

Minutes of a meeting of **COUNCIL** on Monday 25 November 2019

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Council members:

Councillor Simmons (Lord Mayor)	Councillor Altaf-Khan (Deputy Lord Mayor)
Councillor Goddard (Sheriff)	Councillor Arshad
Councillor Azad	Councillor Aziz
Councillor Bely-Summers	Councillor Brown
Councillor Chapman	Councillor Clarkson
Councillor Cook	Councillor Corais
Councillor Curran	Councillor Djafari-Marbini
Councillor Donnelly	Councillor Fry
Councillor Gant	Councillor Garden
Councillor Gotch	Councillor Haines
Councillor Harris	Councillor Hayes
Councillor Henwood	Councillor Hollingsworth
Councillor Howlett	Councillor Iley-Williamson
Councillor Kennedy	Councillor Landell Mills
Councillor Lloyd-Shogbesan	Councillor Lygo
Councillor Malik	Councillor McManners
Councillor Munkonge	Councillor Pressel
Councillor Rowley	Councillor Rush
Councillor Simm	Councillor Linda Smith
Councillor Tanner	Councillor Tarver
Councillor Tidball	Councillor Upton
Councillor Wade	Councillor Wolff

Apologies:

Councillors Humberstone, Roz Smith, Taylor and Turner sent apologies.

The minutes show when Councillors who were absent for part of the meeting arrived and left.

51. Declarations of interest

There were no declarations.

52. Minutes

Council agreed to **approve** as a true and correct record the minutes of the ordinary meeting held on 7 October, subject to a correction to the last sentence in Minute 45: '*...initial investment of between £4 and £5m.*'

53. Appointment to Committees

Council noted that the Leader had appointed Councillor John Tanner as the Substitute Member on the Thames Valley Police and Crime Panel.

There were no changes to committee memberships.

54. Announcements

Councillors Clarkson, Cook, Djafari-Marbini, Garden and Lygo arrived during this item.

The Lord Mayor announced his main civic events since the Annual Council meeting, including:

- the Remembrance Sunday and Remembrance Day services;
- twinning events with the Mayor of Leiden, the Deputy Lord Mayor of Wroclaw, and representatives from Bohn;
- the gift of a 'well wisher' Gnome from Wroclaw;
- relaunching the City of Sanctuary initiative;
- hosting the Mayor of Monrovia;
- civic events in the council including the admission of Freeman, and around the city including Elmore Trust's anniversary events and North Oxford's eco fair.;
- running 'the daily mile' fitness challenge with schoolchildren;

He reminded councillors about the Lord Mayor's carol concert on 15 December and the Christmas reception on 18 December.

The Lord Mayor asked the City Rector, Rev Anthony Buckley, to speak about the recent service of commemoration and remembrance for those who had died homeless in the city in the past year.

The Leader of the Council announced:

- The publication of the report from Oxford Citizens Assembly on Climate Change;
- The publication of a national report on poor air quality's harmful effects on health, and a visit to Krakow, Poland to share good practice on improving air quality.

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

There were no addresses or questions.

56. Appointment of independent persons 2019

Council considered the Monitoring Officer's report published with the agenda and a supplementary report published after the agenda, asking Council to approve the appointment of the council's independent persons for a term of five years to 30 November 2024 following a formal recruitment exercise.

Councillor Aziz, the Chair of the Standards Committee, presented the report. She moved the recommendations, and asked Council to appoint the individuals named below. This was agreed unanimously on being seconded and put to the vote.

Council resolved to:

1. **approve** the appointment of Chris Ballinger, Andrew Mills-Hicks, Jill McCleery and Osama Raja as the council's independent persons for a term of five years to 30 November 2024; and
2. **delegate authority** to the Monitoring Officer to make the necessary arrangements.

57. Urgent decision report on Housing Infrastructure Funding (HIF) - Osney Mead Innovation Quarter.

Council considered the record of the urgent officer decision taken by the Executive Director (Development) on 31 October 2019 to enter a contract with Homes England to secure £6.088m for infrastructure to enable new development at Osney Mead Innovation Quarter under the Housing Infrastructure Fund Marginal Viability Scheme, and a recommendation to amend the capital budget to include these funds in the Council's capital programme.

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

Council resolved to:

1. **note** the urgent officer decision taken by the Executive Director (Development) on 31 October 2019 to enter a contract with Homes England to secure £6.088m for infrastructure.
2. **approve the inclusion of a budget of £6.088m in the Council's capital programme for Osney Mead Infrastructure enabling works.**

58. Council and Committee meetings programme May 2020 - May 2022

Council considered a report of the Head of Law and Governance setting out a programme of Council, committee and other meetings for the 2020/21 and 2021/2022 council years (11 May 2020 to 31 May 2022 inclusive)

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

Council resolved to:

1. **approve** the programme of Council, committee and other meetings attached at Appendix 1 for the council year 2020/21;
2. **approve** the programme of Council, committee and other meetings attached at Appendix 2 for the council year 2021/22;
3. **delegate authority** to the Head of Law and Governance, in consultation with Group Leaders, to make changes to this programme, in the event that there is a decision by Council to change the committee structure or remit which impacts on the programme of meetings; and
4. **delegate authority** to the Head of Law and Governance to set dates for additional training and briefing sessions for members, and, in consultation with the Head of Business Improvement, to set meetings of the Appointments Committee and Investigations and Disciplinary Committee (should they be required).

59. Questions on Cabinet minutes

a) Minutes of meeting Thursday 3 October 2019 of Cabinet

Minute 67, points 6 and 7

Councillor Wolff asked how the contract with St Mungo's (to carry out street outreach work) was monitored and how this affected the re-tendering process.

Councillor Smith replied that there were quarterly contract monitoring meetings including outcomes and performance, and information on the re-tendering process could be given as this progressed.

b) Minutes of meeting Wednesday 9 October 2019 of Cabinet

Minute 80

Councillor Wolff asked about the rationale for the change in qualifying age for older person's concessions from age 60 to 65; if this created a benefits gap for the 60-65 age group and how this linked with the Health and Wellbeing Board target to improve older people's fitness.

Councillor Linda Smith said that concessions were targeted by income rather than by age. Concessions were only one incentive: the service was looking at reducing the wider barriers to participation faced by this age group.

Minute 81

Councillor Wade asked about the reasons for the marketing process for 24-26 George Street, and how much the marketing agents took as a fee.

Councillor Brown said this could be answered in writing.

Minute 85

Councillor Gant asked why a 25year lease was granted to Fusion if the intention was always to let the site to Oxford United football club (OUFC). Councillor Wolff asked whether OUFC was benefiting from a publically funded asset and whether we had lost this asset.

Councillor Linda Smith replied that the change was that OUFC now held the full lease directly from the Council rather than sub-leasing from Fusion. Community use was essential and was written into the lease. She reminded Council that BMW had funded, and the Council retained ownership, of the site.

c) Minutes of meeting Wednesday 13 November 2019 of Cabinet

Minute 94

Councillors Gant and Wolff asked about the business case for resuming greyhound racing, and the analysis of the carbon emissions and pollution from speedway racing. Councillor Hollingsworth replied that the business case for re-opening the stadium would be presented at the Local Plan inquiry, and while he had not seen an analysis, speedway racing was likely to be low-impact because of the nature of the bikes and the races.

60. Questions on Notice from Members of Council

27 written questions were asked of the Cabinet members and Leader, and these and written responses were published before the meeting.

These along with summaries of the supplementary questions and responses asked and given at the meeting are set out in the printed pack of these minutes.

61. Outside organisation/Committee Chair reports and questions

With Council's consent this item was taken before the break.

Councillor Simm arrived during this item.

a) Outside Organisation report - Oxfordshire Health and Wellbeing Board and Health Improvement Board

Council had before it the report of the Cabinet Member for Healthy Oxford on the work of the Oxfordshire Health and Wellbeing Board and Health Improvement Board

Councillor Upton introduced the report and answered questions. She thanked the Policy and Partnership Team Manager for her supporting work for these partnerships. She outlined the key aims of the two boards including work to prevent ill health and deterioration in chronic conditions; the community impact zones; innovative ways of accessing healthcare through the Trailblazer scheme; and considering how to encourage businesses to engage effectively with employees suffering with chronic conditions. Partners shared good and successful practice with each other.

Council noted the report.

62. Scrutiny Committee update report

With Council's consent this item was taken before the break.

Councillor Bely-Summers arrived during this item.

The Chair of the Scrutiny Committee, Councillor Gant, presented the report updating Council on the work of the committee and its standing panels; and of the newly convened review group on the climate emergency. He thanked the new scrutiny officer and all those who had attended committees and panels for their work.

Council noted the report and the appendices.

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

Councillors Henwood left at the start of this item.

This item was taken first after the break, then the meeting resumed consideration of the motions.

