

Minutes of a meeting of the **COUNCIL** on Monday 27 November 2017

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Council members:

Councillor Fooks (Lord Mayor)	Councillor Simm (Deputy Lord Mayor)
Councillor Altaf-Khan (Sheriff)	Councillor Abbasi
Councillor Azad	Councillor Brandt
Councillor Brown	Councillor Chapman
Councillor Clarkson	Councillor Cook
Councillor Curran	Councillor Fry
Councillor Gant	Councillor Goddard
Councillor Haines	Councillor Hayes
Councillor Henwood	Councillor Hollingsworth
Councillor Iley-Williamson	Councillor Kennedy
Councillor Ladbrooke	Councillor Landell Mills
Councillor Lloyd-Shogbesan	Councillor Malik
Councillor Munkonge	Councillor Paule
Councillor Pressel	Councillor Price
Councillor Rowley	Councillor Sanders
Councillor Simmons	Councillor Sinclair
Councillor Smith	Councillor Tanner
Councillor Tarver	Councillor Taylor
Councillor Tidball	Councillor Turner
Councillor Upton	Councillor Wade
Councillor Wilkinson	Councillor Wolff

Apologies:

Councillors Anwar, Goff, Humberstone, Lygo and Thomas sent apologies.

Minute's silence in memory of Councillor Jennifer Pegg

Council stood for a minute's silence in memory of Councillor Jennifer Pegg who had died suddenly on 23 November 2017.

54. Apologies for absence and lateness

Councillor Turner sent apologies for lateness and arrived at the start of Minute 65.

55. Declarations of interest

Gordon Mitchell, Interim Chief Executive, declared that as he was the subject of the report at Minute 61 he would leave the room for that item.

56. Minutes

Council agreed to approve the minutes of the meeting of 20 October as a correct record and the Lord Mayor should sign these as such.

57. Appointment to Committees

Councillor Price proposed and Council agreed the following appointments to the vacancies left by the death of Councillor Pegg:

- Scrutiny Committee – Councillor Paule
- West Area Planning Committee –Councillor Tidball

58. Announcements

The Lord Mayor reported on the Remembrance Day and Remembrance Sunday ceremonies and on visits from French and Cuban dignitaries.

She drew Council's attention to forthcoming events:

- The Lord Mayor's Christmas Reception on 11 December – please notify attendance and guests
- The Lord Mayor's Carol Service on 17 December

She welcomed the new Monitoring Officer Anita Bradley and thanked the previous Monitoring Officer Lindsay Cane for his service over the past year.

The Sheriff reported on the admissions ceremony for 6 new hereditary Freeman of the City on 9 November and the annual Freeman's dinner.

There were no announcements from the Leader or senior officers.

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

There were no public speakers on this section.

60. Museum of Oxford Hidden Histories Redevelopment Project

Council considered a report from the Head of Community Services seeking approval of the revised project budget for the Museum of Oxford Hidden Histories Redevelopment Project.

Councillor Sinclair, Board Member for Culture and Communities, presented the report and moved the recommendations.

Council resolved to:

1. increase the project's overall capital budget by £611,754 to £2,842,804 and the Councils capital contribution from £315,000 to £1,340,106 to be financed by prudential borrowing in accordance with paragraphs 22 and 25 of the report; and
2. note the increase in the Councils revenue budget in respect of the additional cost of operating the new museum of £30k per annum with effect from 2020/21 which will be raised during the forthcoming budget setting process (paragraph 28 of the report).

61. Extension of contract of Interim Chief Executive to 2020

Gordon Mitchell, Interim Chief Executive, left the room for the duration of this item as he was the subject of the report before Council.

Council considered a report from the Executive Director Organisational Development and Corporate Services asking for approval of the recommendation of the Appointments Committee to extend the Interim Chief Executive's fixed term contract until 31 December 2020

Councillor Price, Leader of the Council, presented the report and moved the recommendations.

Council resolved to:

agree the recommendation from the Appointments Committee for a 3 year extension to the Interim Chief Executive's current fixed-term contract to 31st December 2020.

62. City Executive Board Minutes

a) Minutes of meeting Monday 16 October 2017 of City Executive Board

There were no questions on these minutes.

63. Questions on Notice from Members of Council

34 written questions on notice were submitted. These, written responses, and 24 supplementary questions and responses are set out in the supplement to these minutes.

The conclusion of this item (from questions 21 onwards) was deferred until after Minute 63 to allow the public speakers to be heard at 7pm.

64. Public addresses and questions that do not relate to matters for decision at this Council meeting

Four speakers addressed Council, making five speeches.

1. Dr Ramzy spoke in support of the decision at the preceding Special Council meeting to remove the Freedom of the City from Aung San Suu Kyi
2. Niels, Chair, Summertown Stars AFC and Richard Lawrence-Wilson spoke requesting Council to rebuild the pavilion at Five Mile Drive Recreation Ground
3. Elise Benjamin spoke requesting Council to ensure provision of the agreed cycle parking at Westgate
4. Artwell spoke about the need for public accountability for the Oxford Direct Services Company
5. Artwell spoke about the need for the Standards Committee to be apolitical and asked for an independent Chair.

In addition to the response from the Board Member, Councillor Sanders (Standards Committee Chair) and Councillor Wade (Standards Committee member) made points of personal explanation to defend their actions questioned in the speech.

One speaker asked questions of the relevant Board member:

6. Judith Harley asked about the applications of Local Plan policy SR2 and Councillor Hollingsworth responded.

The full text of these speeches and question where these were read as submitted; responses from the Board Members in writing before the meeting; and summaries of verbal responses given at the meeting are in the supplement to these minutes.

65. Petition submitted in accordance with Council procedure rules – Oxford City Council must fix the blue hole they have created

Councillor Turner arrived at the start of this item.

Council considered a petition meeting the criteria for debate under the Council's petitions scheme in line with the procedure for large petitions stating:
Oxford City Council must fix the blue hole they have created. We the undersigned call on Oxford City Council to address the loss of health, fitness and exercise facilities in the

'blue hole' caused by the Labour-led City Council's closure of Temple Cowley Pool in December 2014, and extended for five years in the Leisure and Wellbeing strategy 2015-2020 adopted in September 2015.

Nigel Gibson, the petition organiser, addressed Council.

There were no motions proposed by Councillors.

Councillor Smith moved, seconded by Councillor Price, that Council note the petition.

Councillors Gant and Simmons observed that an independent survey to gather evidence of the need identified in the petition would be helpful.

Council resolved to note the petition and to take no action.

66. Outside organisation/Committee Chair reports and questions

There were no reports presented this time.

67. Scrutiny Committee update report

Council had before it the report of the Scrutiny Committee.

Councillor Gant moved the report and drew council's attention to changes in officer support arrangements.

Council resolved to note the report.

68. Motions on notice - 27 November 2017

Council had before it nine motions on notice and amendments submitted in accordance with Council procedure rule 11.17 and published with the agenda and briefing note, and reached decisions as set out below.

Council resolved to adopt the following motions as set out in these minutes:

- a) A tourism policy for Oxford, amended from the original
- c) The United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities

Council resolved not to adopt the following motion:

- b) Call on Council to support conversion of buses into homeless accommodation.

The following were not taken because the time for discussing motions had elapsed.

- d) Fair employment: voluntary charter "Dying to Work"

- e) Call on Government to introduce a new Clean Air Act
- f) Against harassment
- g) Free city centre wifi
- h) Phasing out unnecessary single-use plastics
- i) Support for the union national wage claim.

a) A tourism policy for Oxford

Councillor Wade proposed her submitted motion as set out in the agenda and briefing note, and accepted the amendment set out in the briefing note proposed by Councillor Clarkson.

Councillor Landell-Mills seconded the amended motion.

After debate and on being put to the vote, the amended motion was declared carried.

Council agreed the following motion:

Council notes that Oxford is a world-famous city. It is also the eleventh fastest-growing city in the UK but it is still small in size - currently 161,000 residents.

The Under-Secretary for Tourism, Tracey Crouch, has identified the need to encourage a higher percentage of tourists to move out of London. Currently 36.1 million international visitors come to the UK each year but 51% of them never leave London.

Oxford, not forgetting Bicester Village, is an easy destination, but it already receives seven million tourists pa which puts a strain on the goodwill of the local population and on the fabric and environment of the city.

Since the fall in the pound, Oxford tourism has been 'booming' (Oxford Mail: December 2016) and Bicester Village is now 'one of Britain's biggest tourist draws' (Financial Times: April 2017).

There have been recent expressions of discontent, publicised in the international press, in other tourist cities in the UK and Europe.

The Council therefore asks the City Executive Board

1. to continue to build its links with other tourist cities, such as Bath and the London Borough of Camden to share best practice on tourist management and to look at a joint approach with them on the introduction of a tourist levy, which will require Parliamentary legislation. This would enable tourist cities such as Oxford to spend money on additional street cleaning and the enforcement of restrictions on parking and idling coach engines.
2. to continue to work with OxLEP, Experience Oxfordshire and other organisations involved with the local tourist industry;

3. to continue to work with Oxfordshire County Council and Experience Oxfordshire on better options for coach parking and the management of large tourist groups in the city centre.

b) Call on Council to support conversion of buses into homeless accommodation

Councillor Simmons proposed his submitted motion as set out in the agenda and in the briefing note, seconded by Councillor Brandt.

After debate and on being put to the vote, the amended motion was declared lost.

c) The United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities

Councillor Tidball proposed her submitted motion as set out in the agenda and briefing note.

Councillor Paule seconded the motion.

Councillor Gant, seconded by Councillor Wade, proposed his amendment as set out in the briefing note.

After debate and on being put to the vote, the amendment was declared lost.

After debate and on being put to the vote, the original motion was declared carried.

