

Minutes of a meeting of the COUNCIL on Monday 23 April 2018

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Committee members:

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

Apologies:

Councillor(s) Fry, Goff, Hollingsworth and Munkonge sent apologies.

Minute's silence and tributes

Council heard tributes and stood for a minute's silence in memory of former Lord Mayor Pat Stannard who died in late March.

103. Apologies for absence

Apologies are noted in the attendance.

Councillors Goddard, Iley-Williamson and Turner sent apologies for lateness.

104. Declarations of interest

There were no declarations.

105. Minutes

Council agreed to approve the minutes of the ordinary meetings held on

- 29 January 2018
- 14 February 2018
- 19 February 2018

as a true and correct record,

subject to a minor change in Minute 73 to correct Councillor Price's term to 10 years as Leader of the Council.

106. Announcements

The Lord Mayor thanked those councillors standing down at the election for their service to the Council and to their communities.

She announced the upcoming Lord Mayor's Charity dinner on 27 April and memorial services on 4 May.

She reported on her attendance at events including a remembrance ceremony on the 24th anniversary of the Rwandan genocide.

The Sheriff reported that new honorary Freemen and a number of apprentices had been admitted.

The Leader of the Council reported she had been honoured to attend the local synagogue for a Holocaust Memorial ceremony.

She also thanked those standing down for their services, and paid tribute to the three long-standing councillors (Councillors Fooks, Price, Sanders) who were stepping down.

107. Appointment to Committees

There were no appointments.

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

There were no addresses or questions.

109. Highway Maintenance Agreement

Council considered a report of the Executive Director Sustainable City, submitted to the City Executive Board on 20 March 2018, seeking authority to enter into an Agency Agreement with Oxfordshire County Council to provide highway maintenance services on the classified road network in the City, in addition to the works already undertaken on minor roads under section 42 of The Highways Act 1980.

Councillor Brown, Leader of the Council, presented the report and moved the recommendations which were adopted on being seconded and put to the vote

Council noted that the confidential information would be released when appropriate; under the agency agreement the Council did not have complete control over the scheduling of repairs; and the contract would be signed at a future date. Council noted concerns over the allocation and amount of funding for road repairs in the city, the reactive nature of repairs, and the poor quality of some repairs made by utility companies.

Council resolved to:

approve the inclusion of a gross expenditure and gross income budget of £1.56 million for the year 2018-19 i.e. nil cost to the Council.

110. Pay Policy Statement 2018/19

Council agreed to grant a dispensation to officers (all of whom were affected by the policy) allowing them to remain in the meeting for this item.

Council considered a report of the Head of Business Improvement seeking approval of the Annual Pay Policy Statement, and also setting out the annual gender gap report.

Councillor Price, Board Member for Corporate Strategy and Economic Development, presented the report and moved the recommendations which were adopted on being seconded and put to the vote.

Council resolved to:

approve the Annual Pay Policy Statement 2018/19 attached at Appendix 1 of the officer's report.

111. Scheme for the enrolment of Honorary Aldermen and Honorary Alderwomen of Oxford City Council

Councillor Goddard arrived at the start of this item.

Council considered a report of the Head of Law and Governance asking for approval of the scheme for the enrolment of Honorary Aldermen and Honorary Alderwomen.

Councillor Brown, Leader of the Council, presented the report and moved the recommendations which were adopted on being seconded and put to the vote.

Council resolved to:

adopt the scheme for the enrolment of Honorary Aldermen and Honorary Alderwomen of Oxford City Council, attached at Appendix 1 of the officer's report.

112. City Executive Board Minutes

a) Minutes of meeting Tuesday 13 February 2018 of City Executive Board

Minute 155 Grant Allocations to Community and Voluntary Organisations 2018/19

Councillor Gant asked about the timing of the implementation of the decision: in particular was there a delay in issuing the funds; the effect on organisations waiting for their grants; and were all grants now paid.

Councillor Brown replied that those with one-off grants were not generally reliant on these and those with on-going grants had been notified of the award. Those grants not disbursed before the election purdah period started would be paid after the election.

b) Minutes of meeting Tuesday 20 March 2018 of City Executive Board

There were no questions.

c) Minutes of the meeting Tuesday 17 April 2018 of City Executive Board

There were no questions.

113. Questions on Notice from Members of Council

50 written questions on notice were submitted. These, written responses, and summaries of the 21 supplementary questions and responses are set out in the supplement to these minutes.

114. Outside organisation/Committee Chair reports and questions

This item was taken before the public addresses.

Council had before it the Oxford Safer Communities Partnership's Annual Review report.

The Board Member, Councillor Hayes spoke to his report and thanked the Council's partner organisations.

Council discussed and noted the report, the work of the partnership on tackling drug-dealing and the ensuing anti-social behaviour, and the impact of cuts in funding on the budget and capacity of the police force.

Council resolved to note the report.

115. Scrutiny Committee update report

This item was taken before the public addresses.

Council had before it the report of the Chair of the Scrutiny Committee.

The Chair thanked all those involved with the work of the committee and panels over the year and in particular the officers directly supporting the committee's work. He noted the changes to the committee's work to allow it to play a full part, in particular on scrutiny of the Council's companies; and the changes needed to allow scrutiny of the Oxfordshire Growth Board.

Council resolved to note the report.

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

Councillor Iley-Williamson arrived for the start of this item.

There were four addresses to Council and two questions to Board Members.

1. Amanda Mackenzie Stuart addressed Council asking for action to secure proper access to the Westgate car park for high Wheelchair Accessible Vehicles, as the current height restrictions prohibited this and there was no advance warning of the restriction.
2. Judith Harley addressed Council inviting the City Council to work with the Oxford African History Celebration (OAHC) organisation to commemorate events three key days: Windrush Day (22 June 2018) August 23 - Remembrance of the Slave Trade and its abolition (23 August 2018) and Abolition of Slavery (2 December 2018).

3. Judith Harley addressed Council outlining problems with car and bike parking at Temple Cowley Library caused by the ongoing construction work and asking that the spaces are provided as shown in the planning permission.
4. Artwell addressed Council about his view that inflated house prices were being aggravated by prices in the Barton Park development.
5. Nigel Gibson asked a question about the pricing structure and price increases at the Council's leisure centres as in his view these resulted in Oxford City Council discriminating against disabled people.
6. Judith Harley asked questions about the new Oxford Direct Services Company.

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.

117. Motions on notice

Council had before it six motions on notice and amendments submitted in accordance with Council procedure rule 11.17, and reached decisions as set out below.

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

- a. Addressing the housing crisis
- b. Disabled access to the Westgate Centre
- c. Phasing out unnecessary single-use plastics
- d. Short-term Lets

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

- e. The Crisis in Legal Aid and the Immediate Need for Action
- f. Call on Government to introduce a new Clean Air Act and other measures to tackle air pollution

a) Addressing the housing crisis

Councillor Turner arrived during the debate on this item.

Councillor Brown, seconded by Councillor Rowley, proposed her submitted motion as set out in the agenda and briefing note.

Councillor Gant, seconded by Councillor Landell Mills, proposed his submitted 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 agreed.

Council resolved to adopt the following motion:

Council believes that Oxford is in the midst of a housing crisis, affecting all sections of our city, from people who grew up here but cannot afford to live here any more, families spanning several generations forced to live in one house because grown-up children cannot afford to move out, through to those who need to move on from hostel provision but can find nowhere to move to, and those who end up sleeping on the streets.

Council believes that a wide variety of factors are responsible for this housing crisis, including decades of under-investment in social housing, and in particular a reckless disregard by central government for the potential that council housing could play in solving the housing crisis.

Council further believes that, notwithstanding the city's determination to free up land for development, there is no ability to build enough dwellings to meet our housing needs within the city's boundaries, and therefore sustainable urban extensions, with a good proportion of genuinely affordable housing and nomination rights for the City Council are a necessary part of the solution.

Consideration should be given to taking further land out of Oxfordshire's Green belt to facilitate this as has happened elsewhere. The emerging National Planning Policy Framework recognises that in exceptional circumstances this can be a sustainable way to plan to meet housing needs, including allocating new land as Green belt by way of compensation.

Council resolves to ask the City Executive Board to continue to make appropriate representations to our neighbouring councils on this matter, to feed such views into emerging sub-regional planning arrangements, and for the Leader to write to both local MPs asking for their views on this matter and their support.

b) Disabled access to the Westgate Centre

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

In the debate Council requested that checks on compliance with standards and that height restricting barriers met the requirements for accessibility for large WAVs were carried out for its own car parks, and noted that the County Council would be asked to take steps to improve advance notice of the height restrictions in the Westgate car park.

After debate and on being put to the vote, the motion was agreed.

Council resolved to adopt the following motion:

Council believes that disabled people should have the same life opportunities as all. In that context, Council notes concerns about aspects of access to the Westgate centre for disabled people. In particular, Council notes:

- 1) Difficulties of access to the centre's car parks for specially adapted vehicles for disabled people due to low headroom at car park entrances;
- 2) unhelpful placement of notices about the low headroom meaning that difficult manoeuvres are needed to reverse from the car park entrance;
- 3) the limited disabled parking available near the Westgate centre;
- 4) wider concerns about the placement of usable taxi ranks in the vicinity of the Westgate centre and about the size of some of the lifts within it.

Council resolves to mandate the Leader and Chief Executive of the Council to contact the Westgate Alliance to instigate discussions over how to further improve access for disabled people to the Westgate centre, and to ensure that such concerns are fully factored into the Alliance's plans for the Castle Quarter.

c) Phasing out unnecessary single-use plastics

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

After debate and on being put to the vote, the motion was agreed.

Council resolved to adopt the following motion:

This Council commits to working to bring an end to the use of unnecessary Single Use Plastics (SUP) in Oxford.

