

# **COUNCIL**

**Monday 25 February 2013**

**COUNCILLORS PRESENT:** Councillors Armitage (Lord Mayor), Abbasi (Deputy Lord Mayor), Sinclair (Sheriff), Altaf-Khan, Baxter, Benjamin, Campbell, Canning, Clack, Cook, Coulter, Curran, Darke, Fooks, Fry, Hollick, Humberstone, Jones, Kennedy, Khan, Lloyd-Shogbesan, Lygo, Malik, McCready, Pressel, Price, Rundle, Sanders, Seamons, Simmons, Turner, Wilkinson, Williams and Wolff.

## **119. MINUTES**

No minutes had been submitted as this item had been dealt with at the meeting of Council held on 18<sup>th</sup> February 2013.

## **120. DECLARATIONS OF INTERESTS**

None declared.

## **121. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE**

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Tony Brett, Mary Clarkson, John Goddard, Michael Gotch, Mick Haines, Joe McManners, Mark Mills, Helen O'Hara, Mike Rowley, Gwynneth Royce, Val Smith, John Tanner and Oscar Van Nooijen.

## **122. APPOINTMENT TO COMMITTEES**

No appointments were made.

## **123. LORD MAYOR'S ANNOUNCEMENTS**

The Lord Mayor informed Council of the recent death of Fred Ingram former City Councillor, Lord Mayor (1973/74), Deputy Lord Mayor (1971/72), Sheriff (1982/83) and Alderman (1967-74).

Council stood for a minutes silence as a mark of respect.

## **124. SHERIFF'S ANNOUNCEMENTS**

No announcements were made.

## **125. ANNOUNCEMENTS BY THE LEADER OF THE COUNCIL**

The Leader made the following announcements:

- (1) Wished to pay tribute to Fred Ingram and highlighted that apart from his service on the City Council, he was also was a founding member of the form OAP's Club in Gloucester Green which he also helped manage for many years.
- (2) The nominations to Civic Posts for the Council Year 2013/14:  
  
Lord Mayor – Councillor Dee Sinclair  
Deputy Lord Mayor – Councillor Tony Brett  
Sheriff – Councillor Mohammed Niaz Abbasi
- (3) The City Deal which Oxford had been successful in achieving was progressing apace and that a formal meeting with the Cabinet Office would be taking place in early March 2013. Council would continue to receive regular updates.

## **126. ANNOUNCEMENTS BY THE CHIEF EXECUTIVE, THE CHIEF FINANCE OFFICER AND THE MONITORING OFFICER**

No announcements were made.

## **127. ADDRESSES BY THE PUBLIC**

Council received (previously circulated, now appended) three addresses to Council from members of the public.

- (1) William Clark – Managing the family budget
- (2) Nigel Gibson – Temple Cowley Pools Petition
- (3) Jane Alexander – Temple Cowley Pools and recycling

## **128. QUESTIONS BY THE PUBLIC**

Three questions were submitted by members of the public as follows:

- (1) **Question to the Board Member, Leisure (Councillor Van Coulter) from Nigel Gibson**

### Action following submission of petition

At the last Council meeting, a petition with 1,666 signatures concerning university building in Roger Dudman way and the view across Port Meadow was rightly supported by Council, who immediately responded by instituting an enquiry, and now, we hear, discussions with the University to remedy the situation. Why did Council not respond with similar speed and decisiveness when a 12,000 signature petition to keep Temple Cowley Pools open, affecting the health and well-being of thousands of people across Oxford, was presented to council?

**Response:** The Council takes all petitions seriously. Having considered and debated the matter, Council then resolved to take action, weighing the views in the petition with all the other factors that must be taken into account.

**(2) Question to the Board Member, Leisure (Councillor Van Coulter) from Sarah Lasenby**

Fusion Leisure Contract

At the last Full Council meeting a question was asked by Nigel Gibson concerning the payments to Fusion Lifestyle as the information then available did not add up. But the answer given did not answer this question in anyway as far as I could see. This really shocked me as the Council has a policy to make information publicly open and transparent. In this case it did not happen.

I am confused; did the Councillor or whoever constructed the answer for him, not agree with the policy of openness or with the Contract or what? Please could I have an answer to the question this time? Can you please publish a breakdown by Leisure Centre and by year of the payments to Fusion Lifestyle up to the end of this financial year? You show the totals and I should be grateful if you could show how these are made up.