Council agreed the following motion:

The Conservative government, and their coalition partners, has failed disabled people. It has failed to protect their human rights and to understand what it means to be a disabled person living in the United Kingdom today. In August of this year, the United Nations told the Conservative government that it's 'social cuts policy is a human catastrophe for disabled people'. In their full inquiry, published last month, the UN Committee found reliable evidence [i] that there have been 'grave' and 'systematic violations of the rights of persons with disabilities' by the UK State. They make a direct connection between the State's treatment of disabled people and the terrible rise in stigma and negative perceptions of people with disabilities 'as living a life of less value than that of others'. Make no mistake about the impact this has had on disabled people:

- 13,900 of them have lost their motability cars;
- 41,792 were sanctioned and deprived of income from Job Seekers Allowance;
- 2,380 people died after being assessed as being fit for work [ii].

The UK Government has failed to recognise the overwhelming evidence provided to the United Nations and respond effectively to the UN Committee's Concluding Observations.

Nature of the problem

The UN Report makes the causes of the 'human catastrophe' facing disabled people very clear: the ideologically driven and disproportionate 'impact of austerity measures and anti-poverty initiatives' introduced by the Coalition government from 2010 onwards. This has resulted in 'severe economic constraints among persons with disabilities and their families'. This has led to multiple forms of intersectional discrimination with the UK government failing to:

- protect the rights of women and girls with disabilities;
- protect the rights of persons from black and minority ethnic minority backgrounds with disabilities;
- prevent many families with children with disabilities from falling into poverty.

The breaches by the UK Government, of the United Nations Convention of the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, cut across the totality of the lives of disabled persons with the UN Committee finding there is a:

- lack of UK State party-led initiatives aimed at assessing and sufficiently addressing the inclusion of and living conditions for persons with disabilities, including the reduction in the nature and time for social care support;
- disabled people have reduced access to employment and where they do have access, it is less well paid and secure;
- increased social exclusion and isolation and a corresponding rise in mental health problems as a result of the negative impact on the standard of living of persons with disabilities arising from 'the reductions in social support, unemployment allowance, independence payments and Universal Credit payments and the insufficient compensation for disability-related costs';
- the reduced access to justice because of the reductions in legal aid.

These findings led the UN Committee to conclude that there was a 'lack of consistency across the State party [the UK Government] in the understanding of, adapting to and applying the human rights model of disability'.

Our Position

November 22nd marks the beginning of UK Disability History Month 2017. This Council believes, we must, therefore, send a resounding message to government. This Council abhors the Conservative government's treatment of disabled people and recognises the evidence and conclusions drawn in the UN Committee's report. We find the level and nature of the Government's response to these findings shameful.

Council therefore calls on the Government to:

- apologise to the 13 million disabled people living in the UK for their treatment of them over the last seven years;
- recognise and act on the UN Committee's findings;
- implement a cumulative impact assessment of all policy, legislative, and budget measures on disabled people, which takes evidence from disabled people themselves; and
- instigate an open review of what the Government is doing to fulfil its own Public Sector Equality Duty under Section 149[iii] of the Equality Act 2010 to mitigate the stigmatising effects of its policies on disabled people over the last seven years.

Council accordingly resolves to ask the Leader of the Council:

To ask the Oxford MPs to write to the Prime Minister

- communicating the resolution of Council as expressed above;
- urging her to call an urgent debate on the UN Committee's findings, and
- requesting a public inquiry into these grave and systematic violations of the human rights of disabled people;

To ask Oxfordshire County Council to:

- join us in this request to the Prime Minister, and
- undertake an impact assessment of the effect of the Government's cuts in social care on the physical, social and mental wellbeing of disabled people in Oxford and Oxfordshire.

Oxford City Council believes in the fundamental dignity of and respect for disabled people. The government must meet its international and domestic human rights obligations with respect to persons with disabilities so they no-longer continue to face barriers in their full and effective participation and inclusion in our society.

d) Fair employment: voluntary charter "Dying to Work"

This motion was not taken because the time for discussing motions had elapsed.

e) Call on Government to introduce a new Clean Air Act

This motion was not taken because the time for discussing motions had elapsed.

f) Against harassment

This motion was not taken because the time for discussing motions had elapsed.

g) Free city centre wifi

This motion was not taken because the time for discussing motions had elapsed.

h) Phasing out unnecessary single-use plastics

This motion was not taken because the time for discussing motions had elapsed.

i) Support for the union national wage claim

This motion was not taken because the time for discussing motions had elapsed.

The meeting started at 5.30 pm and ended at 9.20 pm

Chair

Date: Monday 29 January 2018

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To: Council
Date: 27 November 2017
Title of Report: Questions on Notice from members of Council and responses from the Board Members and Leader

Introduction

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

Questions and responses

Board member for A Clean and Green Oxford

1. From Councillor Simmons to Councillor Tanner – Single-use plastics

Will Cllr Tanner join me in welcoming the fact that Brighton and Hove Council has voted to ban its own purchase of single-use plastics and seeking to work with businesses in the area to do the same? Would he back similar measures in Oxford?

Response

Yes. I am happy to examine the City Council's use of single-use plastics and to work with business to reduce the wasteful and damaging discarding of plastic items. The City Council has an effective policy of recycling waste plastic but our guiding hierarchy is reduce, re-use and only then recycle.

2. From Councillor Wade to Councillor Tanner – Pony and Ofo Bikes

Blue 'Pony' bikes and Yellow 'Ofo' bikes - two new commercial 'dockless' bike schemes in Oxford - have been found abandoned as far out as the A34. In theory the companies collect abandoned bikes but in practice Council staff end up with the job. Can the Board Member advise the staff time and cost to the Council of collecting these bikes,

and whether there has been a discussion about a way to manage this problem with the Council in Leiden, which has experienced similar difficulties?

Response

No costs have been incurred by the Council as Council Staff do not collect dockless bikes. Our involvement is to pass on reports of abandoned bikes to the appropriate company. All bikes have GPS trackers on them so those outside of the geo-fenced area are picked up as quickly as possible. Most of the time the company will call the person who hired the bike to give them opportunity to return the bike to a parking 'hub'. Most of the companies work on a reward / penalty system, so bikes left parked badly, or bikes that end up outside of the geo-fenced area will mean the user is deducted penalty points. All of the companies have dedicated local staff to pick up issues and redistribute bikes as necessary.

Supplementary Question

Was there any truth in a reported claim that the council had a large heap of damaged dockless bikes waiting for recovery and repair?

Response

Councillor Upton, as the Council's cycling champion, responded that the council was not collecting dockless bikes. This was the responsibility of the operators under the agreed code of conduct: contact details had to be on each bike and their own teams had to deal with any reports. Complaints to the council were passed to the operators to deal with and the Council neither collected nor stored any dockless bikes.

3. From Councillor Wade to Councillor Tanner – Dockless Bikes Code of Conduct

Can the Board Member advise whether the Code of Conduct for dockless bikes, reported in the press in August, and to be devised between the City Council, County Council and University, has now reached draft stage?

Response

The Code of Conduct for dockless bikes is already in place and all four operating companies have signed up to this (OFO, Mobike, Obike and Ponybike). You can find the code of conduct on the City Council website at:
https://www.oxford.gov.uk/downloads/file/3893/oxford_code_of_conduct_for_dockless_bike_sharing_operators

4. From Councillor Wolff to Councillor Tanner – Air quality/traffic levels effect from Westgate

When will data be available to allow an assessment to be made of the impact the Westgate centre has had on air quality and traffic levels in the city?

Written response

We require 12 months of data to be able to estimate the annual mean measurement for NO2 in order to undertake a full assessment. However judging by the first few weeks traffic has been flowing freely and it is unlikely that there will be an increase in pollution from the roads around the new Westgate Shopping Centre.

5. From Councillor Wade to Councillor Tanner – Air Quality Levels in Carfax and Cornmarket

Can the Board Member advise whether diffusion tubes have been put up at the south end of Cornmarket and at the Carfax end of the High to measure air quality levels now that the experimental taxi rank and bus stops are in place?

Written response

As part of our city-wide air quality monitoring scheme we monitor air quality at the following places around Carfax and Cornmarket:

- Queen Street at Halifax Bank (diffusion tube)
- Queen Street at M&S (diffusion tube)
- St. Aldates at Town Hall (Automatic monitor and diffusion tube)
- Cornmarket Street at Starbucks (diffusion tube)

Supplementary Question

It would be good to also have a diffusion tube at the end of the High Street were the buses stopped. Could one be installed there?

Response

There may be an existing tube in the area as we do have figures on pollution on the High Street but I will check.

6. From Councillor Wilkinson to Councillor Tanner – Council Vehicles and Zero Emission Zone

The City Council are said to own 322 vehicles, ranging from cars to vans to trucks. How many of them are electrically powered, so would meet the Zero Emission Zone criterion? How many are diesel-powered?

Written response

We have 17 pure Electric Vehicles (plus 6 electric bicycles and 3 conventional pool bicycles). There are 268 diesel powered vehicles. For completeness there are 23 hybrid and 14 petrol vehicles. The Zero Emission Zone from 2020 will apply to City Council vehicles as well as everyone else's cars, vans, lorries and buses.

Supplementary Question

What are we doing about replacing all our diesel vehicles?

Response

We are committed to replacing these with suitable electric vehicles as they come to the end of their operational life. The Zero Emission Zone will modify this planned replacement programme: for instance one of the first things we need is refuse lorries which can come into the Zone from 2020.

7. From Councillor Brandt to Councillor Tanner – New Cleaning Regime costs

Can the portfolio holder let us know how much does the enhanced cleaning regime in the city centre (started when the new Westgate opened) costs? And who is paying for it, is it coming out of the city budget, or is the Westgate Alliance contributing towards it?

Written response

One additional Full Time Equivalent (1FTE) was included for 2017/8 and a second for 2018/19 was included in the budget and is in place. The total cost is around £65k pa from the agreed Council budget. There have been no further costs and there is no contribution from the Westgate Alliance (WGA) and WGA have their own cleaning regimes for areas under their control. In response to the additional cleaning demands in the city we introduced an extended-day service in October 2017 and have managed the increased costs within existing budgets.

