

# Minutes of a meeting of **COUNCIL** on Monday 27 January 2020

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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 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 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 Roz Smith	Councillor Tanner
Councillor Tarver	Councillor Taylor
Councillor Tidball	Councillor Turner
Councillor Upton	Councillor Wade
Councillor Wolff	

## **Apologies:**

Councillors Bely-Summers, Harris and Humberstone sent apologies.

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

## Watch the film of the Council meeting

Watch the [film of the Council meeting](#)

### 65. Declarations of interest

The Monitoring Officer gave the following advice about whether members of Council who are landlords or tenants in the private rented sector can participate in the debate and vote on Motion 2: Licensing Private Rented Sector Homes:.

Members' property interests will be included in their Register of Interests, which is a matter of public record (with the exception of any sensitive interests).

The Members' Code of Conduct states that where any matter disclosed in a councillor's Register of Interest is being considered at a meeting, "the councillor must declare that he or she has an interest...If the councillor has a disclosable pecuniary interest, after having declared it at the meeting he or she must not participate in discussion or voting on the item and must withdraw from the meeting whilst the matter is discussed". (Constitution 22.5(d))

The matter to be considered is whether the Council should in principle continue to seek government agreement to bring forward plans for a city-wide licensing scheme covering the whole private rented sector. This motion is not considering any individual properties and therefore I take the view that it is premature for members to be required to declare an interest and leave the meeting.

If and when members are asked to consider and decide upon the details of a specific scheme, this would bring into play members' property interests in the private rented sector and each affected property owned by a member would at that stage be a disclosable pecuniary interest.

The Lord Mayor noted the advice provided but said that as he was a landlord in the city and in the interests of transparency he had requested and received a dispensation from the Monitoring Officer to allow him to chair the debate but abstain from the vote.

Agenda item 8: During the debate on this item reference was made to the Jericho boatyard and Jericho Community Centre capital project. At that point Councillors Brown and Hollingsworth each declared a financial interest which they considered to be prejudicial and left the chamber until the conclusion of the discussion on that particular topic.

*Councillor Turner arrived during this item.*

### 66. Minutes

Council agreed to approve the minutes of the ordinary meeting held on 27 November 2019 as a true and correct record.

## **67. Appointment to Committees**

There were no changes to committee memberships.

## **68. Announcements**

The Lord Mayor welcomed members to the first Council meeting of the new year. He began by thanking those members who had attended the Lord Mayor's Carol Service and Christmas Reception. He then announced his main civic events since the last meeting, including:

- Carol services and other festive events
- Menorah lighting on Broad Street
- the visit of the Countess of Wessex to the Jubilee Centre
- the Agri-Social Charity Road Run in Thame
- visits to the Iraqi and Chinese communities

The Lord Mayor then gave instructions to Council, which he had composed in the form of a Haiku in honour of Chinese New Year:

*Council has started  
Set your mobiles to silent  
And voices to loud*

The Sheriff announced that since the last Council meeting he had:

- attended a number of festive events
- attended the Freemens' Annual Dinner
- participated in the visit of the Princess Royal, as Patron, to the Annual Farming Conference in Oxford

The Lord Mayor gave permission for the Leader of the Council to invite the Cabinet Member for Planning and Sustainable Transport to update Council on progress on the Oxford Local Plan.

Councillor Hollingsworth went on record to thank the Planning Policy Team members for their hard work and to point out that the Planning Inspector had also paid tribute to that team for their professionalism and the quality of their work. Councillor Gant echoed these sentiments and thanked all participants for their contribution. Councillor Gant said that he was pleased to note that the Inspectors had made reference to the proposals to deliver housing on brownfield sites. In response to a question Councillor Hollingsworth referred members to the timetable for the finalisation of the Local Plan in the report and confirmed that a Special Council would be convened in early June to adopt the Local Plan.

## **69. Public addresses and questions that relate to matters for decision at this meeting**

There were no addresses or questions.

## **70. Bullingdon Community Centre - Project Approval and Award Of Contract**

Council considered a report from Executive Director Customer and Communities which had been submitted to Cabinet on 19 December 2019 for project approval to replace the existing end of life community building at Bullingdon and to delegate the award of the construction contract to Oxford Direct Services and to recommend Council to increase the total project budget and delegation to award the construction contract to Oxford Direct Services.

Councillor Tidball, the Cabinet Member for Supporting Local Communities, presented the report. She moved the recommendation, which was agreed on being seconded and put to the vote.

**Council resolved to approve** an increase in the total project budget by £200,000 to £1,403,000. This is included as part of the consultation budget.

## **71. Integrated Performance Report for Quarter 2 2019/20**

Council considered a report from the Head of Financial Services and the Head of Business Improvement which updated Members on finance, risk and corporate performance matters as at 30 September 2019.

Councillor Turner, the Cabinet Member for Finance and Asset Management, presented the report.