This Council resolves to:

Request that the Executive Director for Sustainable City brings a report to City Executive Board on the options for bringing an end to the use of unnecessary Single Use Plastics (SUP) in Oxford, to:

- 1) enable Oxford City Council to become a full signatory of the 'Plastic Free Pledge', by phasing out the use of unnecessary SUPs in all City Council buildings, and working with commissioning partners to end the purchase and procurement of SUPs through the Council's supply chain;
- 2) encourage the city's businesses, organisations and residents to go 'plastic free,' working with best practice partners in the city to explore the creation of a 'plastic free network,' that could provide business support, practical guidelines and advice to help local businesses transition from SUPs to sustainable alternatives;
- 3) provide feasible options to incentivise traders on Council land to sell re-usable containers and invite customers to bring their own, with the aim of phasing out SUPs; including investigating the possibility of requiring food and drink vendors to avoid SUPs as a condition of their event permission, strengthening the existing conditions and guidance circulated to exhibitors and traders.

d) Short-term lets

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

Council noted in debate that this proposal was not intended to penalise those providing short-term lets, but expansion and diversification of the sector meant that regulation was necessary to prevent lettings which were dangerous, sub-standard or caused nuisance.

After debate and on being put to the vote, the motion was agreed.

Council resolved to adopt the following motion:

This Council notes the expansion of short-term lets in Oxford as in many other cities, and welcomes the options that this provides for visitors to our city to find somewhere to stay.

However the Council is concerned with the growing reports of problems in this sector, and in particular notes that the very serious issues that have been reported in other cities are now starting to be reported here.

There have been documented instances of pop-up brothels and evidence of both single properties and groups of properties being used as de facto guest houses, without any need to comply with the same regulations as standard guest houses do when it comes to fire risk, environmental health or safeguarding against child sexual exploitation.

Other cities have seen houses in residential areas advertised for pay parties – where a house is effectively used as a commercial nightclub without the knowledge or consent of the landlord, with no safety or noise regulations in place, and with no consideration for neighbours.

This Council believes that it is essential that the short-term let sector is regulated, both to protect neighbours and also to prevent unfair competition undermining landlords, hotels and guest-houses that do comply with regulations that set safe standards for their properties.

Specifically, this regulation could include:

- A definition of a property used permanently or regularly as a short-term let as a separate planning class, leading to a requirement to obtain planning permission, and allowing neighbours to object;
- Licensing or registration of premises, in line with HMOs or hotels and guesthouses;
- Treating such premises as commercial rather than residential, with a requirement to make use of commercial refuse and waste services.

This Council therefore asks that:

- 1. The City Executive Board, and the Board Member with responsibility for this area, works alongside other local authorities, the Local Government Association and other appropriate bodies to make a coordinated and ongoing request to Government for powers to implement a scheme to make properties on short-term lets subject to the same regulation as equivalent properties.**
- 2. The Board Member with responsibility for this area writes to our two local MPs to ask them to support such a scheme, providing them with evidence and information to allow them to ask questions of Ministers and introduce or support any Private Members Bill or amendment to other legislation to introduce a scheme to regulate short-term lets.**

e) The Crisis in Legal Aid and the Immediate Need for Action

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

f) Call on Government to introduce a new Clean Air act and other measures to tackle air pollution

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

The meeting started at 5.00 pm and ended at 8.25 pm

Chair

Date: Monday 23 July 2018

To: Council
Date: 23 April 2018
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.
5. Unfamiliar terms may be briefly explained in footnotes.

Questions and responses

Board member for A Clean and Green Oxford

1. From Councillor Brandt to Councillor Tanner – air quality data

Will the portfolio holder make available to members the 2017 air quality data (nitrogen diffusion tube data) which it is understood has been "verified and accredited" and released by DEFRA to Oxford City Council?

Response

The data, and associated analysis, will be available in the Air Quality Annual Status Report which will be published as soon as we have approval from DEFRA, I expect this to be by the end of June 2018. We are not in a position to publicise the data until the report is final and all analysis on the data is complete.

2. From Councillor Thomas to Councillor Tanner – air quality data average readings

Is the Portfolio holder aware that of the 70 diffusion tubes in the city centre, only 35 have provided contiguous data for the years 2014, 2015, & 2016, and that the average NO₂ for these 35 sites was 38.0 ug/m³ in 2014, 38.3 ug/m³ in 2015 and 38.1 ug/m³ in 2016 - meaning improvements in air quality stalled in 2014?

Can he provide the average reading for these 35 sites for 2017?

Written Response

Yes. I am aware of the slow-down in improvement which is why the City Council recognises that a step change is needed in order to improve air quality further. This is why we have made proposal in partnership with the County Council to introduce a Zero Emission Zone in Oxford. Air quality data from 2017 will be available in our Air Quality Annual Status Report which is due to be published by the end of June.

Board member for Community Safety

3. From Councillor Altaf-Khan to Councillor Hayes – community cohesion 1

Given past occurrences of anti-semitism in Oxford, including in student societies, what is the city council doing to allay anxieties of Jewish residents?

Written Response

The Council undertakes and grant funds a wide range of positive activities to support community cohesion: this ranges from community events through to sessions and activities in our community centres.

The City Council works closely with Thames Valley Police to ensure we play our part in response to hate crime and the anxieties of all communities and individuals who may be affected by it. Where hate crime does occur we work with partners to deploy a coordinated response, not only through the pursuit of the offenders by Police, but by offering target-hardening advice to improve the individuals' safety.

Thames Valley Police are in regular contact with the Synagogue and thankfully there are very few anti-Semitic hate crime incidents reported in Oxford, however if there are anxieties amongst Jewish residents which we are not aware of then we would of course seek to work with them and our partners to support them and identify opportunities to increase cohesion.

Supplementary Question

Would the Board Member agree that harmony between communities takes a long time to build? Would he agree that the grant process does not effectively contribute to this as it does not attract applications from ethnic minority groups? Would he make dealing with anti-semitism and hate crime a priority for the community safety team?

Response

Reducing hate and hate crime in the city is a priority. The community safety partnership has secured £10k specifically to reduce hate crime and I am sure that will address the concerns.

4. From Councillor Gant to Councillor Price – JSSP

Para 21 of the Growth Deal states: "...The JSSP [joint statutory spatial plan] would be prepared under section 28 of the Planning [etc] Act 2004, which enables two or more local planning authorities to agree to prepare a joint Local Plan. However, formal decision making to commence, submit and adopt the JSSP would remain with the local planning authorities individually through full council meetings."

Could the Cllr tell us exactly how this council will be asked to make that decision, and the timescales involved?

Will this council and the other districts have a vote on whether to commence, submit and adopt the JSSP?

Will all councils need to approve it for it go forward?

Will the County, as a non-planning authority, have a vote on the JSSP at the Growth Board?

If so, will the county council get a vote, or will its cabinet decide its position, as happened with the Growth Deal?

Written Response

The preparation of the JSSP will follow the same regulatory processes as other statutory plans under the NPPF and associated regulations. Key stages are subject to Council approval by each planning authority. The County Council is the minerals, waste and transport authority and will contribute in both areas and participate in plan preparation. The Growth Board oversight of the JSSP preparation is now proposed to be supported through a newly constituted s.28 committee. This will involve the participation of all of the local planning authorities including the county council. The plan-making authority of the individual local planning authorities is not affected by this proposed governance structure.

Supplementary Question

Will this council and other district councils vote separately on whether to adopt the JSSP?

Response

Yes.

5. From Councillor Gant to Councillor Price – local plan timetables

Cllr Cotton said the recent rejection by South Oxfordshire District Council of his proposals for their Local Plan would put the process back by "about a year". This takes SODC right up to the deadline of April 2019 identified in the Growth Deal for submission of Local Plans. The Deal specifically says that funding allocated by government "may be withheld or clawed back" if certain targets or milestones are not met: the Local Government Chronicle has characterised this as meaning that "failure to meet milestones could result in the "cessation of further investment" or the deal being cancelled."

Can Cllr Price as chair of the Growth Board reassure council that all member councils will meet the deadline of April 2019, and explain what happens if they don't?

Is the LGC right that the deal could be cancelled?

Written Response

There are a number of alternative options for SODC to take forward their Local Plan; the suggested delay is not inevitable. If there were to be a delay, it will be clear from early on that this could impact on the JSSP and Growth Deal timetable and discussions would then take place with Ministry of Housing and Local Government. Progress with delivering other key parts of the Growth deal such as our house building and infrastructure projects would be key factors in determining the views of Ministers and the civil service.

6. From Councillor Gant to Councillor Price – Growth Board Scrutiny

As chair of the Growth Board, would Cllr Price give this council an update on the emerging Scrutiny function before it comes to the board later this week?

Written Response

A Growth Board Scrutiny Panel is proposed to be established through a protocol between the constituent authorities with the involvement of a Scrutiny Chair from each authority. It is proposed to have three representatives for each authority. It will have the same call in powers as set out in the Local Government Act 2000. However, this non statutory Scrutiny Panel does not affect the statutory scrutiny functions in each of the constituent authorities.

7. From Councillor Gant to Councillor Price - revisit the apportionment of housing numbers

The cumulative total of units contained within proposals by a range of parties for housing developments at Bayswater and Wick Farm is significant. Reportedly, one possible outcome of changes at SODC is that Grenoble Rd may come back into consideration.

Given that SODC never agreed to the apportionment of Oxford's "unmet need" at the Growth Board, and given that it doesn't have a Local Plan, will this council be proposing that the Growth Board revisits the apportionment of housing numbers?

Written Response

No.

8. From Councillor Wade to Councillor Price – tourist levy progress

Following the successful Motion in Council on 27 November 2017, can the Board Member advise what progress has been made in liaising with other tourist cities to bring in a tourist levy?

Written Response

No action has been taken as yet. The Council's wider policy for the future of the city centre is being developed in conjunction with our partners and will provide the basis for approaches to other tourist cities.

Supplementary Question

The need for this levy was becoming urgent especially with the additional pressures from AirBnB lets. Will the Board Member look at other areas where this is being considered and progress this for Oxford?