There were four addresses and two questions to Council:

1. Mark Franks, a Blackbird Leys Parish Councillor asked a question about proposals for the area around Knights Road taking over the ownership of Spindleberry Nature Park.
2. Frances Ashworth and Cyril Foster spoke in support of the motion at 15b (mental health).
3. Safoora Teli and Fayaz Khan spoke in support of the motion at 15c (Kashmir).
4. Judith Harley asked a question about plans for the Oxford Greyhound Stadium and their relationship to plans for William Morris sports field.
5. Judith Harley gave an address about the rules on councillors lobbying other councillors.
6. Artwell gave an address about community facilities in Barton.

The full text of these speeches read as submitted; responses from the Cabinet members in writing before the meeting; and summaries of any verbal responses given at the meeting are set out in the printed pack of these minutes.

64. Motions on notice

Council had before it seven motions on notice submitted in accordance with Council procedure rules and reached decisions as set out below.

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

- a) Setting an Oxford Living Rent
- b) Mental Health
- c) Kashmir

The following motions were not taken as the time allocated for debate had elapsed:

- d) Long Service Awards
- e) International Treaty to Prohibit Nuclear Weapons
- f) Greening the city centre
- g) Tourism management

a) Setting an Oxford Living Rent

With Council's consent this item was taken before the break.

Councillors Corais and McManners arrived during this item.

Councillor Wolff, seconded by Councillor Rowley proposed the 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 notes

- 1) the high cost of rent within the private rented sector within the City;
- 2) that it has limited influence on the private rented sector rental values;
- 3) that it has a duty under the Homelessness Reduction Act to do what it can to prevent homelessness including helping those who are not in priority need from losing their home;
- 4) the success of the Oxford Living Wage campaign in raising awareness of low pay and encouraging more employers to pay a living wage;
- 5) that the Mayor of London has set and published benchmark London Living Rent levels for every neighbourhood in the capital. These are based on a third of average local household incomes and adjusted for the number of bedrooms in each home.

Council therefore agrees to:

- 1) ask Cabinet to commission a report to explore the idea of setting and publishing an annual 'Oxford Living Rent' for the private rented sector with a view to exerting influence on the rental market within Oxford.**
- 2) write to the incoming Government after 12 December asking for the power to establish and enforce local rent controls..**

The Oxford Living Rent should be calculated using a methodology that utilises existing, annually published data using research from organisations such as the Joseph Rowntree Foundation who have studied this in some detail.

This motion does not prescribe the method to be used but notes that various options exist and should be evaluated for their relevance to Oxford and their alignment with the values of this Council.

b) Mental Health

Councillor Iley-Williamson arrived and Councillors Fry, Pressel and Tidball left during this item.

Councillor Bely-Summers, seconded by Councillor Upton proposed the 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:

The 2012 Health and Social Care Act opened the NHS to private companies, allowing them to bid for big contracts and sue the NHS if they didn't get it.

The NHS is being dismantled piece by piece. This is compounded by the longest spell of austerity cuts in living memory and a lower investment in health compared to other EU countries.

Oxfordshire CCG is a serial under-funder of Mental Health services. It persistently spends well below the national average figure of 13.9%. For the people in Oxford it means rationing and difficulty accessing services for those who need it at a time when public awareness of mental illness is increasing and the rate of Oxfordshire pupils suffering from mental health problems tops national average (see Oxford Mail 8/10/19). Unite which represents 100,000 members in the Health service have pointed out that psychological therapies have lost about 90% of their most senior clinicians since 2007 and that the trend needs to be reversed to prevent mentally ill people falling through the care net. Consultant psychology posts in adult psychology have recently been reduced by a third. The expectation is that less qualified staff will do more complex work with people who have serious mental health problems.

Oxfordshire Unison Health branch has highlighted the following:

- a shortage of Mental Health nurses in psychiatric wards.
- the recruitment and retention crisis being made worse by high cost of living in Oxfordshire.
- overcrowded wards are creating stressful environments, hampering recovery.
- the lack of decent housing and supportive placements prevents rapid discharge.
- the lack of adequate community services to support people in crisis leading to readmission.

Put under pressure from politicians, local people, councillors and campaign groups, the county council reversed its decision over a £1.6 million cut in the Mental Health budget earlier this year but we will need to do much more just to stand still as our population grows.

Therefore

- 1) We call on the Leader of the City Council to write to the Secretary of State to urge them to increase Mental Health funding to meet national target and address the needs of the population.**
- 2) We call on the Systems Leaders Group for the Buckingham, Oxfordshire and West Berkshire Integrated Care System (BOB ICS) to ensure they will consult the local population on decisions made regarding Mental Health provision.**
- 3) We request a clear line of accountability to be outlined by BOB ICS to ensure that the public has confidence in its decisions.**

c) Kashmir

Councillors Lloyd-Shogbesan left at the start of this item.

Councillor Altaf Khan, seconded by Councillor Wade, proposed the 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 supports the calls of the Oxford Kashmiri/Pakistani community to take notice of the humanitarian crisis intensified since 5th August 2019 when the Indian government revoked Article 370 of the Constitution thus abrogating the special status granted to Kashmir.

This Council notes that:

- eight million people in the valley of Kashmir are completely disconnected from the rest of the world due to curfew imposed by the Indian government;
- the enforced disappearances of civilians, the state-endorsed sexual violence of women by armed forces and the overall prevalence of human rights violations in the region worsens;
- the consequences of the abrogation of Article 370 and 35A along with the lockdown is aimed to demolish Kashmiri identity and bring about a demographic change against the wished of the people of Kashmir;
- thousands of Kashmiris including political leaders, both pro-freedom and mainstream, have been imprisoned without lawful justification;
- the number of children abducted from their homes is estimated by Indian human rights activists is about 13,000;
- the ongoing communications black-out is causing disruption for medical agencies and distress for the families.

This Council affirms that:

Jammu and Kashmir is a UN mandated disputed territory and the people of Kashmir must be given the right to self-determination as provided by the UN charter and UN resolutions.

It endorses the UN High Commissioners' demand to send a fact-finding Mission to Kashmir as demanded in OHCHR reports of June 2018 and July 2019.

This Council resolves:

- 1) That the international community including our incoming Government should ask the Government of India to lift all restrictions, ensure restoration of all human rights and fundamental freedoms and allow access to all aid agencies and international observers to obtain an independent estimate of this crisis situation.
- 2) The global community through the United Nations should invoke preventative diplomacy to prevent a military conflict between India and Pakistan in the interests of international peace and security and to ensure that the curfew enforced since 5th August should be lifted to guarantee the security and even the lives of the Kashmiri people.

- 3) To ask group leaders to write jointly to the Prime Minister, Foreign Secretary, Oxford's incoming MPs and MEPs supporting this motion.

This Council acknowledges the brave and principled work of Oxford's Kashmiri/Pakistani community and wider diaspora to push for accountability over the many decades of human rights violations and crimes against the Kashmiri people by the Government of India;

and asks the Leader/Chief Executive of the Council to write to the relevant U.K. Government Ministers in the Home and Foreign Offices, and to the city's incoming MPs, asking:

- 1) **The UK government to condemn the use of force, rape and other human rights violations of the Kashmiris.**
- 2) **The Home Office to provide sanctuary to Kashmiri people seeking safety from the oppressive regime in Indian Occupied Kashmir.**
- 3) **The city's MPs to write appropriate letters to the Home Office and Foreign Office representing the demands set out in this motion.**

d) Long Service Awards

This motion was not taken as the time allowed for debate had finished.

e) International Treaty to Prohibit Nuclear Weapons

This motion was not taken as the time allowed for debate had finished.

f) Greening the city centre

This motion was not taken as the time allowed for debate had finished.

g) Tourism management

This motion was not taken as the time allowed for debate had finished.

The meeting started at 5.00 pm and ended at 8.25 pm

Lord Mayor

Date: Monday 27 January 2020

To: Council

Date: 25 November 2019

Title of Report: Questions on Notice from members of Council and responses from the Cabinet Members and Leader republished to include supplementary questions and answers given at the meeting

Introduction

1. Questions submitted by members of Council to the Cabinet members and Leader of the Council, by the deadline in the Constitution are listed below in the order they will be taken at the meeting.
2. Responses are included where available.
3. Questioners can ask one supplementary question of the councillor answering the original question.
4. This report are 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

Cabinet Member for Affordable Housing

1. From Councillor Wade to Councillor Rowley – Loans for out of area school travel

Question	Written Response
Some families on benefits are moved out of Oxford e.g. to Didcot, but their children want to continue attending their existing schools in Oxford. Currently these parents suffer from the poverty	Before making an offer of permanent or temporary housing consideration will be given to whether a property is considered suitable for their family's housing requirements. A number of factors will be considered, which can include, where their children go to school, what transport a family has available & the customer's financial circumstances – particularly if they are to be housed outside of City.

