22 June? Will he also say what additional canvassing of opinion he has personally conducted since 22 June and what were the results in terms of those for, against, and undecided about the respective proposals?”

Response: Councillors canvassed people across Oxford and that these discussions were within a Councillor/constituent relationship which would require the consent of the constituent in order to answer the question.

Councillor Jones in a supplementary question asked if the Portfolio Holder would accept his thanks for his very diligent fact finding and if he could provide some information, informally he would be grateful. In response Councillor Coulter agreed to speak with Councillor Jones informally.

19. Question to the Board Member, Cleaner, Greener Oxford (Councillor John Tanner) from Councillor Matt Morton

Oxford Brookes First for Green Policies

“Would the Portfolio Holder join with me in congratulating Oxford Brookes University in their national ranking with a first for their Green Policies? Would he agree that this top ranking is a model that other universities and colleges in the City should seek to emulate. Would he give a commitment to write to the Pro Vice Chancellor of Brookes to congratulate her on the University’s first class award for Green Standards?”

Response: Councilor Tanner congratulated Oxford Brookes University, which was one of our partners on its award for green standards.

20. Question to the Board Member, Cleaner, Greener Oxford (Councillor John Tanner) from Councillor Dick Wolff

Cancellation of Single Member Decision Making event

“Can the Portfolio Holder explain why his Single Member Decision making meeting scheduled for 16th June was cancelled with only 2 hours notice?”

Response: Councillor Tanner said that the reality was that the meeting was not cancelled, indeed it met and a member of the public was there. It was important that meetings were publicised, more so than the City Executive Board. The actual meeting which was cancelled was the meeting concerning the Board Member for City Development, as there was no decision to make. Dates for Single Member Decision Meetings were placed in the meetings calendar on the assumption that there would be decision to make. However as these dates are set in advance, sometimes there are no decisions that need to be taken and the meeting was cancelled. The meeting which was cancelled was done so with more than five working days notice and not the 2 hours as stated in the question.

21. Question to the Board Member, Finance and Efficiency (Councillor Ed Turner) from Councillor David Williams

Standingford House Small Business Centre

“What is the occupancy rate of the Standingford House Small Business Centre?”

Response: The property comprises 18 units situated over two floors of which 11 (61%) are currently let. 4 lettings are in progress/under offer which officers are reasonably confident will complete. This will then give an occupancy of some 83%."

22. Question to the to the Leader of the Council (Councillor Bob Price) from Councillor Matt Morton

Blackbird Leys Pool the 'Preferred Option'?

“The Portfolio Holder is on record as saying that the building of a new super pool at Blackbird Leys has been identified by previous studies as the ‘preferred option’. Could he confirm that the only report that comes to such conclusion was the 2009 report written by Ian Brooke, Head of Leisure and therefore not independent.

Would the Leader of the Council give an undertaking that the whole decision regarding the building of a new pool at Blackbird Leys will be investigated by a truly independent board and the social cost of taking out of commission Temple Cowley Pool be an integral part of that investigate?”.

Response: Councillor Price informed Council of the various stages and reports:

- (i) Deloitte report commissioned in 2001
- (ii) KPMG report commissioned in October 2006
- (iii) MACE report presented in August 2010
- (iv) Sport England and Oxford Sports Partnership also involved in the process

Councillor Morton in a supplementary question asked if a further independent report be requested as he had concerns on the independence of the MACE report as he felt it had not been as impartial as it should have been. In response Councillor Price restated that the MACE report was an independent report.

23. Question to the Leader of the Council (Councillor Bob Price) from Councillor Dick Wolff

Council website and Area Forums

Now that Labour have abolished a layer of local democracy with the Area Committees, why is it that some Area Forums seem to get a great deal more publicity than others on the Council website? Why for example does the Cowley Area Forum seem to have so much more coverage than the others? Could the Leader of the Council deny the rumour that the lower levels of publicity given to the East and North areas may be as a result of these areas having the good sense not to return Labour Councillors?”.

Response: Councillor Price said he had spoken with the Communities and Neighbourhoods Manager who informed him that all Forums would have a press release a week before each took place. The issue raised in the question, was due to press releases being issued at different times by the Team Leaders. However the Council’s website did carry the dates of each Forum.

24. Question to the Leader of the Council (Councillor Bob Price) from Councillor David Williams

Parking meters in very small car parks

“Clearly the Council must establish parking meters on a minor car parks which are being used as mini park and rides by commuter, but does the Leader of the Council agree that establishing meters on very small car parks that are obviously related to local parks may be a barrier to people from all over the city enjoying these facilities, Cutteslowe Park being a prime example?”.

Response: Councillor Price said that this had been looked at as part of the budget process and there was a difference between car parks. A great deal of comments had been received during the consultation and these would be analysed and a report submitted in due course.