Response

The Local Government Association and the Council have raised this with Government. Their response is that a levy is viewed as a new tax and is not acceptable. Responsibility for taking this forward will pass to the Board Member who takes on this portfolio.

9. From Councillor Thomas to Councillor Price – Westgate impact

Anecdotal evidence from local and independent traders (in the City Centre and in other satellite retail centres) is that since the opening of the Westgate they have started to see a drop business.

When will the City Council undertake a comprehensive survey of the impact of the Westgate on local traders?

Written Response

Anecdotal evidence is not the same as actual evidence. Actual evidence says that since the opening of the Westgate footfall in the city centre has increased sharply against the national trend of declining footfall.

There has been some movement of businesses around the city centre – some moving into the new Westgate, and some unrelated moves. Businesses are moving in to vacant units and a large redevelopment is proposed by Jesus College in Cornmarket.

The Council is developing proposals for an integrated city centre management structure and I expect that a review of the trading experience for the retail and food/beverage/hospitality sectors will be undertaken in the autumn of this year.

Supplementary Question

As footfall does not equate to trade, will the Board Members consider doing a comprehensive survey to get a true picture of trading and market conditions?

Response

A new survey will be undertaken in the autumn, when new short-term leases are in place and the City Centre strategy is better developed.

Board member for Culture and Communities

10. From Councillor Thomas to Councillor Sinclair – EOCC asset of community value

I have been informed by the East Oxford Community Association that an application was made to make the East Oxford Community Centre an asset of community value in 2017.

What is the current status of this application?

Written Response

No application has been received to list the property as an asset of community value

Supplementary Question

I understand an application was made. Could the Board Member investigate if this was received?

Response

I will ask if there is any record of receipt of an application..

11. From Councillor Simmons to Councillor Sinclair – EOCC sale

A CEB report on plans for the sell-off of half of the East Oxford Community Centre site has been repeatedly delayed and now a meeting of the Council's EOCC Reference Group has been postponed.

Can the Portfolio Holder reliably tell me when the report will make it to CEB and scrutiny?

Written Response

A report to CEB is anticipated in July , although The County Council are currently considering whether they could provide services from a joint facility . The timing of County's work could impact upon the timing of reporting to CEB.

Board Member for Finance and Asset Management

12. From Councillor Wilkinson to Councillor Turner – old Rose Hill Community Centre

The land on which the old Rose Hill community centre stood has been unused for a lengthy period when Oxford is experiencing a housing crisis. Can the Board Member please confirm the date on which the old community centre closed and when a planning application will be submitted to develop this land?

Written Response

The old community centre closed in January 2016 and a planning application for the land is expected to be submitted in July following local consultation. Clearly the Council could have disposed of the land very quickly and realised a capital receipt. Instead it chose to await the establishment of the Local Housing Company to progress

the development, which we believe in the long term will give a better outcome for local people, especially with regard to the affordability of the housing. In addition, the site is linked to land close to the new Community Centre, and we have been negotiating to include an adjacent plot of land, belonging to the County Council, in that development.

Board member for Housing

13. From Councillor Gant to Councillor Rowley – Tower block leasehold charges

Will the Board Member for housing apologise for letting leaseholders in its Tower Blocks believe they would be charged up to 50K for “repairs” before the council had established what it was legally entitled to charge them for?

Written Response

The only way to firmly establish the legally correct distribution of cost between the Council and leaseholders was to seek a determination from the First Tier Tribunal. Any Council decision as to cost would have been subject to legal challenge by any leaseholder, so we decided to assist all parties to obtain certainty with as little delay and difficulty as possible, by ourselves asking the Tribunal for a determination. Both leaseholders and the Council now have the certainty provided by the Tribunal's decision.

14. From Councillor Gant to Councillor Rowley – tower block refurbishment update

Will the Board Member give us an update on the refurbishment of the council's tower blocks, particularly in relation to timing, costs, performance in comparison to original estimates, and the impact on budget assumptions of the recent tribunal ruling

Written Response

Works to all towers are virtually complete; the original cladding on Evenlode and Windrush has been stripped and is in the process of being replaced. The revised completion date for the whole project is now July 2018.

The Council agreed additional funding to replace the cladding on two of the towers following the Grenfell Tower fire. With the exception of this additional expenditure the works are currently projected to still come in within the original budget.

In our HRA business plan assumptions we did not factor in additional income from recovery of service charges so the recent tribunal hearing has not impacted adversely on the original budget.

15. From Councillor Wilkinson to Councillor Rowley – delays at Barton Park

Residents are asking why the housing at Barton Park has been delayed. Can the Board Member please indicate the extent of the delay and the reasons for this?

Written Response

The first residents are now moving in to their new homes in Barton.

There have been some understandable delays because of a combination of factors which have affected the whole of Britain, most notably the exceptionally bad winter weather and the significant decline in the availability of skilled building workers.

There has also been a delay in utility connection despite considerable efforts by the contractor to press this forward with the provider. Unfortunately this is not something the Council, the LLP or the contractor can control, since the utilities are privatised companies.

Council Officers attend regular site progress meetings with the contractor to work through any issues that arise.

Supplementary Question

Are there any lessons to be learned from these delays relevant to the housing we and the Growth Boars are hoping to build under the Oxfordshire Growth Deal's proposals for major new housing developments?

Response

Two key lessons are that we can't control the weather and that Brexit has a negative impact on the building trade. However, we will continue to monitor the project and consider what lessons we can learn about how the Council and Oxford City Housing Ltd can manage contracts and large building projects to minimise avoidable delays.

16. From Councillor Thomas to Councillor Rowley – alternative to St Mungo's

Is it true that St Mungo's are no longer providing specialist support for female rough sleepers who could be the victims of exploitation, and if so what alternative provisions will the portfolio holder be making?

Written Response

No it isn't. St Mungo's are commissioned by the Council to operate the Street Population Outreach Team (SPOT) contract on a generic basis. Officers will have specialist areas, to support the work of the team, but all members of the team are expected to support any rough sleeper, dealing with all vulnerabilities and needs on an individual and appropriate basis, and liaising with Thames Valley Police and other agencies where appropriate. The team have recorded over 300 positive interventions to support rough sleepers off the streets in 2017/18.

Supplementary Question

Is it correct that a specialist worker is no longer attending meetings with the council?

Response

St Mungo's are commissioned to deliver contracted services for the council and may not be able to provide someone with the requisite expertise. The council funds and liaises with other initiatives providing shelter and specific services in the city who do have the correct expertise.

17. From Councillor Thomas to Councillor Rowley - OXSPOT number

Will the portfolio investigate why members of the public who use the recommended Oxford Street Population Outreach Team (OXSPOT) number to report rough sleepers in need of support are invariably met with an answering machine that redirects them to

an organisation called 'Streetlink'. The phone number for Streetlink eventually hangs up with a 'busy' message, whilst a message directs callers to a website where they have to register before they can file a report. The first feedback they get after reporting the incident online is a request for a donation!

Does the portfolio holder think that this reporting process is streamlined, efficient and encourages high levels of reporting?

Written Response

Officers have received information concerning this and are working with St Mungo's to ensure effective reporting arrangements are in place.

The Street Population Outreach Team (SPOT) contract prioritises having the team undertake regular outreach work, from early morning to late at night, and does not provide for office-based administration to cover phone lines. It is also not an emergency service, and Oxford SPOT's answerphone message that emergency services should be contacted to report any immediate serious concerns regarding a rough sleeper.

Members of the public are encouraged to report concerns about rough sleepers by calling the SPOT team on 01865 304611. The expectation is that messages left on an answering machine will be responded to promptly, and within 48 hours, Oxford SPOT have maintained a response time for referrals of within 36 hours despite the fact that referrals can often be geographically very distant.

OxSPOT's answerphone message is activated after 10 rings. This has purposefully been set to this response time as the duty worker who is on that day may be out on an Outreach round, talking with a client or in a meeting, and so may need this amount of time to disengage and answer the call. This setting will give the worker a higher chance of being able to take the call.

Reports can also be made by emailing outreach.oxford@MUNGOS.org or by using the national www.streetlink.org.uk service, which will forward the report to St Mungo's SPOT for rough sleepers in Oxford City.

18. From Councillor Simmons to Councillor Rowley – feedback on referrals to homelessness services

Following the recent homelessness briefing Cllr Wolff and I have diligently used the available channels to try and get support for those rough sleepers that we have come across in St. Mary's ward. Though we understand that it would be inappropriate to discuss individual cases now, we have found it difficult to find out whether, or how, those we have reported have been helped (beyond being told that they have been visited).

Would the Portfolio Holder agree that the responsibility of a Councillor for Oxford's citizens (homeless or not) doesn't end with connecting them to services and it would be useful for Councillors to get more comprehensive feedback?

Written Response

This reporting is welcomed, but St Mungo's do not provide further feedback to people making such referrals other than to say that they have visited. This is in order to maintain client confidentiality. Should Councillors wish to make specific enquires relating to persons in their ward, they can do so through the usual Council officer channels, and officers will endeavour to provide them with information.

Supplementary Question

Will you agree to look at this? It does not seem acceptable that there is no follow-up information to tell us if a referral was useful.

Response

I have notified Streetlink about the problems contacting them as we need to ensure the reporting works effectively. The NHS or police can be contacted in an emergency. However, while services may follow up and report back when they can, councillors should not expect privileged access to information about referrals.

19. From Councillor Wolff to Councillor Rowley – casework success

These questions are often used, understandably, to criticise the operation of the Council with a view to improving our policies and processes.

But, on this occasion I would like to invite the Portfolio Holder to join me in thanking Housing Officers for responding promptly to some recent casework in my Ward – reinstating Housing Benefit within a few days.

Written Response

I would of course be very happy to add my thanks also to the housing and benefits staff in the critical work they do to sustain people in their tenancies. Our council staff work hard to make sure that people in the city are helped to access the benefits they are entitled to. I welcome Councillor Wolff's thanks to them.