1. From Councillor Wade to Councillor Rowley – Loans for out of area school travel	
<p>premium i.e. having to buy weekly tickets at much greater cost than annual tickets.</p> <p>Will the Council provide loans, repayable over a year, to parents of these school children for the purchase of annual season tickets, or better still pay for such children's travelling costs'?</p>	<p>Permanent social housing is normally allocated through Choice-Based Lettings so most customers will be able to choose whether to move outside of the City or not.</p> <p>For the ten HRA properties in Didcot, the tenants bid on the properties through the Council's CBL scheme because they wanted to live in Didcot. Around half were existing tenants of the Council who wanted to move to be closer to family or work etc. This is the same for the Council's existing tenants of housing stock in Abingdon and Kidlington.</p> <p>Where OCC has been unable to prevent a family from becoming homeless they may require temporary accommodation. In some cases if it is accepted a family needs to be in Oxford but there is nothing suitable available – they will only be placed out of the area for a short-time until a suitable property in Oxford becomes available & then moved back. So this should minimise the financial cost and impact on the children's schooling.</p> <p>Oxfordshire County Council provides assistances for children to get to school and in summary the policy states: <i>"If a child is in receipt of free travel and the family changes address the child's parent needs to inform the School Admissions Team. The child's eligibility for free travel will then be reassessed against the Home to School Travel and Transport Policy. The parent will then be notified in writing if the child is still eligible for free travel. "</i></p>
<p>Supplementary question</p> <p>How many children living in <u>temporary</u> (not permanent) accommodation outside Oxford but remaining at their city school are affected each year?</p> <p>Could the Cabinet Member look at the numbers affected, the costs, and whether we can award a grant?</p>	<p>Verbal response</p> <p>I can try to find the number of children placed in temporary accommodation outside Oxford, but the council may not have information on school placements. The County Council deals with school transport and provides travel grants. If you know of any cases where children do not have a practical way of getting to school, please contact me.</p>

2. From Councillor Wolff to Councillor Rowley – Energy efficiency standards for council housing stock

Question	Written Response
What renewable energy, insulation (windows, doors, walls, floors, ceilings) and air tightness standards or targets are currently set when improving the energy efficiency of Council housing?	<p>Building on years of data collection primarily using our own data, updates from programmes of improvement works and Energy Performance Certificates, we are at the data validation stage of an assessment of how the housing stock is performing for energy efficiency. We have recently completed a whole stock modelling exercise which indicates that overall the bulk of the housing stock is performing well with 93.6% returning and Energy Performance Certificate (EPC) rating of D or above which demonstrates that the vast majority of our stock performs at average or above with regard to energy efficiency.</p> <p>The Council has given priority to investment projects to improve energy efficiency with extensive programmes of cavity wall and solid wall insulation installations and also solar PV installation programmes. There is a continuing programme of heating upgrades and loft insulation to set minimum standards for our homes</p> <p>Our aim currently is to get all of the buildings to a D in their EPC where this is feasible. However, following the Citizens Assembly there will be further consideration of additional investment to achieve improved energy efficiency and carbon reduction.</p>

Cabinet Member for Culture and City Centre

3. From Councillor Simmons to Councillor Clarkson – Holding a ‘Lyra Day’

Question	Written Response
Will the Portfolio holder investigate the possibility of establishing a ‘Lyra Day’ in addition to, or instead of, ‘Alice Day’ following the televising of the His Dark Materials trilogy, based on the novels by Philip Pullman, who was awarded the Freedom of the City on January 24th 2007?	Events such as Alice Day are reliant on significant external funding e.g. from the Arts Council, Trusts and Foundations. Alice Day is run by the Story Museum, not the City Council. We could make this suggestion to them, but it would depend on their interest, capacity and ability to raise the funding required.

4. From Councillor Simmons to Councillor Clarkson – Friendship link with Neve Shalom/Waha as-Salam

Question

Now that the council has the capacity to manage multiple twinning links, can Council now resurrect the friendship link with Neve Shalom/Waha as-Salam that was agreed by Council following a proposal by former Cllr Mike Woodin, but mothballed because there wasn't the staff capacity at the time.

Written Response

Oxford's twin cities rose from 5 to 8 during 2018-19. Oxford already has a lot more twin cities per head of population in comparison to other cities. London has 10 twin cities and Cambridge has 2 for example.

Whilst officer capacity has been increased from 4 days a week to 5, clearly the resource is already stretched to launch, accommodate, help fundraise for and look after the new links we have recently made.

A small group of councillors have held informal discussions with a member of Oxford University with a view to strengthening links between Oxford and Beersheba in Israel. Ben Gurion University in Beersheba already has links with Oxford University.

The Cabinet approved the following process for developing any future twin city links at their meeting on 7 March 2019:

"Any additional international requests are considered on the following basis:

- *The proposed twin city has a University of international renown that already has links with Oxford*
- *The proposed twin city is committed to immutable principles of individual liberty, democracy, respect for Human Rights and equality under the law*
- *A suitable voluntary link group is available to drive ongoing activity with the twin city*
- *There should be an agreed period during which a Friendship Agreement would be made to monitor the link's ability to deliver sustainable activity in the longer term prior to signing a full twinning agreement*

The decision will need to be reviewed alongside the resource implication and only signed once a budget is in place and the Cabinet has taken the decision"

Cabinet Member for Finance and Asset Management; non-statutory Deputy Leader

No questions

Cabinet Member for Healthy Oxford

No questions

Cabinet Member for Planning and Sustainable Transport

5. From Councillor Wolff to Councillor Hollingsworth – Follow up to Waltham Forest's presentations

Question

Does the Portfolio holder have any plans to actively follow up the series of 'mini-Holland' presentations from Waltham Forest, and if so, what are they?

Written Response

The Connecting Oxford proposals, which were already well advanced, propose many of the things that Waltham Forest have done to tackle the negative impacts of traffic. Most of the powers to implement the 'mini-Holland' approach rest with the County Council, but the City Council will continue to support and encourage similar schemes in Oxford.

I am aware of a community groups building support for this kind of approach in Florence Park, and of course the recent closure of Walton Street has created a much more pedestrian and cyclist friendly environment in that part of the city.

The key message from schemes across the world is that in order to create streets that are cleaner, quieter and above all more human, it is essential to dramatically reduce the volume and the priority for car traffic. That is what the Connecting Oxford proposals aim to do, and as such they are the essential pre-requisite for taking forward schemes such as those in Waltham Forest.

6. From Councillor Wolff to Councillor Hollingsworth – Westgate traffic congestion

Question

There are numerous reports of City Centre congestion as a result of car drivers queueing up to use the Westgate. This is impacting on the reliability of bus services. Given that it was the City Council that gave planning permission for this car park and gave control over the parking charges to the Westgate Partnership it needs to take

Written Response

Traffic congestion across the city is unacceptably high, which is why the City and County Councils have put forward the Connecting Oxford proposals, which aim to reduce traffic levels significantly across the city.

The Council is also expanding the capacity of the park and ride system, which will help to offer public transport alternatives to driving to the Westgate. The County Council has put a

6. From Councillor Wolff to Councillor Hollingsworth – Westgate traffic congestion	
responsibility for the consequences. What is the portfolio holder doing to rectify the situation?	system of signs around the city telling shoppers when the car park at the Westgate is full; given that many drivers seem to disregard them, more needs to be done to ensure that that message gets through.

7. From Councillor Wolff to Councillor Hollingsworth – Local Plan policy RE1	
Question	Written Response
<p>Policy RE1 of the City Council's submitted Local Plan 2036 (concerning minimum build standards) is not specifically mentioned in the planning inspectors' paper '<i>Inspectors' Matters and Issues</i>' of 15th October, although</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> in their earlier query Inspectors' initial questions and comments to Oxford City Council of May 2019 the inspectors suggested they had concerns about the impact of our proposed higher standards on our 'development targets', which presumably include housing delivery. And : our ability to deliver housing remains amongst the inspectors' concerns expressed in the 15th October paper. <p>Does the portfolio holder have any reason to believe that the inspectors have been satisfied with the further evidence submitted by the Council regarding the feasibility of policy RE1, and therefore consider it sound?</p>	<p>No. The absence of a policy from the Matters and Issues for the Local Plan hearings means only that the Inspectors believe that they sufficient evidence already to reach a decision on that policy. It is not possible to infer what that decision will be. The Councillor, like all of us, will have to wait until the Inspectors issue their report, which we expect to be in the spring of next year.</p>

8. From Councillor Wolff to Councillor Hollingsworth – Passivhaus standards	
Question	Written Response
<p>Is it within the Council's legal powers to offer developers 'discounts' on Community Infrastructure Levy and/or Section 106 payments if they 'go the extra mile' and build to Passivhaus standards?</p> <p>Is this a policy he would consider developing?</p>	<p>It is not possible to do this. The CIL regulations and guidance are clear under the circumstances relief can be offered and this is not one. There is an "exceptional circumstances relief", which the Council introduced in June 2019. However, as set out in national guidance, this allows us to consider claims for relief on chargeable developments on a case by case basis, provided the conditions set out in regulation 55 (as amended by the 2013 and 2014 Regulations) are met. This includes:</p>

8. From Councillor Wolff to Councillor Hollingsworth – Passivhaus standards

- a section 106 agreement must exist in relation to the planning permission permitting the chargeable development; and
- the charging authority must consider that paying the full levy would have an unacceptable impact on the development's viability and
- the relief must not constitute a notifiable State aid.