**Response:** At the commencement of the leisure facilities contract with Fusion Lifestyles, an annual fee was agreed for the running of leisure facilities in the City. This payment is a maximum guaranteed payment for the whole contract and it is not reliant upon the performance of any particular leisure centre. The payment is not broken down by centre. Therefore it is not possible to show the payments by centres as there is not one. In order to make comparisons of operations for the development of facilities the Council has estimated the net costs of the Temple Cowley Pools and the Blackbird Leys Pool. The Council has been open and transparent about these estimates.

**(3) Question to the Leader of the Council (Councillor Bob Price) from Jane Alexander**

Ethical Procurement

At the last Full Council meeting, there was a motion proposed by Councillor Hollick that was out of time for debate. It asked Council to enforce an ethical procurement approach by not using suppliers operating tax avoidance schemes. Will the Leader of the Council endorse this approach, and instruct the Chief Executive to cancel the contract with Fusion Lifestyle who operated a tax avoidance scheme through its charitable status?

**Response:** Councillor Hollick was not getting at the issues of Charities using their charitable status to recycle surpluses into their charitable purposes and I have no intention of asking Fusion Lifestyle to do anything different from what they do at the moment.

## **129. HOMELESS STRATEGY AND ACTION PLAN 2013 TO 2018 AND FUTURE POLICY IN RELATION TO SECURING PRIVATE SECTOR TENANCIES FOR HOMELESS HOUSEHOLDS**

Council had before it the report of the Head of Housing together with a minute extract from the City Executive Board held on 13<sup>th</sup> February 2013. (All documents previously circulated, now appended).

Councillor Scott Seamons moved the report.

Following a debate, Council agreed:

- (a) To approve the Homelessness Strategy and Action Plan 2013 to 2018;
- (b) To note the commencement of additional powers introduced by virtue of the Localism Act 2011 related to the Council fulfilling its duties by securing a private sector tenancy for statutory homeless households;
- (c) To approve the policy as outlined in Appendix D of the report as Council Policy;
- (d) To delegate authority to the Head of Housing to implement the policy together with any minor changes that may come forward due to any subsequent revisions or clarifications to Government guidance and any ensuing case law.

## **130. CITY EXECUTIVE BOARD DECISIONS (MINUTES) AND SINGLE EXECUTIVE MEMBER DECISIONS (MINUTES)**

Council had before it minutes (previously circulated, now appended) of the City Executive Board and Single Executive Member meetings held since the last meeting of Full Council.

- (a) City Executive Board Decisions – 19<sup>th</sup> December 2012 (Minutes)

No questions were raised and Council noted the minutes.

### City Executive Board Decisions – 13<sup>th</sup> February 2013 (Minutes)

- (1) Minute 89 – Community Grant Allocations for 2013/2014.

Councillor Simmons was unhappy that the Cowley Road Carnival had not been included. He asked what the current position was with the £50k social inclusion grant which had not been released and suggested that it should apply to the organisations who had not been successful in the grants process.

In response Councillor Curran said that some of the grant applications received had met the criteria for funding and some had not. He added some of those that were unsuccessful would receive grants from the Youth Ambition fund.

Councillor Jones asked for confirmation that the application forms for the Social Inclusion funding were available.

In response Councillor Price said that the criteria had been established, but the forms were not yet available. Regarding comments from Councillors concerning the Cowley Road Carnival he said that the organisers had been in discussion with Council Officers from the Events Team on a service level agreement and funding options.

- (2) Minute 90 – Housing Allocations Scheme – Consultation Draft – Councillor Hollick asked if the Council had to have such restrictive conditions on tenants concerning the bedroom tax. In response Councillor Seamons said that the Council would not put people into accommodation they could not afford.

Councillor Turner said that he was uncomfortable with the changes being forced upon the Council and was unhappy that the Government continued to press forward the changes and putting people into these difficult situations.

- (3) Minute 92 – Green Spaces Strategy – Consultation Outcome – Councillor Rundle asked if this was a strategy and if it was why it had not come to Council. In response Jeremy Thomas, Head of Law and Governance informed Council that it did not form part of the policy framework and so did not require adoption by Council. He added that there was an overarching Leisure Strategy which would be coming to Council for adoption and the Green Spaces Strategy sat under this Leisure Strategy.