20. From Councillor Thomas to Councillor Rowley - rolling winter accommodation for rough-sleepers

Can the portfolio holder please provide an update on plans to provide rolling winter accommodation for rough-sleepers first announced during this year's Budget Debate?

Written Response

Severe Weather Emergency Protocol (SWEP) accommodation was provided on 35 nights this winter season, assisting 141 individuals. The churches also operated a winter night shelter from 1st January to 31st March, providing an additional 10 spaces that were well used. As these services for the 17/18 winter have now ended, officers will be carrying out a review to determine whether or not changes need to be made for next winter.

Supplementary Question

Will you be provided the previously committed-to accommodation for every night when the temperature falls below zero?

Response

We are working with the churches to expand provision and working with others who can offer suitable premises, so that we can provide the same number of, or hopefully more, beds each night through the winter to enhance the SWEP protocol.

21. From Councillor Thomas to Councillor Rowley – additional homeless budget spend

Can the portfolio holder provide an update on how the additional homeless budget for this year is intended to be spent?

Written Response

Spending on homelessness, is expected to be spent, as detailed in the March CEB report on the 'Allocation of Homelessness Prevention Funds for 2018/19'. This summarises the current position well, and highlights additional funding being made available for commissioning, and to support partnership working through the City Conversation, representing an additional £450k budget in 18/19 and 19/20 that is being made available.

22. From Councillor Simmons to Councillor Rowley – Housing company business plan

Does the recent Housing company business plan allow for the provision of community-led and other alternative housing models.

Written Response

Not currently. The priority for our housing company is to directly deliver quality affordable housing as quickly as practicable for those in greatest housing need. However, the council's overall housing strategy welcomes community led housing projects such as co-operative house building or self build where people are able to put together proposals that work.

23. From Councillor Wolff to Councillor Rowley – empty buildings reporting

What is the process for Councillors to alert officers of empty or derelict buildings in their wards which may be suitable for development as housing (given in particular the Council's budget commitment to buy up existing properties)?

Written Response

Empty or derelict buildings should be reported to the Council's Empty Property Officer via the "Report it online" section of the Council's website.

Supplementary Question

Once an empty house has been reported, what happens? Can we be kept informed of progress?

Response

There is a lengthy process including contacting the owner. An update on progress can be provided if requested.

24. From Councillor Wade to Councillor Hollingsworth – number of dockless bikes

Can the Board Member advise how many dockless bikes are now standing on the streets of Oxford, and whether any more are to be licensed?

There is no upper limit in the Oxford Code of Conduct. Is one being introduced?

Written Response

Local authorities have no powers to license schemes, or to set enforceable upper limits through such schemes. However all the operators in Oxford have adhered to the voluntary Code of Conduct. The Code of Conduct is under constant review, including whether an upper limit should be introduced. As the schemes expand their geographic coverage, more bikes will be required, but will be spread over a much larger area. Each time one of the three firms currently operating in Oxford has wanted to increase the number of bikes in their scheme they have consulted with the City Council as part of the ongoing dialogue between the companies, the City Council and the County Council.

Supplementary Question

Do we need an upper limit set now before we have far too many bikes on the streets?

Response

This is covered in the [Code of Conduct](#) which states that before any operator adds another 100 bikes this Council and the County Council, and Oxford University, will be consulted and the expansion will not go ahead if any of the three objects.

25. From Councillor Wade to Councillor Hollingsworth – cycling stations for dockless bikes

Brilliantly coloured dockless bikes are becoming an eyesore on the streets of Oxford. What progress is being made in finding cycling stations where they can be stored?

Written Response

The point of dockless bikes is that that they do not have docking stations. The companies use incentives within their apps to encourage their customers to leave bikes parked appropriately. Several private landowners have agreements with the operators for bikes to be placed on their land.

26. From Councillor Wade to Councillor Hollingsworth – information from dockless bike hire

Dockless bikes are accessed by an app which requires credit card details. They are equipped with satnavs which permanently record bike trips.

How is this information used? How is it monetised? Are people aware of how their information can be used e.g. passed on to marketing companies?

Written Response

Data collected by private companies is subject to appropriate laws. The City Council is not privy to the contractual relationship between the companies running these schemes and their customers, in the same way that it is not privy to the contractual relationship between Oxford's bus operators and their customers.

Supplementary Question

Given the concerns about personal data being passed to third parties without consent, how do we ensure people are aware of what may happen with data given to these companies? Do we have responsibility to oversee this?

Response

The Council can't intervene on this. We have assurances from the companies about data use, although part of the business will be to use the data for their own commercial purposes, and can ask that they make their policy on data use more obvious.

27. From Councillor Goff to Councillor Hollingsworth - OUP Sports Ground and the Golf Club

Residents - of which I am one - are voicing real concerns about the future of the triangle of land comprising the Jordan Hill Estate, the OUP Sports Ground and the North Oxford Golf Club. The Estate includes 74 homes tied to OUP. OUP has refused to grant enfranchisement to leaseholders although usage no longer complies with the original terms and so it seems possible that the residents will face eviction in the next few years. The future of the OUP Sports Ground and the Golf Club, which are of huge amenity value to Oxford Residents over a wide area, is similarly unclear.

Are the Portfolio Holder and City Officers in discussions with Cherwell District Council and OUP about these sites and can the Portfolio Holder advise on the progress that is being made?

Written Response

The three sites referred to in the question are different, so this answer is divided into three parts.

The North Oxford Golf Club site has been proposed for development by Cherwell District Council in its Local Plan, and that Local Plan has been submitted for public enquiry. The City Council has been supportive in broad terms of development close to the city's boundaries in preference to sites further afield, but has left the precise allocation of sites to Cherwell DC.

The OUP sports ground was allocated for residential development, subject to the retention or replacement of the cricket pitch and pavilion in the City Council's Sites and Housing Plan, which was approved after a public enquiry and adopted by the Council in February 2013. No change to this allocation was proposed in the Preferred Options consultation for the emerging Oxford Local Plan 2036, carried out last summer.

The issue of the leases held by residents of Jordan Hill from OUP is unrelated to planning policy, but is clearly a serious issue. I will ask relevant officers to take up the residents' concerns.

28. From Councillor Gant to Councillor Hollingsworth - hotel room policy

The emerging Local Plan identifies a need for more hotel rooms in Oxford, but does not specify where they should go, or what types are best in what places (beyond usual planning rules about types of use, district centres, etc).

Does the Board Member think we should have a policy on this?

Written Response

The current Local Plan identifies suitable locations for hotels, and the range of hotel types that are needed in Oxford. A more didactic approach, specifying exactly which hotels should go where, as the question appears to be suggesting, is unlikely to survive a public enquiry where such a policy would be challenged. The risk of having a policy rejected leaving a free for all needs to be weighed up against the apparent attractions of an overly-detailed policy. The Council will have the opportunity to debate the precise wording of policies in the new Local Plan later this year, and I'm sure will want to consider the balance of factors when weighing the appropriate option to put forward.

29. From Councillor Wolff to Councillor Hollingsworth - potholes and road maintenance

Will the Council's recent takeover of the County's maintenance contract for major roads in Oxford City mean that it is easier for Councillors to get potholes fixed on major roads and for our CIL ward member allowance to be used for repairs to these same roads (as Cllr Simmons and I have previous done for the minor roads in our Ward)?

Written Response

Councillors will certainly be able to put their CIL allowance towards road repair on main roads as well as minor roads, although there should have been no reason why this was not possible under the current arrangements. I am currently working with officers to design a process where it will be easier for local members to flag potholes in their wards that need fixing, but it is also important to be realistic. As the County Council recently made clear, there is a backlog of repairs on roads in Oxford and Oxfordshire that runs into the many tens of millions of pounds, and there is no likelihood at all that the County Council will be able to allocate anything like enough funds to keep with up with new repair requirements, let alone make a significant impact on the backlog. By taking on the contract, the City Council will be able to offer economies of scale and get more done for the money available, but the money available still won't be anything like enough.

Supplementary Question

Are councillors able to contact Oxford Direct Services to discuss and commission work to be funded from their CIL allowance?

Response

We will have to consider how this can be done.

30. From Councillor Gant to Councillor Hollingsworth – pothole repair

Given the recent arrangement between the county and city councils over road repair and maintenance, can the board member update us on progress towards fixing the many dangerous potholes on our roads?

Can he/she let us know if there is an agreed schedule of works for the worst-affected roads, and if so where members of the public can find it?

Written Response

The new arrangement, whereby the City Council takes over as contractor for repairs and maintenance on major roads for the County Council, has not yet come into effect as the legal agreement has not yet been finalised. While the legal arrangements are being confirmed I have asked the lead officer to prepare a clear schedule of works that will be publicly available. It is important to note that areas in need of major reconstruction – as opposed to in need of repair – will be excluded from the schedule, and will be dealt with separately by the County Council. This schedule of exclusions, which was highlighted in the recent CEB report, will also be publicly available.

31. From Councillor Wade to Councillor Hollingsworth – stop coach lay-overs on St Giles

Currently the 'Drop off and Pick up' stop outside the Taylorian Institute in St Giles is being used as a lay-over by a large number of tourist coaches for long periods, often with their engines idling.

Can the Board Member advise what steps are being taken to ensure that this practice is stopped?

Written Response

Both City and County Council staff regularly advise drivers that their engines must be turned off. The two authorities are currently discussing ways of increasing staff on the ground in St Giles, both to advise and enforce where necessary. The intention is to have this in place within a few weeks.

Deputy Leader of Council, Board member for Leisure, Parks and Sport

32. From Councillor Azad to Councillor Smith – cemetery service volunteers

Thank you for the good news about Cemetery Service that they will be launching a new scheme working with trained up volunteers from Muslim Community groups to provide a 7 days a week short notice burial service for the community and volunteers will work with council staff.

How many volunteers have been trained up so far and how will the success of the scheme be appraised?