Supplementary Question

Is the additional FTE just absorbed within the existing budget or is this a new cost?

Response

We are introducing extra staff for the new Barton development. In the town centre the staff are working to a new shift pattern at no extra cost, apart from those for additional cleaning staff for the toilets. Staff now started at 5am, and were scheduled in a more efficient pattern at no extra cost. We commend them for their willingness to change working patterns: these were popular with some, less so with others. Those who found the new arrangements unmanageable have been transferred to suburban areas still on the old shift patterns.

8. From Councillor Wilkinson to Councillor Tanner – Street Scene Staff/reorganization

Can the Board Member please indicate how many staff have left Street scene after its recent reorganization, and for what reasons?

Written response

Four staff have left out of a total of 180 involved in the restructure. This is in line with normal staff turnover. Reasons have included the revised shift patterns, dissatisfaction with a revised role and other unstated personal reasons.

Supplementary Question

Please could the new organisation chart be sent to councillors?

Response

I will arrange for this to be done.

9. From Councillor Wilkinson to Councillor Tanner – Spotless Oxford Scheme

Is the Council embarrassed by Jeremy Mogford's description of Oxford as filthy?

Written response

In the article referred to Mr Mogford states that 'the Streetscene Team did a great job but others should do more...' There is a clear implication that the term 'filthy' is being

applies to the behaviours and habits of people as demonstrated by the BBC TV focus on Oxford's city centre two weeks ago. Everyone is entitled to their own opinion. But my view is that standards of cleanliness in the city centre are improving and are higher than they have ever been.

Supplementary Question

What role does the Oxford Civic Society's scheme have to play in keeping the city clean?

Response

I will discuss this outside the meeting once I have more information.

10. From Councillor Goddard to Councillor Tanner - Glyphosate

Can the Board Member provide details of use of glyphosate by the City Council or its contractors in Wolvercote ward?

Written response

We apply glyphosate in accordance with manufacturers and industry standards to all street pavements and associated hard surface areas three times annually throughout the city which includes all streets in Wolvercote (excluding, on the most recent treatment, Meadow Prospect). This is carried out as a pedestrian operation and is a spot treatment only, meaning only visible weeds are targeted. We do this using controlled droplet applicators (CDA), and so very little visible residue is left behind on the street surface. This helps to minimise the volume of pesticide being applied, and is the safest method of application available for our operators and for the public. In addition to this, in recent years we have also applied glyphosate around the bases of all trees, so that the need for strimming throughout the season is minimised. This was brought in due to concerns surrounding the strimming causing damage to the trees across Oxford, and is usually a one off treatment in April, or in line with the first cut of the season. We are aware that there is a debate about the future licencing of this product which we are watching closely and we will only continue to use it whilst it is a licenced product.

Supplementary Question

What would be the mechanism for streets opting out of the weedkiller programme if there was public support on the street to do so?

Response

It is unclear how this opt-out could work. Any threat would be to our own staff not the public or to animals, and we are keeping up with research and guidance on safety and appropriate use.

11. From Councillor Wilkinson to Councillor Hayes – Enforcement Action on Cyclists in Cornmarket

Please can the Board Member give details of any regular enforcement action of the 'no cycling' in Cornmarket St. between the hours of 10 and 6 has taken place in the last 12 months?

Written response

The Community Response Team and City Centre Ambassadors are the teams that predominantly address this issue. They engage and provide education as to why a person has been stopped. A PSPO Faq slip is issued in most cases which explains what a PSPO means, some answers to general questions; this also contains the full set of conditions.

There have been 308 recorded incidents where a person has been stopped. Some people dismount and move away before an officer can speak to them. Street Scenes staff also ask people to dismount approximately 40 times a week which is not reflected in the figures provided.

We deal with this through day to day monitoring. No FPNs have been issued nor has anyone been prosecuted.

Supplementary Question

Are there any plans to issue FPNs to repeat offenders?

Response

One of the purposes of a FPN is that they are issued for continuing anti-social behaviour so are not applicable here. We work with cycling groups and students to improve behaviour and are asking for new signage and for more resources to enforce the rules.

12. From Councillor Wade to Councillor Hayes – Taxi rank in Cornmarket

On a Monday night two weeks ago I counted 10 taxis pulled up in Cornmarket. The taxis stretched along the east side from Carfax to Market Street, with a further taxi waiting on the west side to join the rank. Cyclists and pedestrians were weaving through them. Can the Board Member advise when and why the decision to extend the rank from Golden Cross Yard to Market Street was made?

Written response

The initial Oxfordshire County Council experimental Traffic Management Order came to force on 24th October 2017 to enable taxis to enter Cornmarket Street from Carfax, turn in the 50 meters before the Clarendon Centre and wait in the taxi bays between 18:00 hrs – 10:00 hrs the following day.

Due to a public safety concerns expressed within the first week of the operations of the taxi rank, Oxfordshire County Council extended the area to 98 meters from Carfax to just north of the junction with Market Street. The Taxi rank will be confined to an area on the east side for 15 taxis. Under County Council powers this variation came into force on 10 November 2017 (variation order attached).

Supplementary Question

How is the use of the new rank managed and the rules enforced?

Response

We are meeting the County Council to discuss how this is working. We are currently paying for additional stewards to manage the rank and ensure public safety but it is not in our interest to keep doing this.

Board Member for Finance and Asset Management

13. From Councillor Wolff to Councillor Turner – Temporary Cycle racks Westgate

Can the portfolio holder let us know who paid for the temporary cycle parking racks which the city has installed near the Westgate on opening week? If it came out of the city budget, how much was it?

Written response

These were paid for by the County Council and there was no cost incurred by the City Council.

Supplementary Question

Given that City Council staff carried out the installation of the cycle stands on behalf of the County Council, could it be confirmed that the County Council paid us for this?

Response

Councillor Price responded on behalf of Councillor Turner and confirmed that to say that the City Council was indeed paid.

14. From Councillor Simmons to Councillor Turner – Business rate income from Westgate

What is the earliest expected date the council will start to see business rate income from the Westgate Centre, and if there is a delay due to a failure in having carried out the necessary rating evaluations, will the Council be seeking the payment of interest on the outstanding amount?

Written response

Around 70% of the properties opened in October 2017 and business rates income will be due on these properties from this date. The Valuation Office are charged with surveying and valuing all properties and adding them to the valuation list for billing to be undertaken by the Council. The Council is still awaiting this information and following a number of meetings with the Valuation Office and the developers, Land Securities, understands that information for 5 of the largest properties will be given to the Council before Christmas. Rating information on the remainder of the properties should be given to the authority by 31st March 2018. The authority is not able to claim interest on any accrued income. It would be fair to say the City Council has been extremely robust and highly proactive in its dealings with the Valuation Office in this matter, and will escalate matters if information is not received in line with appropriate timescales.

Supplementary Question

Could you clarify exactly when the first business rate income will come in and on what units? The interest due on backdated rates will mount up so are there measures to stop this happening and collect this?

Response

Councillor Price passed the question to the Head of Finance who responded.

We are still waiting for the valuation office to make their assessments on units at Westgate, and while we are expecting the top 5 units to be assessed by April 2018, we do not have anything yet. We are meeting regularly with the valuation office. We can't bill until the assessment is made and we can't charge interest on backdated rates. Our experience is that of many other areas: valuation offices are understaffed and have a huge backlog.

15. From Councillor Simmons to Councillor Turner – Loss of Business Rate on Council owned properties from relocation of Westgate

Roughly how many Council owned properties will be vacated as a result of relocation to the Westgate (and the loss of rental income associated with this) and, more broadly, what is the expected loss in business rates from the relocation of businesses to the Westgate?

And how does this combined financial loss compare with the additional income that is to be expected from the expanded Westgate (excluding the business rates that would have been expected from the original Westgate)?

Written response

At present there are 28 properties vacant in the City Centre, two of which are owned by the City Council. The gross total value of business rates on these empty properties is £1.6 million per annum although some may be given rate reliefs. Empty properties will benefit from no charge for the first 3 months but this will revert to full rates after this period. The two properties owned by the Council would pay rent of £227k per annum. It is not always possible to know the reasons for tenants vacating properties and some of the properties were vacated before the Westgate opened, and of course there will always be some properties that are not occupied at any given time.

It is anticipated that the current empty properties will be re-occupied or reconfigured and the expectation is that they will be brought back into use. Consequently, the loss of rates income and rental income for those properties owned by the Council is anticipated to be mitigated. The estimated amount of income from the Westgate once all properties are fully occupied will be around £11 million per annum. This has been arrived at based on other similar sized shopping centres in the absence of accurate information from the Valuation Office. In comparison to the previous rates income on Westgate this would represent an increase of £7 million per annum in gross rates.

Proactive work is being undertaken by the City Centre Manager and the Council's own property team to not only ensure the re-occupation of our properties but improving the window displays and frontages of unoccupied buildings in the meantime.

Supplementary Question

What action is being taken to re-let vacant shop units and what is the current market for units?

Response

The majority of vacant units are our properties or within our control. We understand all but one unit is either being re-let or has potential occupiers. The owner of the vacant Next unit is considering different options for redeveloping this.

16. From Councillor Wilkinson to Councillor Turner – Covered Market

Please can the Board Member provide the following information with reference to the Covered Market:

- How many vacant units are there?
- When did those units become vacant?

Written response

On 24th November there were 3 vacant units .The fishmonger vacated in November. Helen and Douglas House vacated in September but in fact this is still let to them until December, a pop up has been agreed subject to an early surrender of the lease. CH Brown vacated at the end of September and there is interest from a pop up . In the long term we have interest in all vacant units from permanent occupiers. We want to work hard to bring any vacant units back into use, but of course to do so in such a way that supports the unique and distinctive character of the market in the long term, including, so far as possible, supporting the food-led emphasis of the leasing strategy.