Councillor Benjamin welcomed the list of consultees and suggested that maybe some should have been consulted on the Roger Dudman Way development.

Councillor Fooks said that it was important to look after the green spaces in the City, but she still had concerns over the countryside aspect of the strategy.

- (4) Minute 93 – City Deal – Councillor Williams said that previous experience had taught him that the Government comes in on initiatives such as this and starts to change things. He stressed that the Council should keep control of the whole process.

In response Councillor Price said that the City Deal was a partnership and the Council did not have the locus to take control. He added that he would continue to provide regular updates to Council.

- (b) Single Executive Member Decision (Board Member, Finance and Efficiency) (Minutes) – 25<sup>th</sup> January 2013

No questions were taken as the time allowed for this item had been reached.

## 131. RECOMMENDATIONS AND REPORTS FROM SCRUTINY AND OTHER COMMITTEES

No recommendations or reports from the Scrutiny or other Committees were submitted.

## 132. QUESTIONS ON NOTICE FROM MEMBERS OF COUNCIL

- (1) **Question to the Board Member, Young People, Education and Community Development (Councillor Steve Curran) from Councillor Jean Fooks**

### Youth Ambition Fund

Could you give Council a report on how the £240k 'Youth Ambition' fund has been spent this financial year?

**Response:** To develop a sustainable programme that makes a real difference to young people's lives we are taking a strategic approach. Initial steps have been to work with Anna Wright (Educational Advisor) to develop an up to date understanding of needs. This work is being supported through the Local Government Association's 'Roots to Success' programme which provides free consultancy support to improve services for young people. We have also worked with partners to attain a better understanding of what is already being delivered and understand opportunities for more joined up work. This work has provided the information to develop a Youth Ambition Strategy which will come to the City Executive Board on the 10<sup>th</sup> April.

Coupled with this we have also launched our youth ambition grants which will see £50,000 per year awarded to voluntary and community groups. We will increasingly support these groups to build their capacity and help them attain funding from other sources. We have also launched a free access session at Blackbird Leys Leisure Centre and continued sessions at Wood Farm and Court Place Farm that would have otherwise not been funded. We are also sponsoring the Youth Awards which take place on the 21<sup>st</sup> February. To resource this work we have recruited two people who will help to deliver the programme.

This leaves just over £100,000 which we intend to roll over into the new financial year for match funding bids; one such bid has just been submitted to Sport England.

Councillor Fooks in a supplementary question asked for more information on the new recruits, Councillor Curran agreed to supply this to Councillor Fooks.

- (2) **Question to the Board Member, Cleaner, Greener Oxford (Councillor John Tanner) from Councillor Jean Fooks**

### Payment for garden waste bags

I see that the Administration is proposing to save £20k by insisting that residents pay by direct debit for garden waste bags. This is blatantly discriminatory and unfair. Will you confirm that the saving can be made by offering a direct debit facility but continuing to accept cash or cheques, as well as debit card transactions, in future?

**Response:** although we will encourage direct debits it will still be possible to pay by cash or cheque.

### **133. STATEMENTS ON NOTICE FROM MEMBERS OF COUNCIL**

No statements on notice from Members of Council were submitted.

### **134. PETITIONS**

There were no petitions to consider and debate.

### **135. MOTIONS ON NOTICE**

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

(1) **Winter fuel poverty – (Proposer Councillor Anne-Marie Canning, seconder Councillor Van Coulter)**

The Council notes:

1. Already 1 in 4 households in the UK are in fuel poverty, meaning they need to spend more than 10% of their income on keeping their homes warm. Average bills over £1,247 per annum. The problem is likely to get worse, with 1 in 3 households projected to be in fuel poverty by 2016. Council notes that this will affect thousands of households in Oxford.
2. The main reasons for this crisis are that gas, oil and coal prices are high, and the UK's homes are some of the most energy inefficient in Europe – leaking heat from their doors, walls and windows.
3. Cold homes are damaging the health of vulnerable members of society, including children, older people and people with disabilities. Diseases such as asthma are made worse, and people are more likely to have strokes and heart attacks. Illnesses caused by cold homes cost the NHS nearly one billion pounds each year.
4. Over the next 15 years the Government will raise an average of £4 billion every year in carbon taxes through the European Emissions Trading Scheme and the Carbon Floor Price. Recycling this revenue back into households could bring 9 out of 10 homes out of fuel poverty, lower people's bills, cut carbon emissions and create jobs.