Written Response

20 volunteers from the Muslim community have been trained. With regards to appraising the system, we have asked both the Duty Supervisors and Muslim community for feedback when a short notice burial at a weekend occurs. At moment there has been no need for the service. When the service is used if any issues or

glitches are reported back to us we will provide a suitable solution to ensure the system works and continues to work.

33. From Councillor Pressel to Councillor Smith - Cutteslowe Park 'Park Run' track

Every Saturday at 9.00am hundreds of people of all ages and abilities take part in the wonderful Park Run in Cutteslowe Park.

The track they use in winter unfortunately gets really muddy.

Please can you tell me when Parks will be able to improve the surface?"

Written Response

Works to re-surface the footpath that runs along the rear of the Parks Depot from the duck pond are in our current work programme. We intend to start the work in July. Works will be phased and this will be subject to a detailed site survey when works commence.

Supplementary Question

How likely is it that this problem will be sorted out before the winter?

Response

The work is scheduled to be done in the next few months. It is complicated by drainage issues but certainly feasible and I hope it will be done in the timescale requested.

34. From Councillor Gant to Councillor Smith – Stadium: Greyhound and speedway

What evidence is the Board member using to support her belief that greyhound racing and speedway are commercially viable on a valuable site within the city?

On the same day her view was expressed the Oxford Mail carried reports of a motocross event just down the road in Culham. Doesn't this show that activities of this kind are better accommodated outside the city, and that this is a prime example of land within the city which should be used for housing (as stated in the LibDem response to the Local Plan), thus relieving pressure on less suitable sites elsewhere?

Written Response

The City Council have just published a recently commissioned research study into the commercial viability of these activities and it's on our website/here's the link. The study will be an evidence document as part of developing the new local plan policies, ensuring that all relevant factors are taken into consideration as we look at sites within the city.

https://www.oxford.gov.uk/downloads/file/4517/stage_1_report_on_commercial_viability_of_oxford_stadium

35. From Councillor Goddard to Councillor Smith – Five Mile Drive portakabin

Could the board member update Council on timing and location of the proposed Portakabin for Five Mile Drive?

Written Response

We are currently working through the proposal to develop a dual use small pavilion (small social space, toilets and kitchenette) which will double up as a polling station and have developed a Project Initiation Document which is currently being reviewed. We are speaking with local contractors to understand the viability of achieving what we want within the budget we have. We are also working with colleagues from our electoral services team to ensure the specification will meet our requirements for a polling station.

We are proposing the location will be the same as the previous pavilion, although we will factor in the guidance from the contractor as to the financial impact of the location of the building, in particular the impact of the connection of services and the base upon which the unit would sit.

If the project is viable we would aim to have this in place by September 18.

Supplementary Question

Can the Board Member clarify exactly what will be provided; when; and whether it is suitable?

Response

Details are not finalised yet: discussions with the club are on-going and the works must not conflict with other works and projects in the recreation ground.

36. From Councillor Goddard to Councillor Smith - Five Mile Drive rec new equipment

Could the board member give details of proposed new or renewed equipment for the Five Mile Drive children's recreation area?

Written Response

Looking after our parks and play areas is so important and we have a regular programme of investment in our play areas in order to keep them in great condition and encourage children and families to use our parks. After all, outdoor play is fun, healthy and free to enjoy.

The city council is halfway through a ten year £1 million investment programme which sees £100k a year spent on improving and refurbishing play areas across the city.

This year, approximately a third of the annual budget is planned to be spent on upgrading Five Mile Drive recreation ground. The plan is to install a new multi-frame piece of play equipment which will replace the existing worn slides and climbing frame. Work will also be carried out to install a new self-closing gate on the play area and hoggin footpaths will be improved.

There is also a plan to install goal posts and basketball hoops on the existing hard surface area, but only if this area is not required for the new facilities which the council is working with Summertown Stars FC to provide to support football.

Supplementary Question

Can the hard surface are definitely be left for recreational use?

Response

Yes – although we are considering whether a Multi-use games area (MUGA) could be provided.

37. From Councillor Brandt to Councillor Smith - concessionary rate for Fusion Leisure

Can the Portfolio Holder please explain the sudden, above inflation, increases in the concessionary 'Bonus' rate for using Fusion Leisure facilities. For example, the £1.30 session cost has increased to £1.50 and there is now a new 'peak period' charge of £2?

Written Response

The schedule of fees and charges including the price of activities in our leisure centres was consulted upon as part of the public consultation on this year's budget between 21 December and 28 January. The fees and charges were then agreed by the City Executive Board on 13th February and by Full Council on 19th February. The new concessionary charge of £1.50 off peak and £2 peak for holders of a Bonus card still represents a very large discount on the full price and excellent value for money. For comparison the normal price for swimming is £4.70, for a swim and sauna £8, for an exercise class £6.60 and for a visit to the gym £8.30. This means that a Bonus Card holder pays only 18% of the regular price off peak and only 24% of the regular price at peak times for gym access.

These fees and charges agreed by council are the maximum prices that Fusion Lifestyle can charge under our contract with them for the operation of our leisure services. Fusion currently offers a monthly membership for Bonus Card holders for only £19 a month. This equates to £4.38 a week for unlimited access to our leisure centres and demonstrates the commitment shared by this council and Fusion Lifestyle to inclusive and affordable leisure facilities for all residents of this city

Leader of Council, Board Member for Customer and Corporate Services

38. From Councillor Gant to Councillor Brown – ICT restructure

This council has undertaken a significant restructure of its IT provision, involving a significant budget commitment and impacting a number of members of staff.

Could the board member provide a progress report on the implementation of the restructure, particularly in regard to the impact on the council's employees?

Written Response

A total number of 25 staff were directly affected by the IT restructure. All have roles in the new structure. The restructure created a number of wider skill-based jobs allowing staff to re-position themselves in roles that better reflect their individual skill sets and aspirations. The appointment process, which was supported by staff and by the unions, gave staff the opportunity to apply for new roles/promotions on a ring fenced basis to IT

staff initially and then offering opportunities to staff more widely from outside the IT function for vacancies left at the end of the internal recruitment process. As an example, the IT Service Desk management role has been filled as a six month secondment opportunity. Having completed the placement of existing IT staff, the next step is to advertise both internally and externally as we look to fill those vacancies remaining.

39. From Councillor Wade to Councillor Brown – UC emergency fund

Can the Board Member advise the initial figure in the emergency fund for Universal Credit claimants, and how much of it has been paid out?

Written Response

Prior to the rollout of Universal Credit full service in Oxford, the Council set aside £50,000 to support customers migrating to Universal Credit in 2017/18, and a further £25,000 for 2018/19. As of 17th April 2018, payments have been made to 22 customers, totalling £1,015.

Since Universal Credit full service was rolled out in Oxford, a number of significant changes have been made by the government to support residents who are moving to the new benefit. The changes are as follows:

- A full month's payment can be obtained as an advance whilst people wait for their first UC payment, it was previously half a month's payment
- The seven waiting days which were applied to some claims were removed, reducing the time taken to receive the first payment from 6 weeks to 5 weeks.
- From this month, anyone moving to UC who was previously receiving Housing Benefit, will receive an additional 2 weeks' worth of Housing Benefit in addition to any housing costs they receive in UC

These changes have all reduced the potential demand for emergency support.

Supplementary Question

As it is surprisingly little used, and residents may not be aware of it, can it be better advertised?

Response

The scheme is advertised to anyone who contacts us, to advice agencies and in the press and our publicity. There were some changes to government policy which mitigated the hardship a change to UC caused. The Discretionary Housing Payment budget was fully spent in 2017/18 and will continue to be available. However there are clear limits to our ability to offer help.

40. From Councillor Gant to Councillor Brown – Green Belt and Growth Board

The Prime Minister has once again reaffirmed the central importance of Green Belt and the strictness of tests required to encroach on it.

Can Cllr Brown explain how the approach taken by the constituent members of the Growth Board is consistent with this approach?

Written Response

Development in the Green Belt is justified in 'exceptional circumstances'. The new National Planning Policy Framework launched by the Prime Minister states that 'where it has been concluded that it is necessary to release Green Belt land for development, plans should give first consideration to land which has been previously-developed and / or is well served by public transport', and this will guide our approach.

In respect of the Oxfordshire Housing and Growth Deal, it is proposed that the new homes will be delivered on a range of land supply sources including public and private land, on former greenfield sites, brownfield land, in our garden towns and villages, in existing towns, villages and within Oxford City.

41. From Councillor Gant to Councillor Brown – housing numbers in Oxfordshire

The government's own housing minister has pointed out that local authorities in Oxfordshire are working to housing figures which are in excess of identified need.

How can this council justify its continued use of figures which even the housing minister recognises as inaccurate?

Written Response

The government is introducing a new standard methodology for the calculation of housing need in the development plan system. The methodology is not in the adopted NPPF yet and consultation is still underway on the draft methodology contained in the National Planning Practice Guidance. The actual numbers for Oxfordshire's future housing need that may come from the proper application of the new methodology are as yet unclear and are a matter of speculation. This methodology will be relevant for the new joint statutory spatial plan for Oxfordshire covering the period from 2031 onwards.

The Oxfordshire Growth Board and the government have signed a housing and growth deal based upon the housing needs identified in the Oxfordshire SHMA 2014. These needs have been translated or are being translated into a suite of local plans covering the district and city areas of Oxfordshire up to 2031/2033 and 2036.

42. From Councillor Gant to Councillor Brown – Growth around Kidlington

In its recent bid to the Housing and Infrastructure Fund the Growth Board placed housing around Kidlington third in order of priorities. The project was turned down. Funding for infrastructure through the Growth Deal is inadequate, and the Chancellor made clear in the Budget speech that, far from the deal being a down-payment on further funding for Oxfordshire, it should in fact be seen as a down-payment on the whole Ox/MK/Cambs arc- in other words, infrastructure funding for this project is far from secure.