Supplementary Question

Have the previous leaseholders given reasons for vacating their units?

Response

Councillor Clarkson responded as the Covered Market champion. The fishmonger wished to consolidate its business elsewhere; Helen and Douglas House were reducing their activities because of more general problems. It was disappointing but we were confident of getting suitable tenants shortly. The market was still busy and anecdotal evidence was that footfall rose and fell with visitors to the city centre and the Westgate.

Board member for Housing

17. From Councillor Wade to Councillor Rowley – Trailblazer Initiative

Oxford, together with several other UK cities, has received a grant (in our case: £790,000) as part of the Government's Homelessness Trailblazer initiative.

Will the Board member look at the possibility of combining with these other cities to press the Government to: (a) increase Trailblazer resources, and (b) provide emergency payments to Universal Credit Claimants during the six week 'waiting period' and a long 'claw-back' period for such payments - without which there will be a dramatic increase in homelessness?

Written response

- a) The Trailblazer is a two-year programme to develop new initiatives and interventions that will prevent homelessness earlier. The funding allocated to Oxford is to fund the Trailblazer Team and to commission a number of initiatives that will lead to systemic change in the future, when the Trailblazer programme ends. There is no suggestion from the Government that there could be on-going Trailblazer funding, as their intention is that learning from the programme should be absorbed by the Council and its partners as new ways of working, especially in the delivery of HRA17.
- b) Funding for the Trailblazer programme has been allocated to carry out certain activities as presented in our bid and cannot be used to mitigate the impact of universal credit. However, Oxford City Council has set up an emergency fund to support UC claimants who are waiting for their first payment. This fund might be available if someone:-
- lives within Oxford City Council boundaries or are one of our tenants
 - have made a claim for Universal Credit and applied for an advance payment
 - are working with our Springboard Money service or an advice service to help manage your money
 - need help because you cannot afford to pay for food, household necessities or utilities before you get your first Universal Credit payment.

Supplementary Question

Has the Universal Credit emergency fund been well enough publicised and will we be told in advance if there is enough money in it to meet the need?

Response

There has been some movement and compromise on this by government, having been persuaded by robust representations from charities.

The council is determined to make sure people don't lose their homes while waiting for their first payment.

Board member for Leisure, Parks and Sport

18. From Councillor Wilkinson to Councillor Smith – Tree work to Council owned Trees

Residents have written to complain about lengthy delays in works to council-owned trees that were assessed and assigned "routine priority" status. Please can the Board Member confirm the total number of tree works interventions for each priority category between April-October 2017 and April-October 2017?

Written response

These are the timeframe definitions for each priority rating for carrying out tree works:

No Work Required	No works were specified at the time of inspection
Routine	Up to 3 Years

Advisable	Up to 18 Months
Essential	Up to 6 Months
Urgent – Public Safety	Up to 1 Week
Critical	As soon as possible
Urgent – Tree Health	Up to 2 Months

The following is a breakdown for Oct 16 – Oct 17 of both:

- our trees routinely surveyed
- our trees inspected due to enquiries

It is essential to note that we survey some trees as individual trees and some trees as groups. Our database captures these as assets (an asset can be either an individual tree specimen or groups of trees - where up to 200 trees could be present).

According to our database for the period Oct 16 – Oct 17.

No. of enquiries logged 768

No. assets surveyed 8608

No. of assets rated under priority headings:

Urgent 33

Essential 414

Advisable 1492

Routine 1980

No Works Required 4689

Supplementary Question

Do you think the way assets are captured on the database is helpful in assessing workload given that these can capture a single tree or a group of trees?

Response

I think this is the most efficient way of capturing the data. It is taking longer than we'd like to complete the work and we are looking at proposals in the budget for funds to help speed this up.

19. From Councillor Goddard to Councillor Smith – Wolvercote Play Areas

When were the children's play areas in Lower Wolvercote and on Wolvercote Green last refurbished or improved?

Written response

The playground equipment in Lower Wolvercote and Wolvercote Green play areas was installed in 2011 and as with all our play areas we undertake regular safety check and there are no current issues.

Supplementary Question

What is the rough replacement schedule for playground equipment?

Response

That will need to be given as a written answer. All equipment is surveyed regularly to make sure it is safe. We are coming to the end of the full city-wide refurbishment programme.

20. From Councillor Goddard to Councillor Smith – Five Mile Drive Pavilion

Will the Councillor agree with me that the lack of pavilion facilities at Five Mile Drive is unacceptable?

Will she also join me in thanking officers for their hard work both in managing the situation on a temporary basis, and in working on a longer-term proposal involving Summertown Stars taking over the existing brick building and refurbishing it at their own expense?

However, would she also agree with me that in practice this option has turned out to be unsatisfactory for the club and other stakeholders?

Will she therefore commit the council to honouring its commitment made in 2013 that Five Mile Drive, along with other facilities, will be "improved" (the other facilities on the list have all been delivered)?

Will she also agree to meet representatives of Summertown Stars, local councillors and other stakeholders at an early date to agree a long-term solution to this issue?

Written response

As part of the pavilion modernisation programme the Council has invested over £1.2m and a lot of officer time into improving both the pavilions at Cutteslowe Park which now provide excellent provision for Summertown Stars and the local area. As part of this development we obtained £650,000 of external funding from Sport England and the Football Foundation which makes obtaining further funding for the area very difficult.

While the Council supports the clubs aspiration to continue to grow and to further enhance their ancillary provision there is no further funding remaining within the pavilions budget to build a new changing facility at Five Mile Drive.

As such, we are providing a temporary toilet and had hoped that the solution of converting a garage next to the park into a toilet would have been suitable. Through discussion with the football club we understand that they no longer feel that this option would fit their ambitions for the site, however they still wish to explore the building as a potential storage solution for the site. We will continue to work with local members and the key site stakeholders to manage the existing provision at the site and to further explore options to provide long term facilities if external funding were to be found.

Supplementary Question

Is the lack of facilities which were promised in 2013 unacceptable; is the current provision unsatisfactory (eg I understand toilets are not working); and will the council honour the commitment made in 2013?

Response

The toilet and storage situation are not adequate and officers are working with the club to find a satisfactory solution.

21. From Councillor Wilkinson to Councillor Hollingsworth – Highways and Parking

Can the Board Member please set out a list of the projects on which there is collaborative working with the County Council on highways and parking issues for the benefit of members?

Written response

The City and County Councils work closely together on a range of highways and parking issues.

Maintenance and minor schemes are carried out by the City Council on behalf of the Highways Authority, using powers under Section 42 of the Highways Act 1980. This includes winter maintenance work, emergency responses, signs and lines maintenance, some drainage investigation and repairs, vegetation and hedge works and adverse weather response. To assist with this several officers undertake joint roles, working for both the City and County Councils. Where the City Council carries out a maintenance scheme on behalf of the County Council, the scheme is managed and delivered by a City Council officer.

In addition the City and County Councils have recently agreed to appoint a Joint Parking Manager; the primary focus of this role is identify ways in which the two authorities' parking operations can be streamlined and brought into line with another, to improve the customer experience and to generate efficiency savings in back office functions and by sharing technology and resources. This project began a few weeks ago, and so far has been about scoping the work and initiating research; early signs are promising, and positive results should be apparent for both authorities during 2018.

The two authorities also increasingly collaborate on cycling measures, and I am pleased to see that the County Council has now appointed a member cycling champion to mirror our own long-standing role, ably carried out by Cllr Upton. The last couple of years have seen increased collaboration on cycling policy and priorities, and while there is still some further refinements to be made, the direction of travel in terms of bringing the approach of the two authorities into line with one another is the right one.

Finally, there is significant collaboration between the two councils over strategic and infrastructure planning. The Growth Deal announced in the Budget this week stems in a very large part from the successful – and very intensive – work by highways and planning officers of both authorities to identify infrastructure needs for Oxford and Oxfordshire. The two authorities recently commissioned consultants to carry out work on movement and public space in the city centre, which will form both part of the evidence base for the City Council's Local Plan and the County Council's update of their LTP. By using the same evidence base, and working closely on the policies that derive from that evidence, the two authorities can and will bring their respective policy documents into line with one another – something that will also form the basis for the Joint Statutory Plan that will be developed between all the councils of Oxfordshire as part of the work to implement the Growth Deal.

Supplementary Question

Could you explain if the proposed joint parking manager post's remit will cover the revision of existing but outdated controlled parking zones?

Response

The post is intended to work on integrating the back office functions of the County and City Councils' parking operations - for instance new parking machines, technical approaches to non-payment, and reducing duplicated administration costs. It is not proposed that it will change the existing functions. However parking and controlled parking zones are among the matters we discuss this with County Council colleagues.

22. From Councillor Simmons to Councillor Hollingsworth - Westgate Cycle Parking

When will the promised 1000+ bicycles parking spaces at the Westgate be installed and the cycle hub opened?

Written response

I think it would be helpful to spell out exactly how many cycle parking spaces are to be provided by the Westgate development. The original planning permission that was approved included 1034 spaces, of which 118 were for the residential units, 184 were in the secure cycle hub, and 732 were in the public realm.

As part of the development 88 spaces were removed from at the northern end of the site in Bonn Square. As the committee report made clear this was taken into account, so the net increase in the number of spaces was 944 spaces in total. Other spaces temporarily removed during the construction phase, such as those in St Ebbe's, will be replaced and are NOT therefore part of the calculation.

The cycle hub, which now contains 186 spaces, is fully fitted out and (at the time of writing) is planned to open in a week to ten days' time when the electronic fob operating system has been tested and becomes operational. The residential cycle parking, of 118 spaces, is due for completion soon and will be open when residents start to move into the flats.