26. STATEMENTS ON NOTICE FROM MEMBERS OF COUNCIL

Councillor Tony Brett gave the following Statement on Notice

“I want to make a brief statement about the implementation of new additional HMO licensing scheme. While I recognise and fully support the vital work of holding landlords to account and ensuring adequate and safe conditions for tenants I do want to sound a note of caution about discouraging landlords to stay in the HMO market.

Oxford is a lively and vibrant City and has a large population of young people trying to make their way after School, College or University. Housing is scarce and expensive and living in HMOs is the only way many such people can afford to stay in Oxford. I have seen one example (near to my own home) and heard of others where I wonder if perhaps this Council is requiring more work than is strictly necessary on properties that are being used as-built (i. e. with no extra bedrooms or partitions, or rooms being used as bedrooms that were intended for other use), and to modern building regulations standards. While I of course understand the duty of care the Council has to HMO residents I hope that will be kept in balance with the need to maintain a supply of HMOs for those who are not able to afford to live in our wonderful City of Oxford in any other way. Our City's economy is strong and healthy and this is due in no small part to the number of skilled professionals that live here. I would hate to get into a position where they can no longer afford to live in Oxford because too many landlords have chosen to leave the HMO market.

It is a delicate balance and I certainly have no sympathy for landlords that don't look after their properties ensuring they are safe for their tenants, nor for tenants who engage in antisocial behaviour. On the other hand I don't want to see tenants who are responsible members of the community who do not keep neighbours awake, do not have loud parties, do not abuse parking and properly manage their refuse and recycling to be the unintentional victims of a licensing regime that is meant to protect them, not drive their landlords out of the rental market and therefore them out of their homes.

I am grateful to officers for taking the time to discuss this issue with me in the last week or so and grateful for all the excellent work they are doing in bringing Oxford's HMO stock up to a good and safe standard. I also welcome the fact that the council has taken my comments on board and I'm sure officers will bear them in mind when making future assessments of works required to recently-built and/or non-overcrowded residential dwellings. I will be asking the portfolio member for housing for an update in a question to Council later in the year on progress in this important and delicately-balanced area.”

Councillor Turner in response to the statement said in the future smaller HMO's would require a license. Work continued by Officers with landlords across the private rented sector and the scheme would continue to be monitored and a report would be submitted in the autumn.

27. MOTIONS ON NOTICE

Council had before it nine Motions on Notice and reached decisions as follows:

(a) **Proposed closure of BBC Oxford News Operations – (Proposer – Councillor Stuart McCready)**

This Council notes with concern the reported plan to close BBC Oxford and move the BBC's operations from here to Southampton, with the loss of the local news and sport bulletin and the discontinuation of many local radio programmes, to be replaced with national and regional content.

This Council further notes that BBC Radio Oxford is Oxford's most popular local radio station and has risen in popularity over the past year, increasing from 76,000 to 80,000 listeners according to May's Radio Joint Audience Research figures.

This Council believes that local news is important to local democracy, and that local journalism helps build community by being able to keep in touch with what is important to local people and to shape reporting accordingly.

This Council opposes the BBC's plans, strongly asserts the importance of local broadcasting to people in Oxford, and resolves to request the Leader and the Chief Executive to write to the Director-General of the BBC, the Chair of the BBC Trust and the Secretary of State for Culture, Media and Sport expressing our views.

Following a debate, Council voted and the Motion was adopted.

(b) **Public Sector Pension Contributions – (Proposer - Councillor Mike Rowley)**

Council notes with grave concern the decision of the coalition government announced in the Comprehensive Spending Review (CSR) to impose a 3.2% contribution increase on members of the Local Government Pension Scheme. Scheme average member contributions will increase from 6.6% to 9.8% next year. Additionally the value of all local government employees' pensions will be reduced on a cumulative basis by the change in the basis of indexation to the Consumer Price Index (CPI)

Council shares the views expressed by the Local Government Association (LGA) in its letter to the Chancellor of February 16th 2011 where it pointed out that this level of increase will inevitably lead to a massive increase in opt-outs from the pension scheme by lower paid employees who form the majority of the local authority workforce.

Council resolves to write to the Chancellor, the Chief Secretary and the Secretary of State for Local Government to support the LGA and to call for a fundamental rethink of this damaging approach to public sector pension schemes.

Councillors Alan Armitage, Elise Benjamin, Tony Brett, Stephen Brown, Jim Campbell, Colin Cook, Van Coulter, Jean Fooks, Rae Humberstone, Mark Lygo, Susanna Pressel, Bob Price, Gwynneth Royce, Gill Sanders, John Tanner, Bob Timbs and Ruth Wilkinson, declared personal interests as they were members of the Local Government Pension Scheme.