The Council therefore resolves to:

1. Council encourages the City Executive Board to focus upon reducing fuel poverty in Oxford by any means possible and to develop fuel poverty action plan.
2. Support the Energy Bill Revolution campaign calling for the Government to recycle revenues from carbon taxes into improving the energy efficiency of UK homes.

***Councillor Jean Fooks seconded by Councillor Graham Jones moved an amendment:***

*To add a third point as follows:*

3. *Ask the Chief Executive to write to the city's MPs asking them to support all measures, including encouraging households to make use of the Green Deal where appropriate, to improve the energy efficiency of UK homes.*

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

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1. Already 1 in 4 households in the UK are in fuel poverty, meaning they need to spend more than 10% of their income on keeping their homes warm. Average bills over £1,247 per annum. The problem is likely to get worse, with 1 in 3 households projected to be in fuel poverty by 2016. Council notes that this will affect thousands of households in Oxford.
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3. Ask the Chief Executive to write to the city's MPs asking them to support all measures, including encouraging households to make use of the Green Deal where appropriate, to improve the energy efficiency of UK homes.

**(2) Bee Colony Collapse – (Proposer Councillor David Williams, seconded Councillor Elise Benjamin)**

In line with the current petition to Government by Friends of the Earth, and the ever growing scientific evidence this Council is concerned that the Government has not followed the lead of a large numbers of European states such as France and Germany and banned the pesticides neonicotinoides .

The recently published European Food Safety Authority report that concludes that there is a clear link between falling bee populations and the use of neonicotinoides adds even more scientific evidence that these chemicals should be band.

With the recent publication of evidence from scientists at the US Department of Agriculture Bee Research Laboratory, the French National Institute for Agricultural Research and the UK's Keele University indicating strongly that the major cause of Bee Colony Collapse Disorder (BCCD) is the range of chemicals known as neonicotinoides this Council believes that there is an urgent need to protect bees in Oxfordshire from these potentially dangerous chemicals which are now being used in the UK.

The issue is of great concern in Oxfordshire for the area is known for its high quality bee keeping and breeding, the local honey firms and the large acreage that is under cultivation that requires pollination by bees.

Given that bees nationally and internationally play a vital role in maintaining food stocks this Council calls on the Secretary of State to impose an immediate ban on the pesticides sold as imidacloprid and clothianidin which are believed by the scientific community to be behind the phenomena known as BCCD. In following this approach the Minister will bring the UK in line with very large numbers of European states that have already banned the named neonicotinoid chemicals?

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

**(3) Road Deaths of Cyclists – (Proposer Councillor David Williams, seconded by Councillor Craig Simmons)**

Although there has been a decline in the number of deaths of cyclists over the last ten years on UK roads by 49% the figures for Oxfordshire are not so encouraging with a corresponding figure of only 23%? (Office of National Statistics). From the County Council's own figures the majority of the decline in the County was in the first 5 years with the numbers of those killed or seriously injured remaining essentially static for the following five.

There is no doubt a number of reasons as to why this figure is so out of line with the national average figure, especially 2011 when the annual figure increased dramatically, virtually doubling.

With this in view the City Council will work with the County Council with three clear objectives in the short, medium and long term and take into consideration the Western European models of urban traffic management that generally see half the number of fatal injuries to cyclists .

The Council cycle plan will include:

In the short term, identification of accident black spots that keep occurring in the accident statistics and make recommendations for alterations in the traffic management that will improve safety for cyclists.

In the medium terms, recognise that a primary reason for deaths and serious injuries to cyclists is integrated urban traffic especially the mix of cyclists and very heavy vehicles and to move to limiting speed, weight restrictions and other planned traffic management proposals that will cut the number of fatalities in the City and surrounding towns.