The remaining spaces are provided on street, in 25 locations around the Westgate centre. Many of these spaces have been installed, and were installed before the centre was opened – for example in Faulkner Street. Others, such as those on Old Greyfriars Street, can only be installed once the paving works are completed over the next couple of weeks. As of Thursday morning (23rd November) 410 of these spaces have been installed, with 384 currently available for use and 26 about to be when resurfacing work near them is completed. This does NOT include spaces currently installed in St Ebbe's and Pennyfarthing Place, as these are replacements of temporarily removed parking spaces, as noted above.

In order to comply with the total figure in the planning permission a further 320 spaces need to be installed (322 if the public realm figure is treated as a separate target). Westgate believe that they have identified sites for 350 spaces, and these sites have been or are being discussed with planning officers and where appropriate the County Council to ensure that they do not obstruct access for pedestrians or emergency vehicles. It is believed that there is scope for an increase in the number of spaces in St Ebbes for example.

These remaining spaces will be installed as soon as the areas in question are paved and clear of any remaining construction works, so there will be a rolling programme of cycle parking installation over the next few weeks. However because cycle parking can only be installed once there is pavement on which to install it, it is likely that the final

few spaces will only be operational near the end of the final construction works, in the few weeks after Christmas.

In addition, the Council is increasing its resources for ensuring that cycle parking is kept clear of abandoned bikes, meaning that more spaces are available for use. Historically racks were inspected approximately on a quarterly basis by the Abandoned Vehicles Officer, with a focus on machines which could be considered unroadworthy - having 2 or more repair issues, for example one flat tyre and a broken chain. This narrow definition did not of course include bikes which were abandoned.

The frequency of inspections has now been increased, with all cycle parking inspected at least monthly. The bikes that appear to be abandoned are tagged 7 days in advance or removal, and then stored for at least six weeks before disposal. In addition each rack will be deep cleaned once a year, allowing a further opportunity to identify and remove abandoned bikes.

In addition all Streetscene staff have been tasked with reporting any seemingly 'unroadworthy' bikes during their routine work or inspections, and these will be tagged at the immediately rather than being waiting for the monthly inspections.

Supplementary Question

Why is there a perception that the Council appears to allow big businesses to fail to comply with planning conditions whereas small businesses would not be allowed to do so?

Response

It is a false assumption. Regardless of size, enforcement of breaches of planning permission goes through a series of stages before going to court. It is quite clear the Westgate is not in compliance with their permissions and there are reasons for this, but the work to rectify this is ongoing. In some cases the installation of cycle racks is dependent on other works - eg to pavements - being completed. If in the end there is non-compliance then appropriate action against the developer will be taken.

23. From Councillor Simmons to Councillor Hollingsworth - Seacourt Park & Ride

Can the portfolio holder please update Council on the expansion of Seacourt Park & Ride?

Written response

Council officers and our appointed consultants have been working to finalise the information required by the Environment Agency and others as part of their responses to the planning application, and this has now been completed and submitted. I understand that the application will be considered by the West Area Planning Committee in December.

24. From Councillor Wade to Councillor Hollingsworth – 'Oxford Futures'

Will the Portfolio Holder advise whether all or any of the eight positive steps recommended in the Oxford Civic Society's 'Oxford Futures' report have been taken into account in the development of the Local Plan?

Written response

The report – the full title of which is “Oxford’s Futures: Achieving Smart Growth in Central Oxfordshire” – contains many useful and interesting ideas which have shaped the emerging Local Plan for Oxford, and which chime with the City Council’s – and my own long-held - views on planning for Central Oxfordshire.

The eight specific recommendations in the final section of the report are:

1. Set up an Oxford Futures Commission to further the debate and win support for change
2. Develop a spatial growth plan and a charter for sustainable development
3. Establish a Quality Review Panel to assess important new development proposals
4. Engage the public through a Development Forum
5. Train and develop key decision makers
6. Establish design competitions for key sites
7. Model the impact of development and transport options
8. Mobilise and coordinate investment through appropriate long-term mechanisms.

All of these have been taken on board, and have been enacted to some degree. For example the Growth Deal for Oxfordshire announced in the Budget on Wednesday of last week came about through exactly the kind of collaborative working between the LEP, the Local Authorities and other partners envisaged in the first and eight recommendations. A design competition was held for the railway station site, as suggested in the fourth recommendation. Forums for public interest groups have been set up to allow dialogue over the planning process, as recommended. The impact of development options have been extensively modelled by the planners of all Oxfordshire’s local authorities, working together, work that will now be expanded to include a Joint Spatial Plan for the County that will underlie and co-ordinate the different Local Plans.

The main thrust of the report was, of course, that the city and the region which it forms the centre of should adopt the approach of carefully planned expansion along existing and new public transport corridors. That is why it endorsed growth at sites like Grenoble Road and on the transport corridors to the north and south of the city, a policy that I and the City Council fully support.

Supplementary Question

How far has implementation of the Civic Society recommendation to set up the development forum, as it is of interest to other planning forums in the city?

Response

The Civic Society is one of a number of development forums we have in the city. The report in 2014 written by and for the Civic Society (one of a number we have for planning) sets out in detail a good vision for the development of the city, including transport corridors which are now proposed in the emerging wider strategic transport policy.

25. From Councillor Wade to Councillor Hollingsworth – Pavement and Kerbstones Damage

Could the Portfolio Holder consider whether a standard condition should be attached to planning permissions requiring that pavements and kerbstones damaged in the course of building works should be totally renewed?

Written response

I have sympathy with the question, because damage to paving and pavements during the construction process seems to be a frequent problem. However the law is not helpful here in supporting the suggested course of action.

Guidance on the use of planning conditions is clear that attempting to import control over other legislative areas into planning conditions should be avoided and would fail to meet the legal tests for use of planning conditions. This is because powers and responsibilities for the highway exist under highways legislation and these make clear that in the case of areas like Oxford the County Council is the relevant authority for the use, management and maintenance of the highway, including enforcement of the rectification of any damage incurred during building operations. All councillors faced with problems of damage to paving or pavements need to raise their concerns with the Highway Authority.

Supplementary Question

How will the process of all councillors reporting damage work in practice and is there a simpler way if doing this, especially given that many pavements are in very bad condition?

Response

We can't use planning conditions in the way you would like but I will talk to building control and planning colleagues to see if we can carry out a post-development inspection and arrange for repairs to be carried out.

But ward members also have a role to play in reporting damage, and should raise matters with County Council counterparts – raise concerns by as many routes as possible and ask the County Council to use the powers they have to ensure the repairs are made.

26. From Councillor Gant to Councillor Hollingsworth – Barton Park

Households in Oxford recently received a flier bearing the logo of Oxford City Council and its partners, advertising the first phase of market homes at Barton Park. Two-bed apartments are advertised as starting at £360K. A recent look at the website shows the cheapest available two-bed apartment at £395,500.

Would the Board member join me in noting that this is a considerable increase even on the starting price of £300K mentioned in the press earlier this year?

Would he also comment on how these market prices fit with the supply-and-demand argument that simply increasing numbers will on its own cause prices to fall?

Will he also explain what the model of development employed at Barton offers families and workers on middle incomes- exactly the people Oxford needs to provide with somewhere to live?

Written response

As this is three questions rather than one I will respond to each in turn.

On the first, I cannot comment on the accuracy or otherwise of a figure in the press some months ago.

On the second question no-one has made such a claim about Barton Park, as clearly the building of 854 houses in this development is not going to meet demand for housing in all sectors and of all sizes in the city. What is required - as confirmed by a House of Lords report last year, and back by the Chartered Institute of Housing and other experts - is a comprehensive house-building programme across the country, of at least 300,000 units a year over many years, with a substantial number of those homes being for social rent. What is quite clear, however, is that not building homes will simply make the situation worse.

The third question is the same as one asked at the last Council, and the response is therefore the same: The Barton Area Action Plan is the official planning policy document for Barton Park. The AAP, which was debated and adopted by Council in December 2012, establishes the mix of housing to be built by type, and by tenure. Policy BA9 says that a minimum of 40% of the housing on the entire development at Barton Park will be for social rent. The remainder will be market housing - in other words housing sold on the open market. The market housing is in effect paying for the social housing, and also for the substantial infrastructure investment required to develop the site.

When Council approved the AAP it did so believing that this was the appropriate balance to strike between social housing - which is in drastically short supply in Oxford - other forms of subsidised or sub-market housing, and market housing. The alternative, which the councillor appears to be proposing, would have been to have replace the social housing for those in greatest need with other less affordable forms of housing.

Supplementary Question

The response does not entirely answer the question.

Response

The Area Action Plan set the policy for 40% social rented housing and the time to propose changes was while developing the plan.

27. From Councillor Wilkinson to Councillor Hollingsworth – Buses in Queen Street

As the buses will stay in Queen Street for at least another 6 months, will some warning signs be provided to remind people emerging from the Westgate to be alert to their presence?

Written response

Signage inside the Westgate is a matter for the Westgate, and signage on the road is the responsibility of the County Council as the highways authority. The County Council will need to balance any beneficial such signage might have in raising awareness against the disbenefits of cluttering the street scene.

Supplementary Question

Are you minded to exert your considerable influence with the County Council to try and address this safety issue?

Response

I will raise this with County Council when I next meet them. At the moment I am minded to see the disbenefits as outweighing the benefits.

Leader of the Council, Board Member for Corporate Strategy and Economic Development

28. From Councillor Brandt to Councillor Price – Western Conveyance Flood Channel

Can the portfolio holder provide an update on the status of the Western Conveyance flood channel, including any anticipated additional financial contributions from Oxford City Council?

Written response

The Western Conveyance flood channel, now known as the Oxford Flood Alleviation Scheme (OFAS), is a project being delivered by the Environment Agency (EA) and local partners that will reduce the flood risk to at least 1,200 homes in the city and reduce the disruption flooding causes to two key routes into and out of the city- Abingdon Road and Botley Road as well as the railway line. The outline business case for the OFAS has been approved by HM Treasury which demonstrates the scheme represents value for money for the tax payer. The EA has been undertaking survey and ground investigation work across the footprint of the scheme over the last months including archaeology. The EA hope to submit the planning application for the OFAS in Spring 2018.