What guarantees can Cllr Brown give to the people of North Oxford and beyond that they will not be faced with large-scale house-building without infrastructure in place?

What course of action will she be recommending to the Growth Board if the full costs of infrastructure to support the proposed homes around Kidlington are not fully secured within the very tight timeframes contained in the Growth Deal and Delivery Plan?

Written Response

The Housing Infrastructure Fund bids (Forward Funding projects) were submitted by Oxfordshire County Council with the support of the Oxfordshire Growth Board partners. The ranking priority order of the bids was in part based upon their assessment against government guidance and the number of units they would help deliver. It was not anticipated that all three Oxfordshire HIF bids would be successful in the first national funding round where they were competing against other bids from around the country. Two bids were successful however, and are moving into the next stage of the process. Oxford North has not been turned down – it just has not been funded yet. These projects are competing for funds from a national funding pot and the project will be resubmitted to later bid phases when these open up.

The HIF bids are intended to operate as a means of forward funding facilitated by the County Council. They are to accelerate homes coming forward and assist in unblocking barriers to development. The HIF funds are not expected to be grant funding but may contain a component of that if viability issues mean that is the appropriate way of enabling development to proceed. Cherwell District Council has investigated the viability of the North Oxford proposals and has satisfied itself that the development is deliverable with the identified infrastructure requirements. This will be a matter that is considered at the examination of the Cherwell partial review local plan later this year so these are questions that would perhaps be better put to Cherwell District Council – obviously that is more difficult for your party as there are no Liberal Democrat councillors at all in Cherwell District.

The Oxford North proposals are not expected to start delivering new homes until the early 2020s - at the end of the current growth deal period. Infrastructure will need to be planned and delivered as it arises. This will be overseen through the planning process and the joint working arrangements facilitated under the Growth Board.

43. From Councillor Gant to Councillor Brown – Growth Board representative

Could Cllr Brown tell us who will be this council's next representative on the Growth Board? How will our representative be chosen? Will council have a vote?

Given the increasingly important executive function of the Growth Board, and given that my request to this council for a report back from our representative as a standing item at meetings of this council was rejected, could the Leader tell us how our representative will be answerable to this council for decisions taken on our behalf at the Growth Board?

Written Response

The representatives of the Growth Board must be a member of the Executive: this position will therefore be decided alongside other executive positions after the election. To date the councils have been represented by the Leaders of the councils and it is likely that this will continue.

As confirmed in answer to Cllr Gant's earlier question, the revised Terms of Reference for the Growth Board proposes a Scrutiny Panel made up of representatives from each of the councils. This is intended to avoid multiple and duplicative scrutiny processes, however the existing rights of the council's Scrutiny Committee to call in Growth Board decisions will remain. Updates on progress at key milestones will be reported to council.

The reason your request was rejected is that there is already a standing item on the Council Agenda under Part 2 for reports about Outside Organisations which will allow the Growth Board representative to report to this Council.

44. From Councillor Gant to Councillor Brown – vision for Oxfordshire

Will Cllr Brown join me in welcoming the new leader of South Oxfordshire District Council, and ask her to use the opportunity of her election to join us in pursuing a vision for Oxford and Oxfordshire which provides the right housing for the right people in the right places with the right infrastructure, and maintains the clearly-identified benefits of the historic and natural environment of our city and its surroundings?

Written Response

Yes. I do welcome the new leader of South Oxfordshire District Council and look forward to working with her along with the other Oxfordshire Leaders to pursue a joined up approach to planning for infrastructure, housing and growth, not least through their new Local Plan and the JSSP our councils have signed up to.

45. From Councillor Gant to Councillor Brown – unified park and ride charges

Cambridge City Council has recently reduced car-parking charges at its park and rides from £1 to zero.

Would the Councillor join me in noting that Cambridge has the freedom to set policy as a direct result of all its park and rides being controlled by a single authority, rather than the sort of absurd and costly bickering we saw between this council and Oxfordshire county council over Seacourt?

Would he/she regard a similar approach as a legitimate long-term aspiration for Oxford?

Written Response

Had Councillor Gant taken the opportunity to read the details of the recently approved budget, he would have observed that the charges and terms and conditions for all of Oxford's Park and Rides have been made identical. This is one of several concrete achievements of the parking steering group established last year, which has identified ways of saving the two local authorities significant sums through sharing back office functions and coordinating different services. This is an example of the success that can be achieved quickly, by having the two authorities collaborate informally and effectively.

In relation to Seacourt, the County Council as Highways Authority was rightly consulted as part of the planning process, and its views considered and taken into account. Irrespective of the ownership or control of the park and ride car parks, exactly the same process would have been followed in order to ensure the integrity of the quasi-judicial planning process.

46. From Councillor Gant to Councillor Brown – unitary council

Would Cllr Brown join me in congratulating the people of Buckinghamshire and Northamptonshire, whose councils will reportedly soon be achieving savings of respectively £18m (according to the county council's own independently-verified options document) and £29m per year (according to Ernst and Young) on service delivery as a result of Secretary of State Sajid Javid's decision that he is "minded" to implement unitary councils?

Will the Councillor also note that this council's own independent report into proposals for unitary government in Oxfordshire identified similar significant levels of potential saving, with huge potential benefits for the people of our city and county, and urge the Secretary of State to take that fully into account when he considers proposals for Oxfordshire?

Written Response

I don't think the people of Northamptonshire would wish to be congratulated on the situation they find themselves which according to independent auditors is a result of the County Council not managing its finances appropriately. The wholesale decimation of services that is resulting from the situation and the imposing of a structure that no-one locally has voted for or particularly supports does not seem to me to be a matter for celebration. I would also note that government direction for local government restructuring in Northamptonshire has specifically ruled out a County wide unitary.

Cllr Gant will also note the subsequent report in response to the Unitary proposition for Oxfordshire which demonstrated how considerable savings can be made without the disruption and cost of local government reorganisation and note that Oxfordshire County Council have since identified other means of delivering savings.

I think that in Oxfordshire we can congratulate all local authorities on the progress we have made in collaborative partnership working which is has been successful in securing significant investment through a deal with government to support housing, infrastructure and economic growth. This is a top priority for Oxford and Oxfordshire.

That investment would be put at risk of derailment by local government restructuring and I would urge the Secretary of State to take that into account when considering proposals for Oxfordshire.

47. From Councillor Altaf-Khan to Councillor Brown – Town Hall hire by BME groups

Can the Board Member give details of the breakdown of Town Hall room hire by BME groups over the last 12 months as a percentage of the total number of hire transactions by non-council groups?

Written Response

All council facilities are equally accessible to the entire community and our bookings include a wide range of people from all ethnicities and backgrounds.

To ensure inclusivity and that the wider community can benefit from the Town Hall, bookings on Tuesday and Thursday daytimes are free for community groups. The usage on these days has increased to over 25 bookings a month, these bookings include groups such as the Diamond Way Buddhism Group and the Palestine Solidarity Campaign.

The Councillor also attended the recent meeting of the Association of BAME Councillors. This meeting in our Town Hall was organised by Cllr Jamila Azad and the Lord Mayor and I were also there to welcome people.

We do not categorise Town Hall bookings based on ethnicity as each booking tends to include a range of people so we do not have this breakdown.

Supplementary Question

Is it possible to see usage by different groups as it would be helpful to have this and to see if particular groups have problems in booking rooms for meetings? The statements about the Association meeting are not entirely correct and I am aware there have been problems with booking rooms.

Response

There is no information held on ethnicity as we don't categorise booking on this basis, so it cannot be provided. If any group has had difficulties booking a room, please ask them to contact me.

48. From Councillor Simmons to Councillor Brown – GDPR

What is the Council doing to prepare for the General Data Protection Regulations, aimed at protecting personal data, which come into force end May 2018?

Written Response

GDPR awareness sessions and briefings to senior managers commenced early in 2017 and a project team was established in August to implement the GDPR action plan across a number of workstreams including communications, training, policy development, processes and systems, information asset management and contract management.

The Head of Law and Governance has been identified as the Council's statutory Data Protection Officer and the project team has participated in a regional GDPR networking group (including neighbouring local authorities and partner agencies) to share learning and ideas in advance of 25 May.

Since commencement of the project to ensure compliance with the new legislation, actions completed include:

- 2 officers have completed certified training as GDPR practitioners;
- implementation of a comprehensive internal communications plan;
- training to all staff delivered, tailored according to function;
- establishing an intranet page with training guides, FAQs, online training module;
- updating of policies and documentation including the Data Protection Policy, Data Sharing Policy, Privacy Notices and Privacy Impact Assessments
- reviewing and updating of various council processes, including Subject Access Requests
- the completion of an Information Asset Register for all services
- Guidance developed for Councillors (awareness sessions to coincide with issue of new devices following May elections)

A review of the GDPR project by our internal auditors (BDO) confirmed that the project plan was comprehensive and progressing well. A gap was identified in the detail of the Privacy Impact Assessment that has now been addressed.

Work continues in a number of areas such as ICT patching security, consent management and data retention.

The Information Governance Team will continue to monitor and deliver improvements to our Data Protection processes and procedures on an ongoing basis.

49. From Councillor Thomas to Councillor Brown – community post office

Given that the Post Office has now been advertising for a business to take over from the closed Cowley Road PO franchise for more than a year now (with no interested parties coming forward), will the Portfolio Holder consider using Council resources to explore with Post Office Ltd the opening of a community post office on the Cowley Road (using the model developed by Esmée Fairbairn Trust in collaboration with Locality), a model which may also benefit other parts of the City where post offices are under threat?

Could the use of East Oxford Community Centre as a site for a community post office be considered as part of the study?

Written Response

If there is a business case for such a proposal and support by the community and the Post Office we would consider what we could do to help. We have consulted widely on options for the East Oxford Community Centre and such a proposal has not been put forward.

Supplementary Question

As I believe this issue was raised at a reference group meeting in January which was attended by officers, why has this not been considered?

Response

I will look into this.