In the long term, seek to improve existing cycle lanes by removing gaps that leave cyclists unsure where they should go, maximising the provision of clearly marked separate cycle lanes on the road or on pavements if necessary and space permits, and investigating where off-road cycle tracks could be.

***Councillor Ed Turner seconded by Councillor Bob Price moved an amendment as follows:***

*To delete the third paragraph and replace with a new third paragraph with the following words:*

*With this in view the City Council will continue to develop its support for cycling safety with the County Council. Will work to include improved, safer traffic management improvements to cycle lanes, and better signposting of cycle lanes. It will encourage the County Council to consider other measures such as weight restrictions to reduce the number of accidents.*

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

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In the long term, seek to improve existing cycle lanes by removing gaps that leave cyclists unsure where they should go, maximising the provision of clearly marked separate cycle lanes on the road or on pavements if necessary and space permits, and investigating where off-road cycle tracks could be.

**(4) Break the Bag Habit Campaign – (Proposer Councillor Graham Jones)**

This Council welcomes the increasing emphasis on reducing litter and protecting the environment.

However, it

- \* notes with dismay that last year eight billion 'thin-gauge' plastic bags were issued in the UK, an increase of more than 5% over 2010;
- \* notes with interest that in Wales, where there is a 5p levy on bags, there has been a drop of up to 90%, similar to that achieved in the Republic of Ireland, that Northern Ireland is to follow suit, and that Scotland has put a similar policy out to public consultation;
- \* and notes that the Campaign to Protect Rural England, Keep Britain Tidy, and the Marine Conservation Society have launched the Break the Bag Habit Campaign, calling on the Government to introduce a levy on single-use plastic in England.

Council would like to congratulate those retailers in Oxford who have switched to issuing paper or biodegradable plastic bags to reduce damage to the environment.

In keeping with Council policy, to reduce litter as well as to limit environmental damage, Council asks the Leader to write to the City's two MPs requesting them to support the Campaign.

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

**(5) Badger Cull – (Proposer David Williams, seconder Councillor Craig Simmons)**

The Council is concerned that although the Government has temporarily suspended its proposed cull of badgers the commitment to kill these creatures may be taken up again.

This is an important issue for Oxford where the badger is one of our largest native wildlife mammals and an important animal in the bio diversity of the City.

During this period of extended consultation the Council would submit to the relevant Government Minister the conclusion that a cull of badgers is not the most cost effective way to resolve the issue of bovine TB and certainly not the most humane.

The Government should be aware of a new vaccine that is now available for cattle that safeguards against TB and does not transfer antibodies into the food chain. Such a vaccine makes culling unnecessary and a waste of public funds.

The Council believes that the monies allocated to staffing the extermination units should now be directed to an inoculation programme which would be easier to conduct, ultimately far cheaper to deliver and would save one of the gentlest animals in the Oxfordshire countryside.

Council asks the Chief Executive to write to the relevant Minister expressing these opinions on behalf of the Council.

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

**(6) Setting a carbon target – (Proposer Councillor Van Coulter, seconder Councillor Jean Fooks)**

Council notes that the long-awaited Energy Bill has at last been published by the Coalition Government.

It welcomes the establishment of a new legislative framework to deliver secure, affordable and low carbon energy and the availability of the £110 billion investment needed to replace current generating capacity and upgrade the national grid by 2020. Council notes that Government will triple the support available for electricity generation from renewables, nuclear and carbon capture and storage.

However, Council regrets that the Government has decided to defer setting a decarbonisation target until after the next general election.

This risks distracting focus from the pressing need to reduce greenhouse gas emissions and for the urgent need to increase energy efficiency to reduce demand.

The delay in target setting will make it hard for our nation to meet our long-term emissions targets under the Climate Change Act. The implications of climate risk are clear. In many respects these risks are greatest for the most vulnerable, the poor and the elderly in our communities.

Council is concerned at the immediate impact of rising energy prices while noting that Government expects that average household bills will be 7% or £94 lower by 2020.

Council reaffirms its wish to be a lead authority in tackling climate change and reducing carbon emissions. It resolves to do all it can to improve the energy efficiency of its own property and to assist home-owners and private tenants to reduce their energy usage and costs with advice and grants, including taking advantage of the Green Deal proposals.