Following a debate Council voted and the Motion was adopted.

(c) **Business Rate Concessions – (Proposer – Councillor David Williams)**

Given that the New Localism Bill will return the Business Rate back to local authority control and the new legislation may provide the Council with the opportunity to vary the business rate within the City, this Council asks the Executive to investigate the potential of establishing enterprise zones where a special reduced business rate focused on helping small independent traders are established in different parts of the City. The report on the possibility of introducing such a scheme to be brought to the Executive in the autumn once the full extent of the new legislation is known with a view to the potential implementation in the financial year 2012 -2013.

Councillor David Williams withdrew his Motion on Notice.

(d) **Repeal of the 1908 Smallholdings and Allotment Act – (Proposer – Councillor Nuala Young)**

This Council invites the Executive to stand opposed to the suggested abolition to the 1908 Smallholdings and Allotment Act (Section 23) which orders Councils to provide sufficient number of allotment plots to local residents where there is a demand. The Executive is invited not to place allotments and smallholding in its list of potential land sales to developers as envisaged in the Localism Bill and existing allotment sites will not appear in Council plans for future housing development.

The Executive's stance on this issue should be made known to Mr. Eric Pickles the Secretary of State for Communities who is known to be suggesting the repeal of the 1908 legislation under his list of new measures to supposedly reduce Council bureaucracy. Mr. Pickles to be informed that the regulation requiring local authorities to provide allotments is not burdensome or extra red tape and is a vital aspect of communities growing their own food and supporting local sustainability.

Councillor Young's Motion on Notice was not considered as Councillor Young was not present at the meeting.

(e) **Health and Social Care Bill – (Proposer – Councillor David Williams)**

Although there have been cosmetic changes recently announced by the Coalition Government to the proposed Health and Social Care Bill, this Council is still concerned at the likely impact of the proposed new legislation on health social care provision in Oxford and throughout the Country. This Council is concerned that the central theme of introducing competition and private sector tendering via GP led consortia with an

agency (Monitor) to stimulate private sector involvement remains a core element of the proposed legislation. The key objective of the legislation to open up the NHS to private sector cherry picking remains and the gradual erosion of NHS delivery under the proposals will still be the end result.

The Council is also concerned at the cost of the reforms estimated at over £2billion especially the redundancy of senior administrators within the present Primary Care Trusts and their subsequent re-employment with the GP commissioning consortia, a move that will alone cost in excess of £1billion. With this in view and the NHS facing a £20 billion shortfall in its revenues this Council calls on the Government to abandon the proposed legislation and return with more progressive reforms that include providing revenue that will match the increasing demands on the NHS.

Councillor Mark Mills declared a personal and prejudicial interest as his father was an employee of the Primary Care Trust. He took no part in the debate and left the Council Chamber.

Following a debate, Council voted and the Motion was adopted.

(f) BBC Oxford Studio Closure – (Proposer – Councillor David Williams)

This Council is opposed to the proposal by the BBC Trust to close their Oxford Banbury Road Studio and see the concept as a significant dilution of the BBC commitment to local broadcasting services. The proposed ending of the local radio and television production centre would deny the people of Oxford a truly comprehensive service and mean that local communities do not have a voice.

There is a recognition that the Coalition Government have frozen the license fee for six years and that this would lead to sustained reductions in the BBC's services. However local radio and television is as much a part of the BBC as any other aspect of the Corporation's activities and centres of local journalistic excellence such as Oxford should be retained.

Council resolves to ask the Chief Executive to write to the BBC Governors expressing our concerns.

Following a debate, Council voted and the Motion was adopted.

(g) Charges for Residents Parking Zones – (Proposer – Councillor Alan Armitage)

Council notes from Oxfordshire County Council's Provisional 2010/11 Revenue and Capital Outturn Report (Annex 7) that income from residents' parking zones in Oxford City exceeded costs by over £110,000, despite repeated assurances from representatives of the County Council that residents were only being asked to ensure that RPZ administration costs were recovered.

Council condemns this duplicity and asks the Chief Executive to write to the County Council to demand that a rebate is paid to residents who have been forced to pay excessively high charges for the privilege of parking near their own homes.

Councillor John Tanner moved an amendment:- to add a further sentence at the end of the proposed Motion on Notice, to read – ‘Council reaffirms its opposition to any charges being made for residents’ parking in Oxford’.

The mover of the substantive Motion, Councillor Armitage accepted the amendment and following a debate, Council voted and the amended Motion was adopted as follows:

Council notes from Oxfordshire County Council's Provisional 2010/11 Revenue and Capital Outturn Report (Annex 7) that income from Residents' Parking Zones in Oxford City exceeded costs by over £110,000, despite repeated assurances from representatives of the County Council that residents were only being asked to ensure that RPZ administration costs were recovered.