50. From Councillor Thomas to Councillor Brown – Tackling Oxford's Unaffordable Private Rented Sector

In a question to Cllr Bob Price (April 2016), I referred to a Green Party motion entitled 'Tackling Oxford's Unaffordable Private Rented Sector' (passed by Council Feb 2016) which had not yet been enacted.

Cllr Price's response to my supplementary question stated that the motion would be 'addressed through our housing company'.

Can the current Leader update Council on progress now that the housing company has been formed?

Written Response

Solving the problem of high market rents is not within the City Council's gift. However we are focusing our efforts and significant investment on planning for and supporting development of more housing, particularly affordable housing and improving standards

in the Private Rented Sector. We are also working together with our neighbouring local authority partners to meet Oxfordshire's housing need and good progress having secured £215m government investment in infrastructure and affordable housing through the Housing and Growth Deal and are on track to secure further funding through the Housing Infrastructure Fund later this year.

Oxford City Housing Ltd is making good progress with the first phase development programme with 159 new homes about to enter the planning process, planning permission granted for development at Bracegirdle road and the first phase of handovers at Barton Park due to begin in August 2018.

Supplementary Question

Why is the Council not enacting the agreed motion and so not intervening in the seemingly out of control private rental market?

Response

Given the steps we are taking to provide support through our Home Choice scheme and building more affordable housing as a permanent solution, it is unclear what further interventions would be a good use of resources at this point.

To: Council

Date: 23 April 2018

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

Introduction

1. Addresses submitted and 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 set out below. The views expressed are those of the individual members of the public
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, written responses, and any further responses.

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

1. Address by Amanda Mackenzie Stuart: Disabled Access to the Westgate
2. Address by Judith Harley: Windrush Day
3. Address by Judith Harley: Temple Cowley Library car park
4. Address by Artwell: Inflated house prices
5. Question by Nigel Gibson: Why is Oxford City Council Discriminating Against the Disabled?
6. Question by Judith Harley: Oxford Direct Services company

1. Address by Amanda Mackenzie Stuart: Disabled Access to the Westgate

Relating to motion 15b

Thank you for giving me this opportunity to address Full Council.

The issue I want to speak about is the problem of access and safe parking for large Wheelchair Accessible Vehicles (WAVS) in the new Westgate and elsewhere in Oxford.

Specifically, the problem is one of height restrictions. This may sound trivial but it's not. The Westgate car park has a height restriction of 2 metres. The standard height of a large wheelchair accessible vehicle (WAV) is 2.4 metres. There's therefore no way that a large WAV can get into the new Westgate.

Once inside, the Westgate is potentially an empowering space for disabled people, including those in larger electric wheelchairs, allowing them to enjoy a great new civic space along with everyone else.

So, it's all the more frustrating that for those arriving at the new Westgate in large WAVs that the complex is, in reality, an impregnable fortress - a situation I believe is at odds with the Council's stated mission of 'Building a World Class City for Everyone'.

Large WAVs are high for a reason. Sufficient headroom allows single users to load and unload safely using a built-in ramp system. Sufficient headroom allows carers for more seriously disabled people to move round the patient and wheelchair easily, ensuring safe care during transit, and reducing chances of further head injuries while the vehicle is on the move. For these reasons, 2.4 metres is a standard height for large WAVs, although some can be even higher, as can passenger cars with hoists on the roof.

For these reasons, BS8300 – the code of practice for design of building and their approaches to meet the needs of disabled people - stipulates headroom clearance of 2.6 metres as a minimum for car parks built within the last 2 years.

Passengers using large WAVS include those with Multiple Sclerosis, Parkinson's Disease and Motor Neuron Disease, as well as paraplegic and tetraplegic drivers. Charities, care homes for elderly adults and specialist children's homes, as well as individuals, are all users of large WAVS. I understand that the new generation of school buses are also being designed as wheelchair accessible vehicles and will thus come into the large WAV category.

But in the case of the Westgate, I believe the current provision for large WAVs is not only non-existent but unsafe. There are no signs warning of height restrictions until the driver is already committed to going down the ramp into the car park. Indeed, signs to the excellent Shopmobility scheme ironically leads to the belief that all disabled vehicles are welcome. It is only once one is on the ramp that a dangerous situation becomes apparent. At that point the sign orders you to do a U-turn – on the ramp, with exiting cars accelerating round the corner up the ramp having passed through the ticket barriers. This design flaw needs urgent attention before an already vulnerable person in the back of a large WAV is seriously injured.

All new car parks like that at the Westgate should be consistent with BS8300, with reasonable adjustments for disabled people laid out in the 2010 Equalities Act.

I have made a short film, illustrating from a personal point of view the problems faced by users of large WAVs which I hope council members will have a chance to view before the meeting.

Finally I would also like the council to consider the implications for users of large WAVs of **the headroom barriers currently going up in car parks all over Oxford.** Whatever the reasons for this, I would ask councillors to bear in mind that these headroom barriers have the potential to exclude disabled people and groups in large WAVs from every space where such barriers exist. This, I'm sure, is an unintended consequence of some other decision. But it's one with consequences for disabled people nonetheless.

Verbal Response from Board Member Councillor Tidball,

Thank you for this speech which we will consider along with the motion later in the meeting. We will make sure that our car parks and planning officers are aware of the problems and ask that they ensure that any height restricting barriers are not installed at too low a height.

2. Address by Judith Harley: Windrush Day

My last address to Full Council, at the end of January, referred to January's Dr Martin Luther King Junior day, and to the fact that this April commemorated the 50th anniversary of Dr. King's assassination. I also mentioned the fact that Oxford City Council observes a range of days celebrating various communities within the City, but has no special day of significance to those of African heritage. From evidence, the City Council's sights seem disproportionately set on championing, for example, the LGBT community, whilst I believe the City's African heritage community are severely under-represented, ill-considered, poorly served, and generally neglected. Those of African heritage tell me they feel that they are being ignored, stigmatised, and met with racism and disparity.

Another significant anniversary for the African heritage community is fast approaching – Windrush Day, on 22nd June. Since at least Roman times people of African heritage have lived in Britain; until the mid-20th Century, this presence was maintained by forced and voluntary migration – from the African continent, the Americas and the Caribbean – fuelled by the Transatlantic Slave Trade, colonialism, and World Wars 1 and 2. After World War 2, Britain's post-war national rebuilding programme prompted invitations to Commonwealth citizens to "come to the Mother Country's aid". On 22nd June, 1948, the MV Empire Windrush landed at Tilbury docks carrying 492 Jamaican passengers, who were termed "the Windrush Generation". This was the first of many arrivals of Commonwealth citizens willing to help rebuild a broken Britain after the war. This year, Friday 22 June marks the 70th anniversary of this Windrush landing.

Many of these invited Commonwealth workers – British citizens – were treated incredibly badly after their arrival but, despite experiencing years of extreme racial discrimination, they contributed widely to the UK economy and culture. Shockingly, their children, who arrived in Britain between 1948 & 1971, are now in the news for receiving further discrimination and injustice. After years of working, paying tax, and participating in community life, they have been incorrectly identified as undocumented, or "illegal" migrants because, having arrived as children, they are now unable to provide formal paperwork proving their lifetime association with the UK. Some of these are Oxford residents.

Dr. Martin Luther King Junior said, "Injustice anywhere is a threat to justice everywhere.". This year would be a good year for you, the City Council, to address the injustices to, and to understand the particular challenges facing, Oxford's African heritage community, and make Oxford more welcoming to this group. One small step would be to help to celebrate Windrush Day, to remind us how much the African heritage community is a crucial part of British culture, and that racism and intolerance is completely unacceptable. This year, Windrush Day is in Refugee Week (18 – 24 June 2018).

There are two further pertinent commemorative days, recognised internationally by the United Nations. These are:

1. August 23 - Remembrance of the Slave Trade and its Abolition, observed annually to remind people of the tragedy of the transatlantic slave trade.
2. December 2 - Abolition of Slavery; this is held to raise awareness of the atrocities of modern slavery.

I wish to invite the City Council to work with an organisation with which I am associated, the Oxford African History Celebration (OAHC), to commemorate these days. We

would welcome your help in providing premises, funding, and other support to promote events commemorating these days. I look forward to hearing how the City Council will assist OAHC with these commemorations.

Thank you.

Verbal Response from the Leader, Councillor Brown

I would like to thank Judith for raising this important issue. I said earlier I would have been giving a statement to council on this issue in any event but thought it would be most appropriate to give it in response to your statement as you have raised the issue of this injustice.

This whole affair is a shameful episode for which the Prime Minister personally needs to accept responsibility along with her Conservative and Lib Dem coalition colleagues who supported a change in the law in 2014 which has directly led to this situation. The nature of this mean spirited and discriminatory policy is that people are not necessarily aware of the problems that they face until they are asked for proof of identity when applying for work, benefits, new access to healthcare or a pension.

I would like to reassure councillors and the public that in Oxford, City Council staff working in our customer services teams have been briefed to do all they can to help people who find themselves in this situation and more information will be put in our next tenants newsletter. We are aware that people are only just beginning to realise their situation. So far we have had a small number of enquiries but we expect this to grow in light of the recent publicity.

We are fortunate in Oxford to have a number of excellent organisations such as Asylum Welcome and Open Door Oxford, and the advice agencies that the City Council supports with funding, who are well placed to give helpful advice and support. I would urge anyone who finds themselves in this situation to contact an advice agency, the City Council or their MP, depending on their circumstances. I would remind councillors of the advice note that was circulated earlier today. The way the Government has used its immigration laws to discriminate against the Windrush generation is utterly unacceptable and mean spirited. In Oxford we are proud of the huge contribution that they and other Commonwealth citizens have made to our city.