Council instructs the Chief Executive to write to the local MP's and the Prime Minister expressing Council's concern at the omission of a decarbonisation target from the Energy Bill, putting at risk the Government's claim to be the greenest Government ever.

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

### **136. REPORTS AND QUESTIONS ABOUT ORGANISATIONS THE COUNCIL IS REPRESENTED ON**

Councillor Fooks with regard to the Local Enterprise Partnership asked why the funding issue of the lighting at the Cutteslowe roundabout had not been reported.

In response Councillor Price said that this had been news to him and was speculative, but he did confirm that the A34 bid had been put forward.

Councillor Williams said that this agenda item was open to all Councillor to questions those on other organisation. He said that the Scrutiny and Wellbeing Board had a City Council representative on it and that rather than Members having to ask for a report back, representatives should do this as part of the norm. Councillors were not being kept informed on important issues.

In response, Councillor Price said that this issue would be considered as part of the Governance Review currently underway.

### **137. KEY DECISIONS - ALIGNMENT OF THE FINANCIAL LIMITS WITHIN THE CONSTITUTION**

The Head of Law and Governance/Monitoring Officer submitted a report (previously circulated, now appended) the purpose of which was to align the

Councils financial definition of a key decision with the financial limits for officer approvals of projects and acceptance of contracts.

Council agreed that the definition of a key decision in financial terms be increased to £500,000 to align with project approval and contract acceptance figures in the Constitution, and to authorise the Monitoring Officer to make the necessary constitutional changes.

### **138. REVIEW OF POLLING DISTRICTS AND POLLING PLACES FOLLOWING A BOUNDARY REVIEW OF OXFORDSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL DIVISIONS**

The Head of Law and Governance submitted a report (previously circulated, now appended) which sought approval of the revised schedule of polling districts and polling places for the administrative area of the City Council as required by the Electoral Administration Act 2006, following the review of Oxfordshire County Council division boundaries.

Council agreed:

- (a) To approve the schedule of polling districts and polling places as detailed in the report;
- (b) To reaffirm its decision to give the Returning Officer the delegated power to make changes to polling stations in emergencies.

### **139. COUNCIL TAX 2013/14**

The Head of Finance submitted a report (previously circulated, now appended) which set out the necessary calculations to enable Council to set the 2013/14 Council Tax for Oxford City, in accordance with the Local Government Finance Acts, 1988 and 1992, as amended by the Localism Act 2011.

Council agreed:

- (a) To approve for 2013-14:
  - (1) The City Council's precept and Council Tax requirement of £11,228,070 (inclusive of Parish Precepts). Net of the Parish Precepts, the figure is £11,073,898.
  - (2) The average Band D Council Tax figure (excluding Parishes) of £268.19 a 1.99% increase on the 2012/13 figure of £262.96. Including Parish Precepts the figure is £271.93, a 1.83% increase on the 2012/13 figure of £267.05 (paragraph 13 of the Officer report).
  - (3) The contribution of £10,000 to the Parish of Old Marston in recognition of the additional expenditure that the Parish incurs as a consequence of maintaining the cemetery (paragraphs 20 and 21 of the Officer report).

- (4) The amount of £480,238 to be treated as Special Expenses (paragraph 24 of the Officer report).
- (5) The Band D Council Taxes for the various areas of the City (excluding the Police and County Council's additions) as follows:-

Littlemore £286.32  
Old Marston £296.33  
Risinghurst and Sandhills £284.37  
Blackbird Leys £265.50  
Unparished Area £270.39

These figures include the Parish Precepts and special expensing amounts as appropriate on top of the City-wide Council Tax of £256.56.

(b) To note:

- (6) Oxfordshire County Council's precept and Band D Council Tax as set out in paragraph 27 of the Officers report.
- (7) The Police and Crime Commissioner for the Thames Valley's precept and Band D Council Tax as set out in paragraph 28 of the Officers report, and
- (8) The overall average Band D equivalent Council Tax of £1,614.14 including Parish Precepts.

**The meeting started at 5.00 pm and ended at 7.00 pm**

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## Managing the family budget – Address by William Clark

We are currently experiencing the worst recession in British history and heading to even more misery with ever greater demands on the British public for their hard earned money.