Council condemns this duplicity and asks the Chief Executive to write to the County Council to demand that a rebate is paid to residents who have been forced to pay excessively high charges for the privilege of parking near their own homes.

Council reaffirms its opposition to any charges being made for residents parking in Oxford.

(h) Speed Limit Enforcement – (Proposer – Councillor Alan Armitage)

Council welcomes the fact that speed enforcement by Thames Valley Police using roadside cameras has come back into effect. Council believes that enforcement of all speed limits is necessary to ensure that injuries and fatalities on Oxford's roads continue to reduce.

Council therefore calls upon Thames Valley Police to give enforcement of 20mph speed limits in Oxford their urgent attention.

Following a debate Council voted and the Motion was adopted.

(i) Garden Waste Collection Arrangements – (Proposer – Councillor Clark Brundin)

Council is very concerned at the discriminatory nature of the recently introduced arrangements for the collection of garden waste. Residents who cannot accommodate the brown wheelie bin are charged over four times as much for the same annual volume of garden waste if they opt for the new non-reusable sacks. In addition, the sacks can only be obtained in Cowley and Horspath.

Council is further very concerned that the relief for those on benefits appears to apply only to the bin charge, and not the sack charge.

Council believes the costs of collection should be shared equally among participating residents, and therefore requests that:

1. The number of sacks available for £35 should be increased accordingly, as should the number provided for £25;
2. Much more convenient ways of obtaining the new sacks should be provided, with them being available at City Centre offices or delivered by crews on request once initial payment has been made;
3. The relief for those on benefits must apply to the charge for sacks as well as the charge for bins.

Following a debate Council voted and the Motion was not adopted.

28. REPORTS AND QUESTIONS ABOUT ORGANISATIONS UPON WHICH THE COUNCIL IS REPRESENTED

- (1) Councillor Brown asked Councillor Price if any decisions had been taken by the Oxford Strategic Partnership (OSP) and the Local Enterprise Partnership (LEP) and if so, whether the minutes of these meetings could be placed on the Council's website.

In response Councillor Price said that £350k had been allocated to the LEP and that the County Council had also allocated a large part of its Economic Unit to the LEP as well. He said that the LEP suffered from faults which had been highlighted by Labour Councillors as they had no funding or powers of their own and were not a voice of business. Oxford Business First had more say on issues. He further added that the LEP was holding an away-day to try and clarify the support available for local businesses. With regard to the OSP, this was a very successful body.

- (2) Councillor Jones asked Councillor Price for an update on the East/West Rail Consortium. In response Councillor Turner said that he was the representative on the Spatial Planning and Infrastructure Partnership. He said that the EWR Bid had been turned down. However there remained interest and discussions continued between district local authorities on how they might be able to contribute to the costs. All local authorities remained supportive of the proposals.

29. HONORARY RECORDER - APPOINTMENT

The Head of Law and Governance submitted a report (previously circulated, now appended) the purpose of which was to advise Council of the position of Honorary Recorder and to invite Council to appoint the Resident Judge at the Crown Court as Honorary Recorder in place of His Honour Judge Julian Hall who is no longer the Resident Judge.

Council resolved:

- (a) To appoint His Honour Judge Gordon Risius CB to the post of Honorary Recorder of Oxford for as long as he holds the position of resident Judge at the Crown Court;

- (b) To thank His Honour Judge Julian Hall for his services as Honorary Recorder.

30. MATTERS EXEMPT FROM PUBLICATION

None.

The meeting started at 5.00 pm and ended at 8.35 pm

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Minute Item 21

Ruskin Fields

Note only - What is the value of Ruskin Fields?

These are the LAST meadows and countryside in the entire North East area, a green lung which will soon be surrounded by the city – where, for a precious few yards between Barton West, Northway, Stoke Place, Headington and the A40, we see a pastoral scene, hear trees rustling, and admire flowers, spot deer, foxes and other wildlife.

It comes down to two basic issues:

Is there any alternative to building 185 houses on this land?

Who needs green space and who will be the victim of its loss?

There is a presumption against development in a Conservation Area, ie you better have a damn good reason – so what is it?

The Ruskin development is 2% of the 9000 house sites already identified via the Core Strategy with more to come.

How about the 20 Hectares, or 2/3 Barton West, of the 12,000 destination parking spaces of the top 10 North East employers , mostly Headington Hospitals?

Is it beyond imagination that we could dispense with this anachronism, cut congestion and provide housing in such sustainable locations?

Of course, it is not as simple as that – or is it?

Lose Ruskin Fields or part of them and you have set a precedent that declares open season on all our precious remaining countryside fragments

Say “yes” to Ruskin, and you cannot say “no” ever again.

You may be forgiven for assuming this about the privileged folk of Old Headington with leafy green gardens to have a jolly walk and blackberry and apple pie against needy families.