This therefore does not allow a discount and only allows for the full charge to be removed in place of a S106 agreement. As set out in the policy and the regulations it must be based on an assessment carried out by an independent person of the economic viability of the chargeable development. The viability of the scheme would need to be assessed against our adopted development plan policies and demonstrated by an independent viability expert to not be viable against those policies, not against additional costs that fall outside them.

It does not allow for us to apply additional costs beyond that of the development plan on an ad hoc basis.

Section 106 agreements deal with the provision of affordable housing contributions and with predominantly site specific measures that are necessary to mitigate the impact of development in order to make the development acceptable in planning terms. There is not a way to let off or discount these obligations in order to allow for something that would not be required by the development plan to make it acceptable in planning terms.

9. From Councillor Gant to Councillor Hollingsworth – Connecting Oxford

Question

Can the Cabinet Member explain why the recent document "Connecting Oxford" proposes a workplace parking levy in half of the city and not the other half? Isn't this immediately open to charges that it is being applied unequally and unfairly?

Written Response

The proposals in the Connecting Oxford public consultation document have been produced jointly by Oxfordshire County Council and Oxford City Council, and as such reflect where there is common ground between the two authorities on specific elements of the plan. So for example, the City Council view is that a congestion charge is not a preferred way forward because it is expensive to set up and administer and is socially regressive – and that is why it was not included as part of the main proposals put forward in the Connecting Oxford documents.

9. From Councillor Gant to Councillor Hollingsworth – Connecting Oxford

	<p>Therefore while my personal opinion is that a working place parking levy that extends across the entire area of the city within the ring road would be workable, equitable and desirable, the proposals as put forward reflected a concern expressed by our partners that the levy should be raised only in the areas where direct benefits in the form of new subsidised bus routes were proposed.</p> <p>Officers are currently working through the very substantial number of responses, many of which make the same point as the questioner. It will be up to the two authorities to reflect on those responses, and consider what changes should be made to the scheme as it goes forward. It will be incumbent on those of us who believe in applying the levy across the whole city to make a compelling case to do just that, and I will be endeavouring to do so at every opportunity.</p>
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10. From Councillor Gant to Councillor Hollingsworth – SODC Local Plan

Question	Written Response
Has any member formally acting on behalf of Oxford City Council, or any officer authorised to represent the Council, spoken with MHCLG officials, ministers or the Secretary of State regarding the holding direction that currently applies to South Oxfordshire District Council and what was the subject matter of those discussions'	No member or officer from Oxford City Council has spoken to any officials, ministers or the Secretary of State regarding the holding direction, formally or otherwise. The Leader of the Council made clear in a public statement her opposition to the action taken by the Secretary of State.

11. From Councillor Gant to Councillor Hollingsworth – Housing numbers

Question	Written Response
In a recent report to the Audit and Governance Committee (23 October 2019), Officers raised two Service risks from Amber to Red (p10 of the agenda, para 15), in response to what the report identifies as a “possible review of the housing numbers in the [draft] Local Plan”, “changes to the NPPF” and “the need for evidence	<p>I remain unequivocally clear that I believe that the Council’s position is sound, and its evidence base robust, as do our officers. That position and evidence base has been repeatedly tested at Local Plan hearings across Oxfordshire, and in every case it has been found to be sound, and I am confident that it will be found sound again at the hearings into the City’s Local Plan.</p> <p>At the time of drafting the report to the Audit</p>

11.From Councillor Gant to Councillor Hollingsworth – Housing numbers

to support the Council's position".

The Cabinet Member has always been unequivocally clear that the he believes that the Council's position is sound and its evidence base robust. This assessment of risk appears to suggest that the Council is now less certain of that. Is that correct?

and Governance Committee officers were aware that the inspectors had not yet finalised the dates of the Hearings in Public on the Local Plan, and that the potential for delay, however remote, posed an increased risk that should be recorded. Subsequently the dates have been fixed, and the focus of the inspectors on a reasonably limited number of core policy areas indicates that that risk has been reduced, and would today be reported accordingly.

Cabinet Member for Safer Communities and Customer Focused Services

12.From Councillor Wolff to Councillor Chapman – Improving visibility for CCTV on Cowley Road

Question

During August, neighbourhood police in East Oxford made repeated requests to a local councillor and cabinet member for the improvement of natural surveillance of the stretch of Cowley Road between Leon Close and Leopold Street, where low-hanging branches and car parking obstruct both street lighting and the sightlines of CCTV and the general public. These requests were repeatedly refused, and more recently ignored. Street drinking and drug dealing cause persistent nuisance here. Women frequently cross the Cowley Road to avoid walking along that stretch. Recently a man was kicked to death on the pavement here (out of sight of CCTV) and earlier in the year the perpetrators of a murder on Southfield Road are believed to have used restaurants here before and after their crime but in the absence of CCTV footage this could not be confirmed. Drug dealers are well aware of places that are out of CCTV coverage. A previous near-fatal knifing related to the drugs trade further up the Cowley Road also took place out of CCTV visibility a couple of years ago.

Officers have researched alternative sites for CCTV but nothing has come of it: the estimate was in excess of £11,000. But dealing with the visibility issues would anyway render this unnecessary.

Lower branches of trees in Gloucester Green have

Written Response

It is certainly not the Council's intention to obstruct the police in their duties or encourage anti-social behaviour anywhere in the city.

My meetings with senior police indicate the very opposite – how well Council officers and police teams are working together.

As evidence of this, the Council are looking into changing the locations of all three of the current cameras to give better coverage along the Cowley Road. The current locations, although useful, are no longer considered optimal locations.

Visibility issues will be reviewed during any reinstallation, and if tree pruning is considered necessary, arrangements will be made to carry it out in an appropriate manner.

12.From Councillor Wolff to Councillor Chapman – Improving visibility for CCTV on Cowley Road	
<p>been pruned for crime prevention reasons, where there is no additional obstruction of sightlines by parked cars.</p> <p>Is it the Council's intention to obstruct the police in their duties and encourage antisocial behaviour by deliberately creating dangerous places? If not, will the portfolio holder take up the case, meet with police and take action as requested?</p>	
<p>Supplementary question</p> <p>Would the Cabinet Member be willing to draw the council officers' and police officers' attention to the issues with this very specific section of road?</p>	<p>Verbal response</p> <p>Yes: I have done this and the answer sets out the actions.</p>

13.From Councillor Wolff to Councillor Chapman – Encouraging street culture	
<p>Question</p> <p>Will the portfolio holder consider withholding, for the first year, the City Council's demand for an additional licence fee for cafes and restaurants to have tables on the pavement for businesses in areas identified as having problems such as street clutter (with waste and recycling), street drinking, drug dealing and associated violent or threatening behaviour) to encourage a better, more open and LESS cluttered street environment with more street life and less antisocial behaviour?</p>	<p>Written Response</p> <p>There is already a considerable reduction of 55% in licence fees for street cafés outside the city centre which was introduced several years ago to encourage more street cafes. I feel this is pitched at the right level as there are administrative costs the Council bears.</p> <p>For a business owner there are other more significant matters than the fee to consider when introducing a street café, such as securing approval from the Highways Authority & obtaining Planning Permission. Reducing the fee further is therefore not any kind of guarantee that more street cafes will emerge.</p>
<p>Supplementary question</p> <p>Does the discount apply for just the first year? Are these annual costs, or one-off costs which could be deferred by a year.</p>	<p>Verbal response</p> <p>Yes. But the obstacles are not just the cost of the licence from us, but also the time and cost to obtain necessary highways and planning approvals.</p>

14.From Councillor Simmons to Councillor Chapman – PSPO costs

Question

I welcome the recent decision to cancel the Public Space Protection Order. Can the Cabinet Member tell me how much council money has been spent setting up the PSPO, and how much has been spent maintaining it since it came in to force?

Written Response

The aim of the PSPOs was to deter anti-social behaviour from the city centre – including aggressive begging, illegal street trading, busking and inappropriate use of public toilets – and this has happened since their introduction.

In February the City Centre PSPO came to an end, but other powers to tackle anti-social behaviour in Oxford city centre – including Community Protection Notices, and the city-wide dog control and alcohol PSPOs – remain in place.