The present government has imposed swinging cuts in a vain attempt to reduce this country's financial deficits and to what end. They pass on to you, local government, even further reductions in central funding so in order for you to meet the shortfalls you pass these demands on to the residents of Oxford in increased tax bills in order for you to ensure some of our services remain in some shape or form.

What I am getting to is the fact that there is only a limited amount of money you can squeeze out of the residents there comes a time when it just is not tenable to continue these demands from the loyal citizens and eventually they reject your claims stating the obvious "YOU CAN NOT GET BLOOD OUT OF A STONE". Who knows where the money for compensation will come from following the Port Meadow fiasco?

The proposed new swimming facility on Blackbird Leys you are endeavouring to construct will not be a viable proposition because of the ever increasing demand on our money and to decide whether to go swimming or heat the room will be a no brainer. The demand for such a facility will decrease to the point where it becomes untenable with the only users being schools and the swimming club.

At the moment we have two facilities that with a little love and attention and a fraction of the cost could be refurbished to continue the pleasures of the swimming public for some time to come, there is obviously support for them as they continue to get great support in the form of signatures in petitions, so why is it that you still intend to lavish vast quantities of funding on something that will fall foul of this recession.

We have managed to garner support for the aging Oxford Stadium so surely that must give hope for these two swimming pools, do the right thing and resist the need to line the pockets of contractors who are eagerly lining up to fleece the council for everything they can. Stop the new pool build and listen to what the public are saying.

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## Address by Nigel Gibson, Head Petitioner, in support of a Petition to Oxford City Council, February 2013

The Labour-controlled City Council's decision to close Temple Cowley Pools and Fitness Centre, blatantly ignoring the wishes of the people of Oxford, and in so doing deliberately removing publicly funded facilities from thousands of people inside the ring road in East Oxford, remains the biggest single issue in the city, even after three years of campaigning. These facilities offer so many people the opportunity to exercise and maintain and improve their quality of life, in a place where they want to do it.

A petition with over 1,500 signatures forces the Labour councillors, clearly on the basis of previous debates against their will, to face up to what they have done on behalf of vested interests. These vested interests include selling off the Temple Cowley site for student accommodation, ultimately for Oxford Brookes University, and improving the profits of Fusion Leisure, operators of the Council's leisure facilities, by getting rid of over thirty jobs.

The first petition, over 12,000 signatures, was simply ignored by the Labour councillors, who poured scorn on it. Since then we have regularly collected signatures for a series of petitions, the one being presented this evening being the sixth. All told, over 20,000 signatures.

The topic for this petition was inspired by a remark made by a LibDem councillor when the last petition was debated. He suggested that getting round a table and discussing things would be a good idea; and we agree. Doing that in the first place would have saved a lot of time and money. We've been trying to do that since the start of the Campaign, but the Council don't want that to happen because they would have to admit the information that supports their case for closure is a combination of misleading, inaccurate, incomplete and untrue, something we have demonstrated time and again.

The other reason for discussing this issue openly and transparently is simply because THINGS HAVE CHANGED since the Council made their decision.

The costs have spiralled from an estimate of £3m, then £4.5m, then £5.5m, through to £6.5m ('definitely a maximum figure'), then £9.2m, over £11m and if you include additional supporting costs over £13m....

The demographics have changed. At one time the proposed new swimming pool would have been at the centre of a diamond of housing, as the last Labour government intended concreting over the green space between Abingdon and South Oxford. The latest Census figures reveal that the highest population growth over the last ten years has been in Cowley Marsh, where Temple Cowley Pools and Fitness Centre is situated - an increase of 41%, and big increases as a whole across East Oxford within the ring road. And housing in this area continues to increase. Previously the Blackbird Leys population had been the big number, but not any more - the area

Address by Nigel Gibson, Head Petitioner, in support of a  
Petition to Oxford City Council, February 2013

around Temple Cowley now has at least that number of residents, and it is in a place where we know people want to use it. In contrast, Blackbird Leys has grown very little in ten years, and there is absolutely no information on how many people there would actually make any use at all of a new swimming pool on their doorstep. The Council has not dared actually ask the questions that would establish what demand there is for a new swimming pool, or whereabouts in the City this would come from. That's because they know the answer already, and it wouldn't justify closing both Temple Cowley Pools and the existing Blackbird Leys swimming pools, each of which has a different intended group of users. And Labour has consistently 'found' demand only by knocking on doors and giving their version of what they thought happened. We've not on those same doors and found that support for the pool was given based on misinformation. The Council repeats the same mantra, that the proposed new swimming pool is a 'citywide facility', but with nothing that justifies its statements.