So - Is this about class warfare? The rich versus the poor?

We could have diluted and dispersed poverty, and poverty of expectations, rather than intensify and concentrate it as at Barton West, adding to the social deprivation arc from Northway to Blackbird Leys – thats done but Ruskin Fields is not.

Lets imagine future Barton West, the people love the fields for the joy they bring, the daily walk with its five minute breath of the countryside – then we say, “sorry but these fields are being concreted over for a new housing estate..”

Imagine the outrage and anger, yet their voice will never be heard, and thank you they will not.

Is it too much to ask that a child from a poor background can enjoy a green field? Spot wildlife, or pick up sticks, stones or eggshells, hear the rustle of trees?

No leafy green gardens for the children of Barton West.

I have a vision of these families walking along the priceless Stoke Place green lane and the fields while the children catch butterflies, but of course this is private land.

If we take the rights of private property literally we would have “TRESPASSERS KEEP OUT “ notices to this day on the Peak District National Park – it is clear which side of history lies.

Do we say yes of course, there are 3000 of you living at Barton West, under Policy CS21 you have 17 hectares of green space, but drive to Port Meadow to enjoy it, and not only that, we will take even the 3.5 hectares of Ruskin Fields to boot?

Are we going to fob them off with featureless arable fields of Elsfield Hill, that leads nowhere?

Headington Cemetery? Featureless football fields at Northway? A patronising linear park with a few bits of plastic for the children? Tiny Dunstan Park? Anyone for cricket?

The Ruskin Fields development gives less rights to the least advantaged to enjoy England's green and pleasant land equally with others in this city.

Note – Appeal

This may be the last Council meeting before these fields are lost – once a site allocation policy is decided, the Council will have all but ceded the power to prevent it.

If you care more about :

building lives rather than houses

our priceless heritage

poor children having the same access to green space as better off ones

The Council's reputational damage after the conservation area reduction

you must act NOW.

Dont let our greed for housing blind us to the needs of those that live there.

Lord Mayor, you have a constitutional responsibility to act as the conscience of the Council:

It is unconscionable to destroy this priceless asset

It is unconscionable to deprive already deprived people access to England's green and pleasant land

So please :

SAVE RUSKIN FIELDS

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Barton Area Action Plan & Ruskin Fields – Explanatory Note

Status of the Ruskin Fields proposals:

The Barton Area Action Plan Preferred Options document was published for public consultation on 13 May 2011. The consultation ended on 24 June.

The document includes a separate section on proposals by Ruskin College for Ruskin Fields. It is made clear that the proposals have a different status from the others included in the document. The proposals are being promoted by the landowner – not by the City Council. The document also explains that the Ruskin Fields proposals have not been developed with the same ongoing and close involvement of the local community that helped shape the rest of the preferred options, nor are they underpinned by comparable evidence.

The City Council simply wanted to hear peoples' views; including the Ruskin Fields proposals within the Area Action Plan has provided people with an important opportunity to comment.

Next steps:

In October this year the City Council will decide on the content of its Proposed Submission document for the Barton Area Action Plan. The document will set out draft policies and the public and stakeholders will be asked for their comments. Then, early in 2012, the Council will decide on the content of the Area Action Plan that it submits to the Secretary of State. The Council's decision on adoption of the Area Action Plan will take place in autumn 2012.

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Just over eighteen months ago I became aware of the Council's intention to close Temple Cowley Pools & Fitness Centre. I tried to understand the reasoning behind the intention, and the more I looked into the issue the more concerned I became. The council seemed to have little concern for what the public thought over the issue, and the many requests we made as a campaign group yielded answers that only prompted more and more questions. We were told in the end that we simply had to trust the experts, as we couldn't possibly know or appreciate the detail. We carefully examined what we were being told, and checked with independent experts as well. We found we were able to challenge every point being put forward by the council as to why the only publicly funded leisure facility inside the ring road in East Oxford should close. And this remains the case.

We have always ensured that we share what we find with both the Council's leisure department and all the Councillors, of whatever political persuasion. The consequence is that we have a highly controversial issue that in council is separated by only 3 votes, overwhelming public opinion that Temple Cowley Leisure Centre should remain open, along with the existing Blackbird Leys Swimming Pool, and supported by the largest ever petition in the history of Oxford.

The argument is simple, particularly in these times of financial austerity – why spend £16m of taxpayers money on a new, non-Olympic, only 25m, swimming pool when £3m will refurbish and improve two existing leisure facilities, enabling them to remain open for another twenty years?