Now, after nearly ten months without a PSPO setting standards, the City Council's Community Safety officers and Thames Valley Police agree that the impact of the Order is still being felt and many of the anti-social behaviours have not returned. It is not therefore necessary to renew the City centre PSPOs.

Initial costs of £500 were incurred in 2015. This was to install signs around the City Centre to inform people about the PSPO – which is a requirement under the PSPO legislation.

No further expenditure has been incurred since then as the PSPO does not require maintenance.

15.From Councillor Wolff to Councillor Chapman – Joint city police drugs taskforce

Question

Can the portfolio holder provide any updates on the work of the joint city police drugs taskforce?

Written Response

The Public Spaces Drugs Task Force has had a change of personnel within both the Police and the Council. Crime prevention activities, police disruption of drug dealers and patrols continue in hot spot areas with very positive results. Activities in East Oxford have continued to target county lines drugs operations and local organised crime groups.

The Council continues to play a full part in this successful initiative which is tackling open drug dealing and drug taking in Oxford.

16.From Councillor Goddard to Councillor Chapman – Cycling in Cornmarket and Queen Street

<p>Question</p> <p>Is the Cabinet Member aware that the PSPO covering cycling in Cornmarket and Queen Street between 10am and 6pm expired in January 2019, and are they content that this should be the case?</p>	<p>Written Response</p> <p>The Cabinet Member is very aware of the expiry of the City Centre PSPO, details of which can be found on the City Council's website.</p> <p>Oxfordshire County Council's Traffic Management Order governing cycling is still in place in Queen Street and Cornmarket Street.</p> <p>The County Council remains responsible for enforcement, but Oxford City Council officers support this by regularly stopping cyclists in Cornmarket Street to remind them that they are breaching the County Council's order.</p>
<p>Supplementary question</p> <p>Is the prohibition on cycling in Cornmarket and Queen Street between 10am and 6pm still in force? Do council officers still have power to require cyclists to dismount?</p>	<p>Verbal response</p> <p>Yes this is in force. However the signage is not as clear and obvious as it could be, so we need to make the rules more obvious. But they are in place and enforceable.</p>

17.From Councillor Altaf Khan to Councillor Chapman – Improving recycling rates from street litter

<p>Question</p> <p>I welcome the decision by the Council to pilot a scheme to deal with the problem of used coffee cups. Can the Cabinet Member please outline other plans to improve recycling rates from street litter?</p>	<p>Written Response</p> <p>There are over 1000 litter bins across the city, therefore a cost effective solution is to pilot the introduction of new and improved street furniture in three locations to start in conjunction with the used coffee cup recycling scheme. This includes the City Centre, Headington and Summertown.</p> <p>The aim is to improve participation in general recycling of plastic bottles, cans, glass and paper through recycling stations in key locations with high footfall. This will make it easy and convenient for citizens to recycle on the go.</p> <p>ODS and Oxford City Council are working closely together to deliver this project, and our aim is to introduce this from February 2020. The recycling output from this initiative will be monitored to ensure</p>
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17.From Councillor Altaf Khan to Councillor Chapman – Improving recycling rates from street litter	
	<p>that levels of contamination are not excessive.</p> <p>I would add that much better than recyclable coffee cups are re-useable ones, which often give the owner a reduction in the cost of their coffee or tea.</p> <p>We need to encourage their use across the city, especially with those companies who are not currently offering any financial incentive to those who have purchased them.</p>
<p>Supplementary question</p> <p>Are there any plans to extend the scheme by adding more locations or more items for recycling?</p>	<p>Verbal response</p> <p>We are looking at different options, and can provide more information about these.</p>

18.From Councillor Altaf Khan to Councillor Chapman – Central Headington highways work	
<p>Question</p> <p>There appears to be an increasing number of works to highways in central Headington. Residents are particularly concerned when these works happen out of hours and they have not been informed.</p> <p>Can the Cabinet Member please clarify what process is in place for communicating timings of up and coming works to councillors and to residents?</p>	<p>Written Response</p> <p>I'm not aware of any specific recent works in central Headington that were under the control of the City Council, under the highway arrangement with the County Council. Utility company operations and other larger schemes such as the Access to Headington works are controlled by the Network Management team at the County Council.</p> <p>If any highway work involves the City Council and ODS, residents receive a letter in advance advising of the likely disruption, the letter is shared with local councillors and they also receive copies of the temporary traffic regulation orders associated with the work.</p>

Cabinet Member for Supporting Local Communities

19. From Councillor Simmons to Councillor Tidball – Oxford Hackspace

Question

Oxford Hackspace is a non-profit, volunteer-run, member-owned workshop community “for gentle people who love to make things and want to see a better world.”

Will the portfolio holder agree to help the Oxford Hackspace look for more premises following the move out of Osney Lane in 2018?

Written Response

Yes, we’re very happy to meet with Hackspace to explore if we can offer any assistance.

Cabinet Member for Zero Carbon Oxford

20. From Councillor Wolff to Councillor Hayes – Vehicle emissions from Council’s fleet

Question

Despite showing an overall carbon reduction, the recent update to the Council’s carbon footprint results showed an increase in emissions from the Council’s vehicle fleet.

What are the reasons for this and what is being done?

Written Response

Oxford City Council has reduced its own carbon emissions by more than 900 tonnes in the last year. This reduction is the equivalent amount of CO₂ produced by a single car driving 2.9 million miles. These latest figures show the council has reduced carbon emissions by 10% in a single year and over 40% in the last four years. Since 2015, the Council has reduced its annual emissions by the equivalent amount of CO₂ produced by a single car driving 12.6 million miles every year.

It is right to target areas of the City Council where possible improvements can be made, and I thank you for highlighting emissions from the vehicle fleet. Here’s why:

- Oxford City Council has been insourcing and offering commercial services to local organisations. This income protects frontline priorities that deliver for the city’s people, at a time when we are seeing significant funding pressures.
- historically we have operated a fleet of approximately 325-330 vehicles however with expansion in business we have been required to keep older vehicles onto

20. From Councillor Wolff to Councillor Hayes – Vehicle emissions from Council's fleet

fleet to support services. This means we are operating at a fleet of between 340-350, of which some are older vehicles with higher emissions.

What have we been doing to reduce our emissions from our fleet?

- Oxford City Council was one of the first organisations in the UK to receive 'Go Ultra Low Company' status in 2017, which recognises businesses that are embracing electric vehicles.
- We have 54 hybrid or electric vehicles, which is the highest in the county.
- In May the City Council also updated the Lord Mayor of Oxford's car with a zero emission capable MINI which saw a 52% reduction in carbon dioxide emissions in comparison to the previous Toyota Prius T4. We conveniently have a Lord Mayor who tends to use his bike to travel and I hope the next incumbent in that role can carry on this habit!

What are we planning to do?

- We currently have plans to electrify another 50-60 vehicles by end of 2020.
- The Energy Superhub Oxford Project will help to accelerate electric vehicle growth across Oxford, including within our own fleet through providing charging capacity from the world's largest hybrid battery system to City Council depots, as well as other key businesses in Oxford including local bus companies, taxi providers, and commercial fleet depots. Through the increased capacity, the City Council to procure new electric fleet vehicles including refuse collection trucks, sweepers, tippers and vans.
- We're exploring the possibility of financial assistance for new vehicles from the Salix revolving loan fund. Further opportunities are expected to arise to allow faster uptake of EVs from the ground breaking Energy Superhub Oxford (ESO) project, which the council plays a key role in.
- A combination of fleet reduction, vehicle size reduction, telematics improvements and replacement with electric vehicles will bring down the total fleet emissions.

21.From Councillor Wolff to Councillor Hayes –Electric bike public charging points**Question**

Will the portfolio holder agree to look at the demand and feasibility for the installation of public charging points for electric bikes in the City Centre?

Written Response

Thank you for your questions on eBikes and your interest in the subject, including through your attendance of the eBike Summit recently convened by Green TV in Oxford.

Both City and County Councils are very aware of the importance of the need for electric bike charging points and we will work to ensure that they are reflected in policies on cycle parking in LTP5 and the City Council's planning documents wherever possible.

Along with Cllr Upton, I recently participated in the eBike Summit that you reference above which brought together business leaders working in the sector, to explore how we advance full eBike mobility, including around charging points. Some of the learnings and meetings from that Summit are continuing to prove useful.

Oxfordshire County Council as the transport authority are responsible for cycling infrastructure in the city and I will continue to raise the issue with them, and would encourage you to do the same.

22.From Councillor Wolff to Councillor Hayes – Electric bike sharing scheme**Question**

Has the portfolio holder considered a City electric bike-sharing scheme?

Written Response

Officers have meet with providers of electric bike sharing schemes to explore the possibility of them setting up on Oxford.