The political climate has changed; there are heavy curbs on local government spending, and an investment of this size, when there is a much better value alternative, must surely be constantly questioned?

When there are major changes in circumstances such as these, a local authority, in this case Oxford City Council, has a legal obligation to review its decision. So the petition gives the Council, and Labour, the opportunity to do just that.

The petition reads as follows:

*"We call on Oxford City Council to enable Council officers and members of the Save Temple Cowley Pools Campaign to hold a series of meetings where they can discuss, identify and clarify areas of common understanding based on a full, open and transparent exchange of information. These meetings should be apolitical, jointly chaired, open to the public and develop a consensus so that we can agree a way forward that will benefit the people of Oxford"*

**More than 20,000 people have signed our petitions and asked the Council to think again. The Campaign continues because of this huge and continuing support across Oxford and beyond, while the Labour-controlled Council seems determined to ignore the views of so many thousands of people. For more information email [savetcp@gmail.com](mailto:savetcp@gmail.com) and visit the Campaign website <http://tiny.cc/savetcp>.**

## Address to Council from Jane Alexander

The last time I spoke at a Full Council meeting in December I asked why there was no recycling bins at Temple Cowley Pools and that the blue collection box I had provided some years earlier had been removed and the staff were now telling me that not only did they not do any recycling now, that they had never done recycling at that site!

The recycling bins are clearly available at other Fusion Lifestyle run sites so why not at Temple Cowley?

Councillor Tanner answered that he would immediately get on and find out what had gone wrong. To me the word immediately means right away or very soon but almost three months have passed and I still see staff at TCP emptying all waste including recyclables into black PLASTIC bags and throwing them into the green 'non-recyclable' waste.

I have had no feedback from Cllr Tanner and it would seem that he has done nothing to rectify this.

I am also concerned to see that the regular care of the building is not being well carried out at Temple Cowley Pools. It is the responsibility of the council to ensure that the money they give to Fusion Lifestyle to run the centre is well spent and that all cleaning and regular maintenance is carried out fully.

Despite these things the numbers of users at TCP are still well up and new people are joining every day. Something to do with the location being so accessible!

When the time comes to replace TCP and that shouldn't be for at least 25 years from now according to the council's own condition survey, then there is a site which suits everyone much better than Blackbird Leys.

The swimming club have said they "don't mind where it is, people have cars so location doesn't matter". "We just want to be able to hold more Galas and Meets each weekend in good, well maintained pool". "If they open a 50 metre at Didcot we would probably go there".

Blackbird Leys people need to know that the Club have held at least ten events where the whole TCPools are closed to the public all days in the last three months and these are always at weekends.

If the council is so set on building a new pool for the people who at present use TCP then why not build it at the Council's own Cowley Marsh Site (which is soon to be vacated) adjacent to Cowley Marsh Recreation Park. This would mean it is still accessible to many and convenient for buses with space for parking.

Building a new wet and dry site at Cowley Marsh, with competition pool with all timing equipment etc and full competition seating, training pool with moveable floor, with environmental rigid covers, 6 tennis courts, two squash courts, exercise/dance studios, **80** station gym, sauna and steam rooms, crèche, cafe PLUS improving the facilities at the present Blackbird Leys Pool

improved disabled facilities, improved changing rooms, training pool and water slide/flume, enlarged entrance area with cafe, could all be built for less than the amount this council proposes to spend on just one swimming pool, one training pool and a 'splash area' at Blackbird Leys, by employing the right high-standard Pool Construction Consultant Company suggested by the ASA.

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In the light of this and the fact they the council have based their figures of proposed pool use of 2001 figures of population in Blackbird Leys, Cowley and East Oxford which have changed considerably in the intervening years, it is time to stop this plan to build this new pool at Blackbird Leys now.

It is now time to stop this present proposal and meet with those of us who are in touch with the people of Oxford including many at Blackbird Leys and construct a plan which will be acceptable to the majority.

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