Despite the simplicity of this argument, the council has continued to press on, spending more than £600,000 over the last year on consultancy fees to support its case. The irony is that by its own figures just under £1m is required to perform all the required maintenance on these leisure centres, yet another example of where dogma seems to have overrun logic. A quick comparison of the campaign website, <http://tiny.cc/savetcp>, with the Council's leisure webpages, will show how the council is willing to mislead the casual reader. We have always been at pains to ensure that all available information, both for and against closure, is made there for anyone to read and challenge, and anyone can contact us via email at savetcp@gmail.com. We wholeheartedly believe in evidence based decision making, and it was good to hear that the councillor now responsible for this issue on the City Executive Board is also committed to evidence based decision making. However, of immediate concern was one of his first statements, made at the last CEB meeting, that the proposed new swimming pool at Blackbird Leys would provide Oxford with a "world class" facility. There is absolutely no evidence that a 25m swimming pool tacked onto a leisure centre more than 30 years old is "world class", either for Oxford or anywhere else. We expect a "world class" swimming facility to have a 50m pool, with a diving pool and have some sort of heat exchange incorporated into it as well, like an ice rink (or even crematorium). So this is all disappointing, given the amount of evidence we have uncovered and shared over the

last eighteen months. We don't believe that councillors would willingly deceive the public, and our campaign is most definitely not a political one. We are aware from Freedom of Information requests that the council's leisure department does brief councillors with information that is partial and misleading – that's why we spend our time challenging what is said.

And so even more disappointing was the news a few weeks ago that a Labour councillor was distributing a letter, on Council headed paper with the implication that it was officially endorsed, telling the voters in Cowley Marsh ward, where the Temple Cowley Leisure Centre sits, that the facility must close, and using information that has been around for many months, with arguments that have been used time and time again and that have been continually discredited. We issued an open letter in response which we also delivered to the voters of Cowley Marsh, pointing out all the shortcomings in the letter. Councillors who put their name to this type of propaganda do themselves and their party no good whatsoever. The response we have had has been overwhelming. Here's an example from an email received by the campaign a few days ago:

"I also would like to say that of all of the pools in all of Oxford, the Temple Cowley pool has always remained my favourite, out of all of the facilities in Oxford I have used, and that also includes in relation to private gyms as well. This means that I am extremely concerned about losing this facility, and really would hope that it would be preserved..."

She goes on to say:

"...I am writing to you today, after having received a letter from Councillor Malik a few days ago, and then receiving your letter through the door a few days later.

I will admit that when I received Councillor Malik's letter, I was dismayed and distressed by his letter, and made me want to write a reply to express my concerns and dismay at his letter, however, the letter was in such detail that I felt that this would be difficult to respond to adequately, so this is why I am writing in gratitude that your campaign has put together such a great letter to counter his arguments on the behalf of people like myself instead."

She goes on to make a number of points as to why she thinks Temple Cowley Pools should be kept open, and concludes:

"As someone who has also trained in diving, in Oxford, I would also be really keen to see the diving pool re-opened. I would be really keen to see this pool used by the diving clubs that are in Oxford since it is a specialist pool for this purpose, and it is a shame at present that this pool is not even being used."

So, let's look at the facts and the arguments.

- Temple Cowley Pools & Fitness Centre is actually a complete leisure centre, comprising a 25m competition swimming pool, diving pool, learner pool, gym, sauna, steam room and exercise studio, that the Council has deliberately failed to maintain for the last ten years, and is now claiming is too costly to run - not true, the Greens have agreed a budget with the Council Finance Department that would keep TCP running for the next 25 years!
- The council claims that it costs half a million pounds each year to run Temple Cowley Pools - not true. The council pays Fusion a single sum to operate all leisure centres, and Fusion takes the admission income - the claimed 'cost' is an old figure from two years ago when the Council ran the centres, and even that is debatable.
- Carbon emissions. Temple Cowley Pools is the most energy efficient wet/dry leisure centre in Oxford, and the Council wants to knock it down! They claim that TCP's carbon emissions are 10% of the council's 'core' emissions at 885 tonnes CO2 equiv, whereas a new pool would be only 300 tonnes CO2 equiv. This is totally misleading. When you compare like with like, the TCP swimming pool only generates 180 tonnes CO2 equiv, way below that of the proposed new pool. The other TCP facilities include a sauna, that runs on electricity so obviously the carbon cost is higher. But still TCP is energy efficient - it could be even more energy efficient if the Council would invest a few thousand pounds in pool covers to stop evaporation of heated water - but then it would be even more efficient compared to the proposed new pool.
- Transport - TCP is in Temple Cowley, a designated transport hub serviced by 23 bus routes from across the city. There is even a bus from Rose Hill that was put on specifically for the users of Peers swimming pool when the council allowed that leisure centre to close. In contrast, there is a bus service to Blackbird Leys that is 'regular' only if you live on the Cowley Road or are coming from the City Centre. Existing users will find their transport costs exceeding the price of admission! The Council's own core strategy is to promote walking, but the only people able to walk to the new pool will live in one area, Blackbird Leys. Most people will have to drive, significantly increasing carbon emissions and likely to bring gridlock congestion in Blackbird Leys itself, a 20mph residential area with traffic calming and where most roads around the leisure centre there are single lane.
- There is simply no demand for a new swimming pool at Blackbird Leys. The existing swimming pool in Blackbird Leys is open to the public for less than ten hours a week, but is well-used by disadvantaged groups, nine schools and the canoe club. The demand for leisure and exercise in the Cowley community ie at TCP, is overwhelming. The Save TCP campaign submitted the largest ever