The OFAS is a £120m project and there is currently a funding gap of £4.35m. The EA have secured a record £51m in contributions for the scheme, which is the largest amount of partnership contributions for any flood scheme in the UK. Oxford City Council has contributed £1.5m capital so far and has committed to contributing a further in-kind contribution by foregoing land values up to £1m. The EA have a funding contingency plan for the OFAS which includes the action to ask partners for their best and final contribution offer towards the scheme. This could be in the form of an increased capital contribution or through an underwrite, full or part, of the funding gap. The City Council has not yet been asked for their best and final contribution offer towards the scheme. However any likely request is being considered as part of the ongoing budget process.

29. From Councillor Brandt to Councillor Price – Impact of Westgate Centre on Level of trade of local businesses

When will data be available to determine the impact the Westgate Centre has had on the level of trade for local businesses?

Written response

Recorded footfall in the city centre has been increasing since mid-September, with the highest figures this year during half-term which coincided with the opening of the Westgate. During the week commencing 23/10 the change in footfall for Oxford over the last 52 weeks was 1.3% up on the previous year and footfall for the year to date was 2.1% up on the previous year. The number of visitors counted for this week was 929,260 and the busiest day was Saturday 28th October with 160,027 visitors. This is about 10,000 more than on an average Saturday.

We are now four weeks further on in the year and footfall for the year to date is now 3.1% up on the previous year. We are still recording visitor numbers of 783,648 per week, compared to an average increase +0.3% in the South East Region, and -0.8% for UK as a whole.

Our footfall counters are located in Queen St, Cornmarket and St George's Place. They show that Cornmarket is still the busiest location of the three, which confirms that the pedestrian flow is not concentrated in the west of the centre.

We do not have access to sales figures for retail outlets as this is commercially sensitive information which is not shared with the Council, but the City Centre Manager has received many anecdotal references to the benefits that the opening of the Westgate has brought for their businesses.

Supplementary Question

When might we have a more detailed picture – and is there any way to reconcile the 'no expected increase in pollution' with the net increase in footfall and numbers of buses and cars travelling round the centre.

Response

We've been told that there were 100,000 people in the Westgate but only 6% of car park spaces were occupied. There is a successful campaign to get people to use park and ride, buses and trains so they are not contributing to a significant increase in traffic. It will be interesting to test this over Christmas, and afterwards once the trade settles into a regular pattern.

30. From Councillor Gant to Councillor Price – Visual aspect of Cornmarket Street

Does the Board have any plans to improve the visual aspect of Cornmarket Street, and in particular to help ameliorate the immediate impact of business closures linked to the opening of the new Westgate?

Written response

The Council is currently working with the Landlords and Managing Agents who are responsible for units on Cornmarket to ensure that empty units are kept secure and that opportunities for the use of promotional window displays are taken. These could include the promotion of the Covered Market and cultural attractions such as the Ashmolean. Several of the units recently vacated are likely to be re-occupied within the next couple of months.

There are also regular discussions between the City Centre Manager, Streetscene, County Highways and Community Safety and Resilience to ensure the area remains a

priority in terms of cleanliness, maintenance of street furniture, signage and the daily management of any anti-social behaviour.

An audit of the void units across the city centre has been carried out, covering ownership, size, rents and business rates and any current options for reletting.

The latest Retail Needs Study, (Carter Jonas, 2017) indicates that Oxford is ranked 42nd in the 2015 Javelin Venue ranking of all town and shopping centres. (3000+). The I Study identifies that there is strong and growing market demand from retail and leisure operators for representation in the city centre and it is performing well in terms of reported Prime Zone A Rents and shopping yields. Several mixed-use schemes are coming forward in Cornmarket and George Street, including the redevelopment of the Council's own property assets in George St, which was approved by the City Executive Board last month.

31. From Councillor Simmons to Councillor Price – Oxford to Cambridge Growth Corridor

Does the Portfolio Holder agree with CPRE demands that there should be a full statutory public consultation into the Oxford to Cambridge Growth Corridor and Expressway, followed by a Public Inquiry, at which the environmental and social costs of the Growth Corridor should be weighed against the potential economic benefits envisaged, and the routing of any Expressway should be decided.

Written response

The project team for the proposed Expressway consists of officials from Highways England and Jacobs. A Local Authorities stakeholder reference group is to be set up comprising both elected members and senior local authority officers, and this will sit alongside a number of wider stakeholder reference groups that will be open to all relevant interested parties. My understanding is that a major infrastructure project of this type is required to be subject to a public inquiry.

32. From Councillor Wilkinson to Councillor Price – Boundary Review

As part of our cross-Party work on the boundary review, members have been considering documents on structure and governance of Preston Council. That Council has a similar committee structure to our own, plus an extra committee which deals with restructure and other employment issues. Would you agree there might be a case for considering the introduction of a similar committee here?

Written response

The cross- party group for the boundary review has dealt effectively with the issues which arise from the review process, but I am not aware of any pressing need to add another committee to the current decision- making structures of this Council.

33. From Councillor Gant to Councillor Price – Think-tank

Would the Leader join me in noting the recent report from the respected think-tank ResPublica, which says “The needless confusion that frustrates the ambitions of business and government alike in our county areas must end now?”

With Brexit on the horizon and our city-regions already benefiting from devolution, we can't afford the waste and complication that the current system creates. Single councils at the county scale are the future and we call on the Government to move rapidly to encourage them".

Would he agree with me that examples of this sort of "confusion...waste and complication" are a regular occurrence in Oxford, ranging from relatively small-scale examples like this council using resources to conduct a consultation into the new taxi rank in Cornmarket only for respondents to be told that their responses have no bearing on the implementation of the scheme; planning conditions imposed by this council not being actioned because they are the responsibility of another authority; to larger-scale issues like housebuilding and infrastructure planning across the county being dependent on alignment between a range of viewpoints which are not always compatible, with the result that Oxford's housing need does not always get allocated in the best possible place?

Would he join me in urging the Secretary of State to give due consideration to all well-researched contributions to this debate which seek to deliver better services and better value for money, including this report from ResPublica?

Written response

It is interesting to note that the Leader of the Opposition continues to be a cheerleader for the destruction of city government, in order apparently, to bring the designation of taxi ranks and licensing enforcement under a single authority. While I think that there is scope for an intelligent discussion about the appropriate levels and structures for taking decisions about particular strategic and operational issues, the superficial assumption that unitary counties are the panacea to all structural issues is not credible – other than to the commissioners of the report to which this question refers, the County Councils Network.

34. From Councillor Simmons to Councillor Price – Oxford and Cambridge University

Does the Leader share the concerns of the Green Group at the recent revelations about Oxford and Cambridge Universities (including nearly half of all Oxbridge colleges), made in the so-called Paradise Papers, that they have secretly invested tens of millions of pounds in offshore funds, including in a joint venture to develop oil exploration and deep-sea drilling? What influence can/will he bring to bear on the University and Colleges involved?

Written response

It seems unlikely that the City Council will be able to exercise much influence on the investment policies of the University of Oxford and the colleges, but I share the unease that many people in Oxford and elsewhere will feel about the rationale of investing funds in offshore tax havens and in tax avoidance investment vehicles.

To: Council

Date: 27 November 2017

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

Introduction

1. Addresses made by members of the public to the Council, and questions put to the Board members or Leader, registered by the deadline in the Constitution, are below. Any written responses available are also below.
2. This report is republished after the Council meeting as part of the minutes pack. This lists the full text of speeches delivered as submitted, summaries of speeches delivered which differ significantly from those submitted, and written and summarised verbal responses.

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

Addresses in part 2

1. Address by Dr Ramzy – removal of Freedom of the City
2. Address by Gunnar Niels, Chair, Summertown Stars AFC and Richard Lawrence-Wilson - Request to rebuild pavilion at Five Mile Drive Recreation Ground
3. Address by Elise Benjamin - Please provide agreed cycle parking at Westgate
4. Address by Artwell - Public accountability for the ODS
3. Address by Artwell – Standards Committee

Questions in part 2

1. Question from Judith Harley – part of Local Plan Policy SR2

Addresses in part 2

1. Address by Dr Ramzy – removal of Freedom of the City

Dear honourable members of Oxford City Council,

I write with reference to the widely reported ethnic cleansing and forced exodus of hundreds of thousands of Rohingya people and the role of Ms Aung San Suu Kyi, the noble peace prize winner and the de facto leader of Myanmar, in these atrocities.

I would like to bring your attention to the worldwide criticism of Ms Suu Kyi for standing in support of Burma's military campaign of murder, rape and torture against the Rohingya minority Muslim group.

I, and millions of people in Oxford and across the UK, believe that Ms Suu Kyi has ignored her duty to humanity and peace and has failed to speak out against the ethnic cleansing, rape and torture of innocent people whose only crime was to be Muslim.

Ms Suu Kyi has decided to stand in silence whilst the people of Rohingya are killed, tortured, and raped on her doorstep. Her only reaction has been to say this is "fake news". She has failed to recognise the UN's description of the action against Rohingya as a "textbook example of ethnic cleansing".

Standing silent in the face of the horrific acts against the Rohingya people calls the people of Great Britain to question whether Ms Suu Kyi deserves to hold the honour of the freedom of many cities in the UK, including the city of Oxford.

As one of the representatives of Muslims in Oxford and Oxfordshire, I would strongly endorse that Ms Suu Kyi is stripped of any outstanding or honorary titles that she has received in Oxford or any other part of the country.

I strongly believe the Honourable members of the Oxford City Council will keep upholding the standards of Oxford City, the best academic city in the world, and maintain the highest possible standards of justice and fairness that Oxford City deserves.

I thank you and God bless you all.