23.From Councillor Wade to Councillor Hayes – Follow up to the Citizens' Assembly**Question**

Is the Council proposing a follow up to the Citizens' Assembly, perhaps in the form of workshops or publicly accessible lectures on the effects of climate change?

Written Response

The Citizen Assembly is one tool for engaging with the public. The broader issue of engaging with the public in Oxford is something that is on a continuum.

The City Council will continue to work on regular engagement activities, publicise events across the city from partners and working with business. The Oxford Green Week is a key area of engagement on these issues.

23.From Councillor Wade to Councillor Hayes – Follow up to the Citizens' Assembly

Supplementary question

Can Councillors be set updates and advance notice of these events so that we can publicise these to our residents?

Verbal response

Yes: we will use our existing methods to notify councillors.

24.From Councillor Wade to Councillor Hayes – Follow up to the Citizens' Assembly 2

Question

Are the recommendations of the Citizens' Assembly, still awaited, going to be correlated with the 'Fast Forward Oxfordshire' report published by Oxford Friends of the Earth on 24 October? And how are the recommendations of both going to be fed into the Council's forward strategy?

Written Response

The recent Friends of the Earth Report [Fast Forward Oxfordshire](#) is a helpful and practical contribution towards what work can be undertaken in the city to reduce carbon emissions and protect nature. Friends of the Earth also provided input into our recent Citizen's Assembly but the breadth of the report was not presented to Assembly Members.

There is a rich source of partnership in the City and across the wider county that I look forward to working with Friends of the Earth and others to secure reduced emissions in Oxford and beyond as soon as is practically possible.

25.From Councillor Simmons to Councillor Linda Smith – Freephone number for the Outreach Services

Question

Will the portfolio holder ensure that a freephone number is provided for the Outreach Services (and advertised to service users) to allow rough sleepers to contact the service without incurring a cost?

Written Response

The Council commissions St Mungo's to deliver an assertive outreach service for rough sleepers and single homeless people (OxSPOT). Outreach workers make contact with people on the street on a daily basis, and clients are also able to make contact with outreach workers at the multi-agency assessment hub at Bonn Square. The ready availability of face to face contact with outreach workers, should minimise the need for clients to have to make contact via phone.

However, if they were to call and have little telephone credit, OxSPOT staff will offer to call the client back. Other agencies, such as Turning Point, will also support individuals to make a referral.

People sleeping rough or at risk of doing so can call StreetLink on 0300 500 0914. St Mungo's manage the incoming calls, however the service itself is owned by Homeless Link. Although 0300 numbers are not classed as freephone numbers, you won't be charged any extra to call this dialling code. 0300 numbers should be charged at your usual network rate, whether you are calling from a landline or mobile phone. If you have free minutes included with your landline package or your mobile phone package, you can use these to call a 0300 phone number.

In addition, Council officers will work with St Mungo's to scope the options for delivering a Freephone number.

Supplementary question

The point is that some people have no phone credit at all to use. How do they access these services?

Verbal response

I take the point: I have asked officers to work with St Mungo's to provide a Freephone number.

Leader of the Council, Cabinet Member for Economic Development and Partnerships

26. From Councillor Gant to Councillor Brown – progress on Natural Capital motion

Question

At its meeting on 22 July 2019, Council agreed a motion which undertook certain actions in relation to assessing Natural Capital in our region, including work on a possible pilot study.

Will the Leader update Council on progress on the actions agreed in that motion?

Written Response

Officers have written to the Secretary of State, Theresa Villiers MP, on behalf of the Chief Executive of the Council to set our ambition to work on a pilot census in Oxford and our willingness to coordinate local activity in the county. We have received a response to this letter from Rebecca Pow MP, Parliamentary Undersecretary of State at Defra who have informed us that Defra officials will be informed of our offer and aim to pick this up following the election.

27. From Councillor Gant to Councillor Brown – SODC Local plan

Question

At the last full council meeting the Leader informed Council of her intention to address South Oxfordshire District Council at its meeting to discuss its Local Plan.

Does she support the actions of the Secretary of State in preventing her, and many others, from having that opportunity, and indeed in shutting down all discussion of the issue by SODC?

Will she join me in calling on the Secretary of State to lift his holding order immediately?

Written Response

I continue to share the disappointment of SODC councillors and residents that the Secretary of State has found it necessary to take this unprecedented step of interfering in a local plan process. As I said at the time I strongly believe that local planning should remain with locally elected councillors. As I have said I believe SODC will achieve far more on affordable housing and improving sustainability if it continues with its emerging plan than if it is starting again and relying on a 7 year old plan for the next 5 years or so until a new one is in place.

I hope a way forward can be found that allows local councillors in South Oxfordshire to continue to argue the case for more affordable housing and environmental standards within their current local plan process.

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To: Council

Date: 25 November 2019

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

Introduction

1. Addresses made by members of the public to the Council, and questions put to the Cabinet members or Leader, registered by the deadline in the Constitution, are below. Any written responses available are also below.
2. The text reproduces that sent in the speakers and represents the views of the speakers. This is not to be taken as statements by or on behalf of the Council
3. This report is republished after the Council meeting as part of the minutes pack. This lists the full text of speeches delivered as submitted, summaries of speeches delivered which differ significantly from those submitted, and written and summarised verbal responses.

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

1. Question from Mark Franks, Blackbird Leys Parish Councillor - Spindleberry Nature Park
2. Address by Frances Ashworth and Cyril Foster– in support of the motion at 15b (mental health)
3. (a) Address by Safoora Teli – in support of the motion at 15c (Kashmir)
- 3 (b) Address by Fayaz Khan – in support of the motion at 15c (Kashmir)
4. Question by Judith Harley – Greyhound stadium
5. Address by Judith Harley – Rules on lobbying councillors
6. Address to be heard at the meeting.

Addresses and questions in part 2

1. Question from Mark Franks, Blackbird Leys Parish Councillor - Spindleberry Nature Park

Many of my parishioners have come to me with their concerns about Oxford City Council's plans to build on Spindleberry Nature Park which for some odd reason Oxford City Council think is in Knights Road. Interestingly, at the entrance on Spindleberry Close there is a gate and sign to the park which clearly states "Spindleberry Nature Park Tel 01865 252240", which is the number to Oxford City Council parks department. It is through this gate the parks department use to cut the playing-field area.

The Green Spaces Map Blackbird Leys contained within 'Oxford's Green Space Strategy 2013-2027' document (1) clearly lists the whole of the nature park as a green-space: the wooded area is listed as "green link" and the playing field which includes football pitch, exercise equipment and formally a BMX track is listed as 'park under 2 hectors'.

The current and soon to be superseded local plan lumped half the nature park with the Kassam stadium as potential area for development in an area called SP24a. On the new yet to be adopted 'Oxford Local Plan 2016-2036' page 153 (2), it has a site called "Knights Road" it says is in "Littlemore ward" currently used as "open space" or park in non-Orwellian speech. There is only one Knights Road in the city, which in Northfield Brook ward in Blackbird Leys. Something which I find deeply upsetting as a Blackbird Leys Parish Councillor for the Northbrook Ward, as it shows that city council has no idea where my ward actually is located.

On Page 49 of the Playing Pitch and Outdoor Sport Strategy 2012 – 2026 (3), it states "The potential to secure community use at additional sites which currently offer unsecured, adhoc or no community use should be also be explored along with the feasibility of bringing the mini pitch in Spindleberry Park back in to use."

On the current local plan section 'Local Plan 11.0 Sport Outdoor Recreation Community Facilities' (4) page 123, POLICY SR.8 states "The City Council will support the creation of additional allotments where justified by demand. A site is identified at Spindleberry Park, Blackbird Leys to meet the potential need arising from residential development."

On page 120 the Public Open Space section of the current local plan it says "The most popular areas for informal recreation are Oxford's parks, nature parks, historic cemeteries and common land. Each one has a unique character and offers a particular experience that cannot be enjoyed anywhere else. The City Council will protect areas that are used for such purposes."

I find it amazing Oxford City Council has promised to look into reinstating the football pitch, protect open spaces, providing allotments while also concreting over Spindleberry Nature park.

Which is why I am planning to propose a parish poll to Blackbird Leys Parish Council to let my parishioners decide

The question of the poll will be simple:

Do you support protecting the whole of Spindleberry Nature Park from any non-recreational development?

My question to Oxford City Council is:

would it not only accept the result of the non-binding parish poll , but also in the event of the parishioners deciding to keep nature park for recreation use, consider selling the

whole the Spindleberry Nature park to Blackbird Leys Parish council for a 999 year lease for a peppercorn fee?

[Oxford City Council documents referred to \(pdfs\)](#)

- 1) [Green space strategy](#)
- 2) [Local Plan](#)
- 3) [Playing pitch and outdoor sport strategy](#)
- 4) [Local Plan outdoor recreation facilities](#)

Verbal response from the Cabinet Member for Planning and Transport, Councillor Hollingsworth

This response deals with the planning policy aspects of the question: other matters raised will need to be discussed separately with the relevant service heads.