petition in the history of Oxford, over 12,000 signatures, to the Council last year - Labour simply weren't interested. Fusion forecasts just under 400,000 visits a year at the new pool, and yet the existing facilities have over 450,000! We, the council tax-payers, will be paying £16m to decrease leisure usage in the city!

- Why is this happening? Fusion, who operate the leisure centres, stand to benefit massively from closing two facilities (saving costs and cutting about 30 staff). They will also be charging us, the taxpayers, £150,000 a year to run the new pool, as well as taking all the admission charges. And by that time, we will be paying them £75,000 a year to run all the other ageing facilities (some older than TCP, like Ferry and the Blackbird Leys Leisure Centre!). Fusion is registered as a charity, but that is a tax avoidance measure - they keep our money to invest in their administrative overheads (ie management salaries) and leisure facilities elsewhere in the country, not in Oxford. And Labour? As well as buying votes in their Blackbird Leys stronghold, they believe they are capping the cost of a long-running leisure problem. Not so - the costs of the new pool to the taxpayer are not fixed, and will just skyrocket, and all for a facility that is only designed to last 25 years!

This white elephant of a vanity project shows a Labour administration committed to wasteful greenhouse gas emissions and who in an era of supposed austerity are content to spend £16m of our money when £3m keeping existing facilities is what the people of Oxford have shown they want.

In conclusion, I would urge all councillors to revisit this issue with an 'open mind', imagine that perhaps the briefings you get from the council leisure department may not be all that they seem, and look at the campaign website for a rounded view reflecting the reality of what your voters want from you. More and more we are hearing that ignoring your voters now means that they will ignore you when you want their votes next May.

At the City Executive Board next week the Labour administration will no doubt vote the way the Leisure Department wants them to, to proceed to build the proposed new pool at Blackbird Leys. The public will then have three months in which to challenge the decision through a judicial review. If that fails, we will be committed to a £16m vanity project that only vested interest and very few people want. Please look again at what the people you represent actually want, see what evidence rather than propaganda shows, and keep Temple Cowley Pools open.

Response to council address on the competition standard pool

The case for the competition standard pool adjoined to Blackbird Leys Leisure Centre has been consistently made through the due process over the past two years. The case is compelling on the grounds of; cost, carbon, access, usage, quality and sustainability. All relevant documentation and consultation has been published on the leisure pages of the council's website (www.oxford.gov.uk) and all the questions received to date continue to be responded to and added to the website. The points raised are not new and factual information has been provided on numerous occasions.

As such this response is only intended to ensure that those members who are not close to the project are not confused by any misinformation.

Inaccuracies in the address	Factual position
<i>Why spend £16m on a 25 metre pool when £3m will refurbish and improve two facilities enabling them to remain open for 20 years.</i>	The cost for the new pool is £8.5m (this includes fees and contingencies). The 16m figure includes the cost of borrowing. The construction cost for the pool itself is £6.5m-7m. It is therefore the £6.5m-7m figure that the £3m should be compared with. The maintenance backlog at TCP alone is £2.3m. By spending £3m on these sites there would be minimal visible improvements to the customer. The lifespan would not be extended by 20-25 years, but approximately seven. The new pool would have a lifespan of approximately 60 years not the 25 years that Mr Gibson has stated.
<i>The council claims that TCP costs over half a million to run.</i>	Temple Cowley Pools is subsidised by the council by just over half a million pounds a year.
<i>The greens have agreed a budget with the head of finance that would keep the pool running for the next 25 years.</i>	The head of finance has only agreed the proposed budget; it is not his role to review the impact that the proposed expenditure will have.
TCP is energy efficient	Temple Cowley Pools has by far the highest carbon footprint of our leisure centres. Temple Cowley Pools has numerous design and building fabric problems, TCP would not be more energy efficient than a new modern pool. The new pool is proposed to have a biomass boiler, modern energy efficiency measures and a combined heat and power unit. The design of the new pool is classed as <i>very good</i> in relation environmental adaptations and the current design is close to being one of a handful of sites nationwide that are classified as <i>excellent</i> .
<i>There is no demand for a pool in Blackbird Leys</i>	While the new pool would be a city wide facility our research shows that the facility would receive in the region of 400,000 visits a year.
<i>The existing facilities have over 450,000 visits a year</i>	While we continue to work hard to increase participation we have certainly not been this successful. The combined usage at both TCP and BLP last year was 256,000.
<i>Fusion benefit massively from the council closing the two facilities.</i>	The benefit Fusion attains is that they will be operating a modern, fit for purpose site. As charitable social enterprise any profits are re-invested into leisure and the council attain the majority share of any profits.
30 staff will be cut	We are planning for zero redundancies. This will be a managed process with staff transferring to the new pool, or vacancies at other sites. Fusion are taking on five apprentices and have created new posts in the contract.
The costs are not capped and they will skyrocket	The operating costs are capped, the only changes would be changes we request to service delivery, or reductions in the fee from continued improvements in the centres.