The City Council was proud to support the combined celebrations of Commonwealth Day and the single act of remembrance in March, recognising the role that Commonwealth citizens played in supporting our country in its hour of greatest need as well as the massive contribution made every single day, in the NHS, in social care, in education, and building up our vibrant local economy. Given all that these citizens have done since the Empire Wind rush arrived in England seventy years ago to come to our support after the Second World War, you would have thought this Government would want to recognise this and celebrate it in this anniversary year.

Instead they have denied hard working members of the African Caribbean community their rightful access to health services, benefits and housing, and refused them re-entry to the UK after they visit their relatives in the Caribbean. By creating a "hostile environment" for immigrants and treating the Wind rush generation so badly, they have again revealed their true colours. They remain the "nasty party" as the current Prime Minister and architect of our immigration laws, Theresa May, memorably described

them. We will also want to see Oxford City Council support celebrations of the Windrush anniversary in June. We will work with local community groups to see how we can support their celebrations and recognise the contribution to our city.

On behalf of the City of Oxford I know that colleagues across the council will want to say "thank you" to the African Caribbean community, as we do to all the different communities who contribute to the rich diversity of Oxford life.

3. Address by Judith Harley: Temple Cowley Library car park

Lord Mayor, Councillors,

In December 2014, despite many objections, the City Council decided to sell the former Temple Cowley Pools (TCP) site to Housing Association company Catalyst. Included in this sale was the land which had been used, for many years, as a car park by the Temple Cowley Library. This car park had space for around 10 vehicles, and was an essential component of the library, especially for its elderly and disabled users. Planning permission for developing the TCP site was formally granted in February 2018, and part of the sale, and grant of planning permission conditions, included a legal obligation on Catalyst to provide a minimum of three parking spaces for Temple Cowley Library staff and users somewhere on the TCP site.

Since planning permission was granted, contractors for Catalyst have boarded up the entire library car park, without providing any alternative parking spaces on the site. I have notified the County Council of this, and Catalyst have acknowledged their obligation, but have still done nothing to provide any parking spaces for the library. This is most unacceptable, as visitors requiring parking have to park either on the narrow library slip road – into which Catalyst have trespassed with their hoarding – or in the very limited parking spaces in the area, if they can find one. The hoarding around the car park has also severely restricted access to, and vision of, the library cycle racks. I am sure that this lack of visibility contributed to the theft, only last week, of two cycles locked to the racks.

I am asking the City Council, as vendors of the TCP site, before proceeding with final completion of the sale, to immediately enforce the obligation on Catalyst to provide a minimum of three parking spaces for Temple Cowley Library. I believe Catalyst are flouting their legal obligation, to the detriment of library staff and users. I would also ask the City Council to encourage Catalyst to improve the accessibility and visibility of the library cycle racks.

Thank you.

Verbal Response from the Leader, Councillor Brown

Thank you for raising these issues, I will ask officers to investigate and respond to you.

4. Address by Artwell: Inflated house prices

I would like to invite the Labour controlled Oxford City Council to apologise to those in need of Affordable accommodation; the Key workers and those for which two thirds of their income is used for rental purposes.

As awful as this situation is for many people in Oxford, the contract with Grosvenor's to construct 800 homes on the Barton Park estate has added to Oxford's over priced housing crisis.

A seller on the Sandhills estate, who has a three-bedroomed home, has added over £130,000 to her asking price, simply to keep in line with the extortionate prices of £600,000 which Grosvenor's have set as the price of their three-bedroom family homes in Barton Park.

Oxford's Estate agents warned that the inflated prices being asked of Barton Park would have the effect of raising the average price of an Oxford home from £400,000 to nearer Barton Park's prices of £600,000 for a three-bedroom home.

The Oxford Mail front page of Monday 16th April carried the headline "Need a home? Go to Walsall", stating "High city rents force council to move people over 100 miles away", and "the city struggles to come to terms with the housing crisis".

I regard the price of £600,000 for a Barton Park home as complete corporate greed. This appears to be aided by the City Council's actions, and lack of intervention over sale prices.

How does aiding what I believe to be Grosvenor's corporate greed tally with the stated mission of highly paid City Executive Officers to "promote sustainable communities" or "community development and social regeneration"?

I believed that Oxford's Labour-led City Council is directly responsible for inflated house prices being aggravated by prices in the Barton Park development. In my opinion, the latter will worsen, not improve, Oxford's housing crisis. I invite the Councillors to apologise for what I consider to be their financial incompetence which will only add to the misery for thousands of Oxford home-seekers.

Artwell

Written Response from the Board Member, Councillor Rowley

To be clear, there is no contract with Grosvenor under which Grosvenor would build homes at Barton Park. The Council entered into a joint venture (BOLLP) with Grosvenor to enable the development of homes and extensive leisure and community facilities. This means that BOLLP has gained consent for the development and has provided the infrastructure in order to sell phases of the site to house builders. It is the house builders that build and sell the houses, in this case Hill. The house builders set the value of the houses in line with what house buyers are prepared to pay, they are also responsible for gaining planning consent for the detail of their development proposals.

There is an extensive array of infrastructure such as a new school, sports pavilion & football pitches, green spaces, not to mention a new junction on to the A40 and contaminated land clean up. More importantly, 40% of all the homes will be social

rented and owned by the Council's Housing Company. The sale of the private homes effectively pays for these requirements.

In addition there are other S106 requirements, for example paying for an enhanced doctor's surgery in Barton Community Centre; these are also funded by the value generated by the sale of private housing.

Without the sale of private housing this major development would not be deliverable, this would mean that up to some 350 properties would be unavailable to those in greatest housing need.

5. Question by Nigel Gibson: Why is Oxford City Council Discriminating Against the Disabled?

In July last year, the Council Leisure Partnership Board confirmed that Fusion admission fee increases are contractually limited to the Retail Price Index, and noted that the price increases for this year would be discussed at the October Leisure Partnership Board and then forwarded to CEB and Council for approval.

There is no record in the October minutes of any proposed fee increase, and there are no published minutes of the January meeting. The 2018/19 increases for the Bonus Card concession increases are in fact buried in the middle of an Appendix 7 of the budget document voted through by Council in February. There is no record I can find of any discussion of increases that, far from being within the RPI, are in fact several multiples of it, while 'normal' users have increases of under 3%.

The Council offers a concessionary rate, called a Bonus card, for a range of people in need, including the disabled and their carers and different types of income support.

Can you please explain why the admission price for these concessions at Ferry Leisure Centre has been increased by 53.85% from £1.30 to £2.00 since the start of April, with no advance warning, especially as this discriminates so much against the disabled and those on benefits who now have to find extra money in order be able to participate in exercise?

I would also like to know why the pricing shown on the Fusion websites is in line with your Budget appendix, but not what people are being charged, is different between different leisure centres and in my opinion further discriminates against the disabled by introducing the £2 charge in a 'peak time' of 4-8pm during weekdays – with £1.50 at other times, which is a mere 15.38%.

The Blackbird Leys leisure centre pricing shows the higher increase at peak times for swimming, but kept the gym price at £1.30.

It would be helpful to understand if you intend implementing a 'Peak Time' at some point, or whether you plan to continue with the massive percentage price increase regardless of entry time or venue.

What was, before April, a very simple pricing structure that clearly offered real benefit to those in need has become in my view a complex mess.

It would be good to think that the Council still wants to provide those benefits rather than leaving in my view vulnerable people feeling persecuted by what I consider to be iniquitous increases in admission charges, and that you will do something urgently to sort things out, including refunds for overcharging.

Written Response from the Board Member, Councillor Smith,

The schedule of fees and charges including the price of activities in our leisure centres was consulted upon as part of the public consultation on this year's budget between 21st December and 28th January. The fees and charges were then agreed by the City Executive Board on 13th January and by Full Council on 19th January. The new concessionary charge of £1.50 off peak and £2 peak for holders of a Bonus card still represents a very large discount on the full price and excellent value for money. For

comparison the normal price for swimming is £4.70, for a swim and sauna £8, for an exercise class £6.60 and for a visit to the gym £8.30. This means that a Bonus Card holder pays only 18% of the regular price off peak and only 24% of the regular price at peak times for gym access.

These fees and charges agreed by council are the maximum prices that Fusion Lifestyle can charge under our contract with them for the operation of our leisure services. Fusion currently offer a monthly membership for Bonus Card holders for only £19 a month. This equates to £4.38 a week for unlimited access to our leisure centres and demonstrates the commitment shared by this council and Fusion Lifestyle to inclusive and affordable leisure facilities for all residents of this city

Supplementary verbal response from the Board Member, Councillor Smith,

We will consider how to improve the consultation on fees and charged for next year as this was not as clear as it could be. If people have been overcharged then they should contact the Leisure Centre in the first instance.

6. Question by Judith Harley: Oxford Direct Services company

Lord Mayor, Councillors,

On April 1st, Oxford Direct Services (ODS) became a limited company. As they are occupying City Council premises at the Marsh Road Depot in Cowley, I wish to know the following:

1. How much rent is ODS paying the City Council?
2. How much are ODS paying in business rates?
3. As ODS have publicly stated their expansion plans, what measures are they taking to relocate away from their Marsh Road site? For example, at present their services include working on a wide range of vehicles, from taxis to buses to private cars. Their current site, in a residential location and next to leisure facilities, is totally unsuitable for this operation, and totally unsuitable for any subsequent expansion. Local residents are convinced that the expansion of ODS is what necessitated their theft of part of Cowley Marsh Park.
4. As planning permission for expansion into the Cowley Marsh Park wildflower meadow was granted for 5 years, and some 6 months of this have passed already, how will the City Council reassure residents that it will ensure that ODS relocates within the next 4 ½ years, and restores the wildflower meadow to its previous state?

Written Response from the Board Member, Councillor Turner

1. Total of £520k per annum which is at market rent rates for the premises around the city
 2. Total of £223k per annum
- 3 & 4

Part of the ODS plan is to consider its corporate property portfolio to review whether it is fit for purpose to support the business expansion plans and this will be looked at over the next couple of years. The Council is mindful of the 5 year planning permission granted at the Cowley Marsh Park site