Dr Sheikh Ramzy

2. Address by Gunnar Niels, Chair, Summertown Stars AFC and Richard Lawrence-Wilson - Request to rebuild pavilion at Five Mile Drive Recreation Ground

Summertown Stars AFC

Request to rebuild pavilion at Five Mile Drive Recreation Ground

Address to Oxford City Council on 27 November 2017 (first part)

We request the Council to build a permanent pavilion at Five Mile Drive to replace the one that was demolished a few years ago, and to support us meanwhile with a temporary Portakabin. This is vital for the club to continue to offer football to hundreds of girls and boys.

Summertown Stars is the largest youth football club in Oxfordshire. We have around 750 players, a quarter of them girls, and over 50 teams, from under-6 to adult, plus a team for the visually impaired. A third of these teams, in the younger age groups, play at Five Mile Drive.

At Cutteslowe Park, our other home ground where two-thirds of our teams play, the Council and Club successfully completed the Bottom Pavilion in September 2016, an £800k project for which Summertown Stars had secured £600k of funding from the Football Foundation thanks to our Community Charter Standard status.

But at Five Mile Drive we are still without any proper facilities since the old pavilion was demolished a few years ago. This is unacceptable. Around 250 girls and boys from the younger age groups play at Five Mile Drive every weekend, and the club cannot provide even the most basic facilities to players, visiting teams and parents. We have had many complaints, and indeed a formal warning from the Oxford Mail Girls Football League last month.

Our needs are basic, but they are essential: a facility with two toilets (male and female), a small kitchen and room to offer refreshments to players, parents and the teams visiting from across the County, and separately a room or container for storage.

The Council provided a small, temporary welfare unit after the Club last addressed the Council (February 2016), but this is not fit for purpose. We seek the support from the Council for a new temporary solution involving a Portakabin – paid for by the Club – and a container for storage.

But the real long-term solution we are urging the Council to provide is a new pavilion that can be shared with the local Community, and that provides the right basic facilities to the 250 girls and boys playing at Five Mile Drive every weekend.

Thank you.

Gunnar Niels, Chair, Summertown Stars AFC Five Mile Drive Area Residents

Request for a replacement pavilion with a community space at Five Mile Drive Recreation Ground and support for Summertown Stars AFC

Address to Oxford City Council on 27 November 2017 (second part)

I am speaking on behalf of the community living around Five Mile Drive recreation ground. You have just heard about the desperate need for toilets and facilities for hundreds of girls and boys who play football there every week. Their situation is an absolute disgrace and shames us all. Local residents fully support the Summertown Stars request, and we are also desperate to see Five Mile Drive pavilion replaced with a building that includes a space for the community.

About 480 families, 1,300 people of all ages live within 500 metres of the pavilion. We are hemmed in on three sides by busy trunk roads and on the fourth by private land.

Apart from the recreation ground we have no amenities whatsoever - no shop, no pub, no community centre, no church, no school. There is no local hub or meeting place.

Community celebrations and meetings were held in the pavilion for over 50 years. It was our polling station. But it gradually became unsafe until only the toilets could be used. In 2013 we were delighted when the City Council announced that 12 pavilions including Five Mile Drive were going to be improved. Since then all the others have been upgraded or replaced. Most recently the lovely new pavilion in Headington Quarry was opened on 27 October. The essential replacement of our pavilion has not happened. It has simply been demolished.

To sum up, I would like to quote what Councillor Linda Smith said to the press when opening the new Quarry pavilion. She said: *"By the way, it has a fantastic community space - this is something for the whole local community not just footballers"* and *"I hope to see lots of people using it for all sorts of activities from birthday celebrations to group meet ups."*

We recognise exactly what Councillor Smith had in mind. A survey of residents has shown overwhelming support for a pavilion with space for community activities. We desperately need a focus, to tackle isolation and loneliness amongst older people and get youngsters together. We join Summertown Stars in asking the Council to keep its promise, and replace the pavilion at Five Mile Drive.

Thank you.

Richard Lawrence-Wilson

Summary of verbal response from the Board Member, Councillor Smith

Thank you for the address and for the excellent work Summertown Stars do to give so many people the opportunity to participate in football. We have been very successful working in partnership to invest in two pavilions in Cutteslowe and Summertown stars were instrumental in obtaining substantial external funds for these facilities we can all be proud of.

We have assessed the need for community facilities in the city and published our community centres strategy. The assessed need in Five Mile Drive does not support council expenditure on community facilities at the moment. There are nearby suitable alternative venues. To support football on the site, we recognise the need for adequate toilets and storage and there are a number of possible solutions. We will meet to discuss options and I am sure we can provide adequate facilities to allow you to carry on with your excellent work.

3. Address by Elise Benjamin - Please provide agreed cycle parking at Westgate

Statement to Full Council meeting, 27th November 2017

Elise Benjamin

In November 2014 the West Area Planning Committee met to decide on the application for the new Westgate shopping centre.

I was a member of that committee and I remember a representative of Cyclox raising concerns about the provision of adequate cycle parking. Those concerns were shared by some members of the committee, myself included, as stated in the meeting minutes.

It was agreed that

“Details of cycle parking” as conditioned, should be presented to the Committee for decision at a later stage to “ensure that the concerns of Cyclox were addressed”.

The Committee papers also included a response from the developers, Westgate Oxford Alliance

“... applicant and City Council support aspiration to provide circa 1000 cycle parking spaces on or close to development site”

The cycle parking conditions were finally discussed over 13 months later at another West Area Planning Committee meeting in January 2016.

At that meeting it was minuted that

“The Committee were concerned to ensure that the remaining spaces for the final discharge of condition 21 (providing 1000 cycle parking spaces) were secured.”

The committee wanted the Westgate Alliance to have further talks with the County Council, and to also engage with Cyclox to ensure that the conditioned number of cycle parking spaces were met.

To be absolutely clear, Condition 21 of the outline planning permission plainly stated that details of cycle parking had to be approved in writing within 12 months of the start of construction.

Another key part of Condition 21 is that

“The cycle parking scheme as approved shall be available for use upon first occupation of the development and retained at all times thereafter.”

Anyone reading that condition would be justified in the belief that the cycle parking would be installed ready for use on the day The Westgate opened. But as we know, this is far from the case.

Planning Condition 21 actually specifies “1022 spaces in total” and goes on to say:

“The provision of cycle parking is a key element of the public realm and transport design for the Westgate Development. In coordination with Oxford City Council and Oxfordshire County Council [Westgate Oxford Alliance] have identified a range of cycle parking locations at all the main approach routes to the Westgate Development to ensure cyclists have safe, easy approach routes and locations to park their cycles.”

This is repeated in the Westgate developers own Public Realm Design Report.

Not only was there an assurance that cycle parking was to be part of the public realm of the new Westgate, but there was also an assurance that cyclists would have safe and easy approach routes and parking locations.

So, last month we had the long-awaited opening of the new Westgate, with an expectation that cyclists would be welcome. But sadly the reality was far from what was expected. Not only were there insufficient cycle spaces to comply with Condition 21, but the assertion that “*cycle parking is a key element of the public realm*” was a smokescreen for what is clearly an attempt to avoid cluttering the curtilage of a high end shopping centre with bikes.

How inconvenient for a shopping centre to have to accommodate cyclists when they want people to drive in so that they can buy more things.

As a well known local cycling blogger put it a few days after the Westgate opened

“Westgate’s website boasts of the 1000 cycle parking spaces they have provided, and the ‘Cycle Hub’ – covered, secure bike parking with a workshop run by Oxford’s well-regarded Broken Spoke Cooperative. But wait – where are all these spaces? Where is the Hub?”

Yes, when the Westgate opened there was a blatant reference on their website of a local Cycle Co-op’s apparent involvement in cycle provision at the shopping centre, adding to the cycle friendly smokescreen.

Well, I’m a member of the Broken Spoke Board and I can tell you that no such arrangement exists; which is probably why the Westgate Alliance took the page down a few days after the shopping centre opened.

So, back to what happened to the bike parking.

Well, the Westgate travel web page has been changed. It now claims

“If you come to Westgate by bike, you’ll be able to park conveniently around the centre using our bicycle spaces in the vicinity of Westgate. Indoor secure parking stands as well as outdoor parking ...is also available.”

The web page then lists the locations where they have provided cycle spaces; three around the outside of the John Lewis building, and one on Speedwell Street.

That’s a total of just 240 stands.

If you deduct the 176 spaces lost from the front of the old Westgate, and the 46 lost from the top end of St Ebbe’s, that means just 18 additional cycle spaces!

And as for the hub. It still isn’t open, has no signage or information on the web site to say when it will open, and is a mystery to staff at the Westgate information desk.

As the Chair of Cyclox recently put it, in one of many newspaper articles

“There are no cycle parking spaces in convenient locations – none at all. Overall, the storyline for cycling at new Westgate has been one of wholly inadequate planning, complete marginalisation...”

The Westgate car park was up and running in time for the opening, and the temporary council car park at Oxpens is still open, so it’s clear that for the Westgate Alliance and the

City Council Administration, car parking takes priority over cycling provision.

If you, as the political administration of this Council, are genuinely serious about making Oxford zero emission in a couple of years then you need to take action to prove that non-polluting modes of transport are important.

You need to show us that actions speak louder than words.

You need to take action to prove to cyclists that you aren't simply sitting back and letting the Westgate Alliance ride roughshod over planning conditions.

You need to take action to show that marginalising cyclists is unacceptable.

You need to take action to stop the current bike parking chaos around the Westgate with cyclists chaining their bikes to anything they can including lamp posts, the railings at Bonn Square, street signs, and public seating, because the bike racks aren't there.

Written Response from the Board Member, Councillor Hollingsworth

I think it would be helpful to spell out exactly how many cycle parking spaces are to be provided by the Westgate development. The original planning permission that was approved included 1034 spaces, of which 118 were for the residential units, 184 were in the secure cycle hub, and 732 were in the public realm.

As part of the development 88 spaces were removed from at the northern end of the site in Bonn Square. As the committee report made clear this was taken into account, so the net increase in the number of spaces was 944 spaces in total. Other spaces temporarily removed during the construction phase, such as those in St Ebbe's, will be replaced and are NOT therefore part of the calculation.