Note – The diving pool at Temple Cowley has now been closed for nine years and there are no diving clubs in the city.

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Martha:

Dear Council, my name is Martha McKenzie and I am the Oxford University Students Union President – or OUSU President for short.

OUSU represents the student body to the University and the wider Oxford community. OUSU is useful to you as councillors because rather than seeking to work with 44 different Colleges around Oxford you can come to us as your main port of call.

As well as myself OUSU employs 5 other student officers. We have a Vice-President for Academic Affairs and Access, a Vice-President for Graduates, a Vice-President for Welfare and Equal Opportunities, a Vice-President for Women and a Vice President for Charities and Community who will introduce himself shortly.

What I'd like to say in closing is that I'm sure many of you here are aware of the positive impact students are having while in Oxford – with the volunteering work of the Oxford Hub and fundraising efforts of RAG to name but two – And I am here to signal the intent of OUSU to work more closely with members of council and with all Oxford residents to build a world class city for everyone.

Daniel:

Dear Council, my name is Daniel Stone and I am the OUSU Vice President for Charities and Community

My title gives away the fact that community liaison work falls directly under my portfolio although I also oversee the charitable arm of the Students Union (RAG), the Environment and Ethics Campaign, and the Living Wage Campaign. So if you have a particular interest in any of these aforementioned areas please let me know.

Like Martha I really want to signal my intent over the coming year to work closely with members of council on issues of mutual and perhaps not so mutual interest.

The vacation is the ideal time for us to open a dialogue on the various issues and topics we can work on together over the coming year. So if you'd like to meet please send me an email at community@ousu.org

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Address to General Council meeting to be held on
the 11th July '11.

Lora Mayor and councillors,

Thank you for giving me the opportunity to address you once again on the subject of 'Un-parished Areas' tax or 'special expenses' tax.

I promised you on the last occasion that I would raise this subject till I received a honest and fair explanation or the ruling LAMBOR administration can JUSTIFY that it is reasonable for deprived areas to bear the costs of parks, cemeteries etc as I outlined previously and meet the 'short falls' of taxes not collected.

I consider this tax as a STEALTH tax introduced to receive the public if the true rate increase and therefore should be abolished. The items paid for by this tax is enjoyed by all citizens, therefore these items should be included in the City Wide Tax.

I am aware that the Director of Finance has explained to councillor Ed Turner, and I quote ... 'In short if a parish precepts for a particular function legally we can not charge those same residents for that function again, hence we have to levy a 'special expense' for those particular functions across the residual areas of the City. ...

I reiterate my answer ...
... All items and functions enjoyed by the public should be included in the City Wide Tax.

I would also like to remind councillors that Parish Councils have the benefit of being able to administer their funds as they wish and appoint their own professional accountants, lawyers etc to manage their day to day expenses.

I can not understand why members of this council are reluctant to have a meeting to discuss this issue.

... ..

With reference to HOUSING we are told that the Council requires more 'social' and affordable housing, therefore it comes as a shock to find speculators moving in to purchase new properties which were targeted to meet the demand of those on low incomes.

Do councillors read the contracts prepared by officers?

We are told that in the 'contracts' between the Council, OCHA, and the developer Taylor Wimpey, 30% of the houses built in Rose-hill can be purchased by individuals provided no one individual, purchases more than 15%.

Figures that have been forwarded to me are as follows:

... Taylor Wimpey confirmed on Friday last week (20th May 2011) that out of the 113 properties designated for private sale, 108 have been sold to date and, of these, the maximum number sold to a single purchaser is 9 and the total number sold to purchasers buying more than one unit is 13. ...

Considering that the Council gave away this land in Rose-hill and the tenants and residents association were given to understand that those on the Council's waiting list would be housed, I feel that they could rightly say they have been CHEATED.

Thank you.

J. A. V. Rainier.

VIM RODRIGO,
RIVERMEAD ROAD,
ROSE-HILL
OXFORD.

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