The Knights Road site, the area adjacent to the Spindleberry nature park, has been allocated for housing development for nearly 10 years. It was allocated in the Sites and Housing Plan (consultation on which began in 2010, with the plan formally adopted in 2013) for residential-led development as part of policy SP24 of that Plan, which covered this site and sites next to the Kassam Stadium; the majority of the overall area was in the Littlemore ward. The Local Plan 2036 proposes to maintain that allocation, but has split the site into two different policy areas, SP15 (Kassam Stadium) and SP16 (Knights Road).

Unfortunately the information box which should have been updated with the correct ward information to show that site SP16, the Knights Road site, is entirely in Northfield Brook was not altered. I'm very sorry for the error, and that will be corrected in the final document.

The Local Plan 2036 and its Policy Map show that Spindleberry Nature Park continues to be protected both as a wildlife site (policy G2) and as part of the green and blue infrastructure network (policy G1).

Both the Sites and Housing Plan and the Local Plan were subject to extensive public consultation. The Sites and Housing plan underwent a thorough public consultation and an examination in public before adoption at a full Council in February 2013.

The City Council followed all the statutory consultation procedures during development of the 2013 Sites and Housing Plan and the current proposed Local Plan. The consultation periods were advertised with significant publicity, including press releases, leafleting of public buildings and posters. Direct contact was made with those on the planning database, which includes all residents' associations and similar bodies, and with all statutory consultation bodies such as the Parish Council, Historic England and the Environment Agency. There was also a leaflet drop to all households in the city.

The Plan is currently under examination by the Planning Inspectorate on behalf of the Secretary of State. The Inspectors are appointed to test the soundness of the Plan including whether policies such as the site allocation for the Knights Road site are justified and likely to be effective.

2. Address by Frances Ashworth and Cyril Foster– in support of the motion at 15b (mental health)

I would like to speak to support the mental health motion, especially those parts which relate to CCG underfunding, rationing, lack of access to psychological services and provision in the community including housing. We don't very often talk about the needs of those with severe mental health problems but I know that I speak for many who would like their views put forward.

Personally I speak as someone who has had a number of relatives who have experienced severe mental health difficulties involving psychosis, one of whom is sadly no longer with us as a result. I have been a recent user of secondary mental health services and a relative currently has a schizophrenia diagnosis and is cared for by a community mental health team. And the more you talk to people the more common you will find that this experience is. Many people cope with severe and enduring mental health conditions all their lives, some better than others and there are also many family carers who are put in the position of having far too much responsibility for the welfare of their family members – some even being overtly told that, in the absence of enough skilled staff time, they can be the only people keeping their loved ones out of hospital.

I am a Trustee for Rethink Mental Illness, the national charity run by and for people with experience of severe mental illness and am chair of its South East Regional Committee so have very wide experience of talking to people who experience severe mental illness and of surveys and research in this area.

I also act as Group Coordinator for a group called Rethink Oxford Campaigners which meets just off the Cowley Road. We are a group of people with direct experience of severe mental illness. When we set ourselves up 5 years ago we had a meeting to determine our priorities. The room was packed and the priorities were: Access to the right help at the right time including psychological therapy and access to Care Coordinators and support generally. It seemed then that the more ill you were the more difficult it was to access the right help and this has not changed. Some three years later we did a survey amongst the 200 or so people on our email list and the major problem was access to staff, not getting appointments and staff moving on causing breaks in care. Last year we contributed to the Independent Review of the Mental Health Act from our own joint experience and we found that some of us had been sectioned into hospital on reaching crises which should have been avoidable with proper care in the community. Sometimes being sent to hospitals many miles away (eg from Oxford to London, from Witney to Windsor) And then in hospital not being listened to and sometimes being discharged with no housing to go to, so inevitably ending up back in hospital. Hospital is very expensive compared with proper community care and causes additional trauma.

Last week we had a meeting to discuss action points for a new government and agreed that the fundamental problem was ironically a lack of regard for people's welfare. We are in favour of a cross-governmental approach with shows some kindness and understanding; often people do not know where to go for help and are actually advised to go to A and E in these circumstances.

We feel strongly that individual clinicians are not at fault and are very often extremely caring and professional. But administrative convenience and cost-cutting is put above the wellbeing of individuals. A therapeutic relationship cannot be nurtured if staff have to move on.

Even worse is the experience of those who rely on the Community Mental Health Teams. Besides staff turnover (leading to many changes of Care Coordinator with gaps in between and missed appointments because of this) it is much more difficult for people with very severe mental illness to gain access to psychological therapies, much

more reliance being put upon medication. They are also deemed too ill for IAPT, the service to which you can refer yourself, so they wait marooned in the middle and risk getting worse. In some places in the area there have also been a series of locum psychiatrists for years now and long gaps between appointments.

There is also the very common experience that, in order to save resources, people are discharged from Community Mental Health Teams to their GPs when they are still very ill on the pretext that they are not engaging. A symptom of schizophrenia is an unwillingness to engage. GPs will readily say that they do not understand anti-psychotic medication, which is all the treatment a lot of people are offered. On paper there is the Oxfordshire Mental Health Partnership which should bring together aspects of health and social care – but in practice on the increasingly rare occasions when people meet with their clinical care teams there is not the time to discuss access to what is needed or plan properly.

And access to all this stops in any case with premature discharge.

The Rethink Mental Illness report “Right Treatment, Right Time” covers the difficulties of obtaining the right treatment across the country and also makes the point that the more ill you are the more difficult it is to access the right help. Its analysis of spending by CCGs and its analysis of the use of co-production by CCGs (ie involving those who actually use the services in their design) consistently shows that Oxfordshire has been underspending and underperforming.

I should say that I now know many people who have been diagnosed with a severe and enduring mental health condition who, with the right care and given reasons to be hopeful about their future, have made very good recoveries and some are doing important jobs.

Letting people go into crisis because of lack of funds is like standing by while people have the first symptoms of a heart attack, not supporting them with the right housing is asking for a relapse to happen. Discharging them when you know they are still ill is playing with fire.

I urge you to support the motion.

Verbal response from the Cabinet Member for Healthy Oxford, Councillor Upton

Thank you for your speech in support of the motion later on the agenda. Thank you for sharing your stories with us: it is only when we hear the experiences of people living with these illnesses that the statistics become meaningful. While this council is not responsible for mental health services, we can have an impact on these through our partnerships. We have raised an Oxford weighting for NHS staff with the NHS Trusts. We are working through different programmes (eg Trailblazer, and two mental health workers in the Housing Services team) to help people secure and keep their homes. It is crucial that we focus on, and encourage others in, encouraging good mental health, and the motion we will debate later helps the council to do that.

3. (a) Address by Safoora Teli – in support of the motion at 15c (Kashmir)

3 (b) Address by Fayaz Khan – in support of the motion at 15c (Kashmir)

Address by Safoora Teli

Dear Lord Mayor, respected Councillors and all present here today, good evening. I am really grateful for this opportunity to talk about Kashmir, the place of my heritage and to share some insight today.

For the past 9 years, I have worked with and advocated for vulnerable people, many of them asylum seekers and refugees. I currently work in Oxford, supporting those in this city who have been recognised as potential victims of human trafficking. I've heard first-hand accounts of the disturbances, tragedies and desperate circumstances that push people to leave their homes and countries. The unrest in Kashmir is no exception; with an Oxford businessman recently telling me about his insomnia and anxiety, describing the ways in which he is trying to assist his younger brothers to leave Kashmir to go somewhere, anywhere safer. This is a concern shared by many as since August 4th this year- thousands of young men and boys have been victims of arbitrary arrest and detention, picked up as they try to go about their daily routine or during targeted raids in the middle of the night – and many tell harrowing stories and show evidence of torture in prison. The continued indiscriminate use of pellet guns on protestors too has injured, blinded and killed many young people and children.

Since the sudden revocation of article 370 (which protected its semi-autonomous special status), Kashmir has entered a new chapter of anxiety and disarray - with internet services still completely blocked, and only partial reinstatement of some mobile phones in recent weeks- there have been major impacts on the running of and supplies to schools, hospitals, pharmacies, shops and businesses. The UN has repeatedly urged India to exercise restraint in Kashmir, with a spokesperson recently expressing concern at the impact of the current curfew on the right to peaceful assembly, freedom of political expression, access to education and health. As with most societies blighted by humanitarian crises and war, it is the vulnerable that are doubly affected. Children have not been to school for almost 4 months, and the elderly and unwell have been dying premature deaths from otherwise manageable illnesses. The British Medical Journal described the situation as having led to a 'blatant denial of the right to healthcare'.