The cycle hub, which now contains 186 spaces, is fully fitted out and (at the time of writing) is planned to open in a week to ten days time when the electronic fob operating system has been tested and becomes operational. The residential cycle parking, of 118 spaces, is due for completion soon and will be open when residents start to move into the flats.

The remaining spaces are provided on street, in 25 locations around the Westgate centre. Many of these spaces have been installed, and were installed before the centre was opened – for example in Faulkner Street. Others, such as those on Old Greyfriars Street, can only be installed once the paving works are completed over the next couple of weeks. As of Thursday morning (23rd November) 410 of these spaces have been installed, with 384 currently available for use and 26 about to be when resurfacing work near them is completed. This does NOT include spaces currently installed in St Ebbe's and Pennyfarthing Place, as these are replacements of temporarily removed parking spaces, as noted above.

In order to comply with the total figure in the planning permission a further 320 spaces need to be installed (322 if the public realm figure is treated as a separate target). Westgate believe that they have identified sites for 350 spaces, and these sites have been or are being discussed with planning officers and where appropriate the County Council to ensure that they do not obstruct access for pedestrians or emergency vehicles. It is believed that there is scope for a increase in the number of spaces in St Ebbes for example.

These remaining spaces will be installed as soon as the areas in question are paved and clear of any remaining construction works, so there will be a rolling programme of cycle parking installation over the next few weeks. However because cycle parking can only be installed once there is pavement on which to install it, it is likely that the final few spaces will only be operational near the end of the final construction works, in the few weeks after Christmas.

In addition, the Council is increasing its resources for ensuring that cycle parking is kept clear of abandoned bikes, meaning that more spaces are available for use. Historically racks were inspected approximately on a quarterly basis by the Abandoned

Vehicles Officer, with a focus on machines which could be considered unroadworthy - having 2 or more repair issues, for example one flat tyre and a broken chain. This narrow definition did not of course include bikes which were abandoned.

The frequency of inspections has now been increased, with all cycle parking inspected at least monthly. The bikes that appear to be abandoned are tagged 7 days in advance or removal, and then stored for at least six weeks before disposal. In addition each rack will be deep cleaned once a year, allowing a further opportunity to identify and remove abandoned bikes.

In addition all Streetscene staff have been tasked with reporting any seemingly 'unroadworthy' bikes during their routine work or inspections, and these will be tagged at the immediately rather than being waiting for the monthly inspections.

4. Address by Artwell - Public accountability for the ODS

The Oxford Mail and the Oxford Times have recently reported the request from the soon-to-retire Labour City Council Leader, Cllr Price, asking us, the residents to “help us to create the sort of city we can be happy with.”

Consultation, if honestly conducted, is to be welcomed, and can be empowering for Oxford residents. However, there are significant areas where consultation is glaringly missing. Major changes are currently taking place within the Council Tax funded Oxford City Council, which will transform part of the Council – at the Cowley Marsh Depot – into a private, for profit company, named Oxford Direct Services (ODS); the turnover of ODS will be over forty million pounds, and the majority of the current City Council’s 300 employees at the Cowley Marsh Depot will have their contracts transferred to ODS. Where was the public consultation for all of this?

Why was this policy, to transform the City Council into a private, for Profit Company, not presented as a major Labour Party policy at the last local elections? This is a major change of accountability, and local Labour should have presented this to the people of Oxford, giving them the opportunity to comment, prior to the development of this private entity ODS. On Monday 6th November, Cllr James Fry, as Chairman of the Scrutiny Shareholder Panel, referred to ODS, and its creation, as a “Beast.”

This is a huge and major change in the nature of the City Council, and a major change in how local services are managed and delivered. Surely, Cllr Price should have sought a referendum of the people of Oxford? The Council Tax payers should have been consulted and consented prior to this.

Currently, executing citizen’s democratic duty of holding the City Council to account by writing to the servants of the Council and elected Councillors is already tardy, and the response is often shockingly unsatisfactory; even with the help and assistance of Freedom Of Information (FOI) powers. Why is the City Council permitted to create a third layer of local government that is a private company, which is not subject to public transparency, nor accountability, nor FOI requests, without this plan being offered for consultation, or as a referendum question, to the people of Oxford?

Elected Councillors, you are about to create a private company called ODS whose function is to delivery Oxford City Council services. Before you agree to this, will you please hold a referendum of the people of Oxford City, asking if they consent to the creation of this privatised company? This would determine how many residents are “happy” with this proposal, in line with Cllr Price’s recent request. In addition, will you please make it a legal requirement of the privatised ODS that it is to be subjected to the terms and conditions of the Freedom of Information Legislation?

Artwell

Barton.

Summary of verbal response from the Board Member, Councillor Turner

We are really clear this is not about privatisation: the Council is going to be the sole shareholder in its company and the point actually is to enable the Council continue to run front line services. Additional trading will be directed back into front-line services

This Council has a proud record of in-sourcing work and doing work for other organisations in the private sector, in not for profit sector, and in the public sector. Setting up this vehicle allows us to take control of our services and bring more work in so it is actually the reverse of privatisation. We can demonstrate our commitment to the values of public service through the values of our local authority trading company.

The proposal was set out in the local party manifesto and I think the vision was shared in some degree by others in the chamber at local elections so I wouldn't want to spend local people's money on a referendum.

5. Address by Artwell – Standards Committee

Artwell gave a speech about the Standards Committee meeting on 1 November which was significantly different from that submitted in writing.

In summary he said that:

Holding councillors to account and probity in public office was very serious and should rise above political colours. He attended the Standards Committee meeting on May 1st because he had submitted a complaint and wanted to hear how the Standards Committee would address these complaints. He was disappointed that Chair and the committee did not deal afresh with the complaints, and with the Chair's remarks about the untimely recent newspaper coverage. He asked Council to consider removing the Chair and replacing her with an independent Chair, independent and bold enough to speak up for probity of elected Councillors without prejudice to party politics

Summary of verbal response from the Board Member, Councillor Price

Firstly, there is no longer any requirement in the law to have a standards committee: the current government back in 2010 abolished the requirement. We retained it because we felt it was important to have the public reassurance that standards and public probity are maintained.

Because it is a committee set up under the local government act 2000 it has to conform to the proportionate membership of groups on the Council.

It is chaired by a member of the majority Labour group currently. It has four invited non-voting attendees: the Council's 'independent persons' who are chosen for their expertise and advise the Monitoring Officer and take part in the individual examination of the particular cases referred to them. They play a very important role and their contribution has been very significant in determining the outcomes of cases referred to them.

In the meeting that Mr Artwell refers to there was a report on the cases that have been dealt with in the course of the year. These were not cases to be considered at that meeting: they were cases which had been dealt with and resolved already. The Chair was perfectly right in her actions. I can assure Mr. Artwell that the Chair will not be withdrawn from that Committee.

Questions in part 2

1. Question from Judith Harley – part of Local Plan Policy SR2

Judith Harley gave a speech about the application of policy SR2 to the wildflower area of Cowley Marsh Park which was different from that submitted in writing.

In summary she said that:

Lord Mayor, Councillors,

At the last Full Council, on 2nd October, I asked a question about part of Local Plan Policy SR2 I was disappointed that my question seemed so unclear that it was not answered so I am asking it again: about the level of proof required to show that an open area provides an important green space for local residents and thus allow planning permission to remove this space to be denied.

In his reply Cllr Hollingsworth acknowledges the space at Cowley Marsh Park is important to those who wrote in but SR2 appears to contradict his stance.

I understand planning applications must be judged on their merits but surely SR2 has been met and permission should not have been granted. Which is why I am asking: what evidence is sufficient to trigger the balance of SR2 against permission? We are still not sure what the precise criteria are: what precisely and exactly do we need to provide to satisfy you and have permission refused?

Written Response from the Board Member, Councillor Hollingsworth to the original question.

The premise of the question appears to be based on a misunderstanding of the planning system. Each planning application has to be judged on its merits, and against all current national, local and neighbourhood planning policies that apply. In many cases an application that supports one planning policy may run counter to another, and in those cases it is up to the planning officers, and where appropriate a planning committee of councillors, to weigh up the competing policies and decide on balance whether the application should be approved or refused. The planning process is not a tick-box exercise.

In the case of Cowley Marsh Depot, it was acknowledged that the level of response indicated that this space was important to those local residents who had written in. However it is not the case that demonstrating that importance would automatically lead to the refusal of the planning application, as this question appears to suggest that it should. As with all planning applications, the assessment of this application took into account planning policies and other material planning considerations. The assessment has to balance the requirements of this policy against all other relevant policies and factors.

In reaching a decision in this instance, the identified harm was balanced by the size of the area where the development was proposed, the quality of that space, the fact that the majority of the park would be retained for use by local residents and the wider benefits that stemmed from the proposal. The minutes from the Planning Review Committee on 21st August record that “In determining this application a majority of the Committee were persuaded that there was a proven need for a temporary extension to the depot and that this outweighed the harm caused by the loss of open green space under policy SR2.”

In other words, the Committee recognised that there was harm because the application ran counter to policy SR2, but this was outweighed by the benefits. Different councillors could and did form different views on this balance, as demonstrated by the majority

rather than unanimous decision, but all councillors accepted that there was harm as defined by policy SR2.

Any subsequent planning application would be subject to the same process, and would be judged on the balance of its benefits and harms when measured against planning policies.

Summary of verbal response from the Board Member, Councillor Hollingsworth

Planning decisions are taken in a quasi-judicial process. Each member has to come to their own decision on the facts. There is an officer report written on basis of professional expertise but each member has to form their own view based on the weight of the policies and facts which is why you get majority not unanimous decisions. So it's impossible to answer the question as posed as each individual committee must weigh up the evidence in front of it and come to a conclusion – there is no other legal way of doing this.

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