A spokesperson of the ruling political party in India recently tried to make the justification that "the life of a citizen is more important than civil liberties". As someone with all of my extended family in Kashmir, and having visited many times since childhood- these words are hollow and frankly laughable. Because for 30 years now Kashmiris have been living in a state of martial law. 1989 was when the extreme militarisation of the valley began, leading to the current ratio of approximately 8 civilians to each Indian soldier. Due to so-called emergency powers in place that ensure impunity for actions of the military (namely the Armed Forces Special Powers Act and the Public Safety Act) - there has been almost 100,000 killings, more than 8000 disappearances, numerous mass graves of unidentified bodies, thousands of reports of torture, the extensive use of mass rape as a weapon of war as well as arbitrary arrest, detention and destruction of property. These have been diligently documented by local human rights and civil society groups working tirelessly in the valley. International organisations such as Human Rights Watch, Amnesty International and the Red Cross have consistently been denied access to Kashmir.

The UN, Members of the European parliament and others have begun to speak out. As a city that values and encourages diversity and discourse, Oxford taking a stand today to seek justice and accountability for Kashmiris would be a most fitting and commendable move.

Address by Fayaz Khan

Speech on Kashmir Issue

Lord Mayor, distinguished Councillors and respected participants-GOOD Evening. It is a great honour for me to address this Session of the august Council of the city of Oxford and to bring to your kind attention the ongoing humanitarian crisis in Jammu and Kashmir.

The persistent crisis in Kashmir has not only endangered peace in Kashmir and the region but it is a continuous cause of disturbance for British Kashmiris and Pakistanis residing here in Oxford UK. Being a student of diplomatic studies, I consider dialogue and diplomacy is the only way to resolve this conflict, but unfortunately India wrongly considers it a bilateral issue and refuses to negotiate anything related to Kashmir. I strongly feel that the involvement of international community is indispensable to ask India to pay heed to the wishes of Kashmiris and resolve the issue in accordance with UN resolutions, as rightly highlighted in the motion put forward by Altaf Khan.

More than 100 days have passed since India imposed strict curfew in Jammu and Kashmir thus depriving eight million innocent men, women and children from their basic fundamental human right : all educational institutions are closed, people have no access to internet/social media to maintain contact with the outside world or to inquire about their family members, all sorts of political activities are banned, Political leaders including former Chief Ministers of Jammu and Kashmir are detained without any charge or trial- all these illegal actions by the Indian government reflect utter disrespect for democratic and constitutional norms.

Respected Councillors, the prevalent systematic oppression and injustice in Jammu & Kashmir has caught the attention of the global community and International Organizations. The office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights of the United Nations has called for the establishment of an independent commission of inquiry to investigate gross human rights violations in Kashmir in its recent report and rightly demanded in the motion put forward by Deputy Lord Mayor Altaf Khan- which I support. Similarly, the public hearing on human rights in occupied Jammu and Kashmir was held by the Tom Lantos Human Rights Commission of the U.S. Congress on 14 November 2019 at Washington DC. The deliberations of the Commission reinforced internationally recognized disputed nature of the Jammu and Kashmir issue and highlighted gross human rights violations taking place in Indian Occupied Kashmir.

I request this august house, which is well known for upholding the principles of human rights, rule of law and justice across the globe, to help the oppressed people of Indian occupied Kashmir by supporting this motion and becoming their voice.

I would also like to request you all to write a letters to your MPs, as demanded in this motion, to bring this matter to the kind attention of higher leadership and international organizations to put pressure on the government of India to revoke the unilateral decision and allow the people of Jammu and Kashmir to decide their future in accordance with their wishes and free will.

To conclude, I thank you all for honouring me by addressing this Council of the great people of Great Britain.

Verbal response from the Leader of the Council, Councillor Brown

Thank you for your speech in support of the motion later on the agenda. We are really concerned about the situation in Kashmir ad it is important for our Kashmiri residents that we raise these issues. We will be debating the motion on this later in the meeting.

4. Question by Judith Harley – Greyhound stadium

Lord Mayor, Councillors,

This month several issues of the Oxford Mail have reported on the significant support given by Oxford City Council to the prospect of reviving the Oxford Greyhound Stadium in Blackbird Leys. On 2nd November the Oxford Mail stated that the Council has “produced a new report exploring how it could help a private company or charity bring the much missed stadium back into use as a leisure facility”, and on 15th November Councillor Hollingsworth is reported as saying that, if the current owners of the stadium do not co-operate with Council plans to bring it back into use, then the Council would be prepared to ask for a Government Compulsory Purchase Order to force a sale to revive the stadium and save it from destruction.

I have addressed Council several times in the last two years over the William Morris Sports Ground in Temple Cowley, because residents value this as a protected open space and wish to see it returned in its entirety to public use for open air sport and informal leisure activities. I have twice asked the Council to make a compulsory purchase order for this site, to bring it back into use for leisure and recreation. On both occasions the Council has declined, citing not using taxpayers’ money, but has never suggested the “facilitator” rescue route offered to the stadium.

Why is there such a difference in attitude from the Council in reviving the Greyhound Stadium yet destroying the William Morris Sports Field? Both are much missed leisure facilities, now in private ownership, and closed by their owners. In both cases residents wish the current landowners would re-open the sites for public use. Both could be run by a private company or charity for public benefit. For the Greyhound Stadium the City Council is prepared to undertake a “facilitating role” with a development partner or leisure operator and, if the owner is unwilling to co-operate, “use compulsory purchase powers to buy the site to enable a third party operator to bring the facility back into use”. Why not do this for the William Morris Sports Ground? The City Council is even writing a special policy into Local Plan 2036 to bring the stadium back into use, to prevent its permanent loss, whereas the William Morris Sports Ground has no such protection.

Councillor Hollingsworth is quoted as saying “Oxford Stadium is a valuable community asset”. **We feel the same about the William Morris Sports Ground, which is a gift and legacy from William Morris, Lord Nuffield, to his workers at the local car factory and to the local community.**

Why won’t the Council offer a similar “facilitator” rescue for this site, and ask for a Government Compulsory Purchase Order to assist revival of the William Morris Sports Ground, and **preserve this heritage asset as a tribute to Lord Nuffield and his philanthropy and beneficence?**

Written response from the Cabinet Member for Planning and Transport, Councillor Hollingsworth

The Oxford Stadium is the only stadium of its type in the city, is within a conservation area and is a designated heritage asset. None of these apply to the former cricket pitch at William Morris Close, which is why the Local Plan proposes different planning policy approaches to the two sites. The former pitch at William Morris Close is being replaced and the scheme offers new public open space for the local community. This approach is also being taken elsewhere in the city for other allocations in the local plan relating to other sports pitches where they can be consolidated in the locality.

The special circumstances for Oxford Stadium require a different approach, which is what the Council is proposing in the Local Plan.

5. Address by Judith Harley – Rules on lobbying councillors

Lord Mayor, Councillors,

According to **section 24.8, Lobbying, in the Planning Code of Practice in the latest City Council Constitution (July 2019)**, “ ... ***Councillors should not lobby each other on planning applications, nor should they put pressure on officers to make a particular recommendation or do anything which compromises, or is likely to compromise, the officers’ impartiality or professional integrity.***”

Surely this prohibition, especially on lobbying each other, thwarts and compromises the ability of councillors to inform other members of concerns from ward residents over unsuitable and inappropriate developments in their ward. With this veto in place, and the threat of being reported to the Standards Committee for councillors who breach this section, accidentally or otherwise, how can councillors perform their obligations to represent their constituents and their constituents’ views?

Section 24.23 of the Constitution, Responsibility for this code, identifies that “ ... ***the Head of Planning Services and the Monitoring Officer have overall responsibility for this code. They will review how the code is working.***”

I would suggest that **section 24.8 of the code is not working** as it prevents **MY** ward councillors – and everyone else’s – from representing and discussing my views, and those of other residents, with their colleagues when it comes to dealing with planning applications. **This is quite extraordinary, inappropriate, and most unreasonable. Please will Council revise section 24.8 of the Constitution to remove this ban on lobbying on planning applications.**

As the Head of Planning Services and the Monitoring Officer have been identified as having overall responsibility for this code, please will Council ask them to make the appropriate amendments, and remove the threat of reporting to the Standards Committee any councillor who discusses a planning application with their colleagues.

Thank you.

Verbal response from the Leader of the Council, Councillor Brown

The Monitoring Officer has produced a note for all councillors, which sets out her advice on this matter. The Planning Code of Practice is there to ensure that councillors carry out their planning roles correctly. The distinction is drawn between making representations to the planning officer to be considered in the normal way; and directly lobbying each other (which is not appropriate).

6. Address to be heard at the meeting.

This address about a local issue is from a candidate for the Oxford East parliamentary seat in the general election.

He can speak at Council but under the purdah restrictions this speech is not published or broadcast until after the general election.