During the debate on this item reference was made to the Jericho boatyard and Jericho Community Centre capital project. At that point Councillors Brown and Hollingsworth each declared a financial interest which they considered to be prejudicial and left the chamber until the conclusion of the discussion on that particular topic.

*Councillors Brown and Hollingsworth left the chamber.*

Councillor Turner undertook to provide a written response in relation to the development of a business case for the potential purchase of the Jericho boatyard rather than investment in the Jericho Community Centre.

*Councillors Brown and Hollingsworth returned to the chamber.*

On his return to the chamber Councillor Hollingsworth responded to the question relating to cost increases for the Seacourt Park and Ride extension and made the point that “decking” had been ruled out on planning rather than financial grounds. He said that there was no proposal to remove coach parking spaces at Redbridge Park and Ride site but that members would be updated when the scheme details were available.

Councillor Turner provided clarification on what constituted a project change, project slippage and project re-profiling which was inevitable in such a large capital programme. He acknowledged that previously there had been an element of “optimism bias” in the capital programme but he now believed that there was greater rigour and challenge.

Councillor Turner moved the recommendations, which were agreed on being seconded and put to the vote.

**Council resolved to:**

1. **Approve** a virement of £0.500 million from Compulsory purchase of property (N7049) to Extensions & Major Adaptions (N7020) to cover the work of four extensions within the Housing Revenue Account Capital programme as set out in paragraph 10 of the report; and
2. **Approve** the revised Capital Programme budget to be £59.962 million in line with the latest forecast following the major review carried out by officers.

## **72. Treasury Mid-Year Report 2019/20**

Council considered a report from the Head of Financial Services which detailed the performance of the Treasury Management function for the six months to 30 September 2019.

Councillor Turner, the Cabinet Member for Finance and Asset Management, presented the report. He confirmed that the Council did not invest in fossil fuels.

During the debate Councillor Upton undertook to provide a written response to a question from Councillor Gotch regarding the possibility of saving money if the City Council was to share the use of Cherwell District Council's new cemetery in Kidlington. Cllr Turner clarified that any such proposal would not be a treasury matter.

Councillor Turner moved the recommendations, which were agreed on being seconded and put to the vote.

**Council resolved to:**

1. **Approve** the change of the Indirect Property Funds counterparty category to Pooled Investment Funds; and
2. **Note** that the Council is considering investing in a Multi Asset fund instead of an Indirect Property Fund as was previously anticipated.

## **73. Use of s106 and Retained Right to Buy Receipts to increase the provision of more affordable housing**

Council considered a report from the Head of Housing Services which had been submitted to Cabinet on 22 January 2020 seeking project approval and delegations to enable the spending of Retained Right to Buy Receipts (RRTBRs) and s.106 funding for the purpose of delivering, or enabling the delivery of, more affordable housing, through new build or acquisition activity.

Councillor Mike Rowley, Cabinet Member for Affordable Housing presented the report. He informed Council that the recommendations set out in the report had been agreed by Cabinet and announced that the funds would be used to buy properties at the Sandford Road site in Littlemore, 45 of which would be for social rent and 25 would be key worker homes. He moved the recommendation, which was agreed on being seconded and put to the vote.

**Council resolved to:**

1. **Approve** a capital budget for £3m of expenditure in 2019/20, subsidised using RRTBRs, to enable an off-plan purchase of Social Rented homes, this sum being effectively brought forward from the overall £13.2m identified in 2020/21 in the consultation budget, which would then reduce to £10.2m in 20/21 accordingly.

## **74. Council Tax Reduction Scheme 2020-21**

Council considered a report from the Head of Financial Services which had been submitted to Cabinet on 22 January 2020 which considered the feedback from the recent consultation on the proposed changes to the Local Council Tax Reduction Scheme and proposed the principles of the new scheme to be drawn up for approval by Council on 27 January 2020.

Cabinet Member for Supporting Local Communities, presented the report. She informed Council that the recommendations set out in the report had been agreed by Cabinet.

During the debate Councillor Tidball undertook to provide a written response to Councillor Landell Mills on the details of the income review process for individuals and also to confirm whether neighbouring local authorities retain the 100% level of entitlement.

Councillor Tidball moved the recommendation, which was agreed on being seconded and put to the vote.

**Council resolved to adopt** the new Local Council Tax Reduction Scheme for 2020/21.

*Councillor Howlett arrived during this item.*

## **75. Constitution Annual Review 2019**

Council considered a report from the Monitoring Officer recommending changes to the Council's Constitution following an annual review of the Constitution overseen by a "Cross-Party Constitution Group".

Councillor Chapman, Cabinet Member for Customer Focused Services, presented the report.

Council had before it a proposed amendment which had been submitted by Councillor Henwood:

### **11.18 Motions on notice**

#### **(d) Listing motions on the agenda**

Motions will appear on the agenda in the order that will rotate between different political groups at each meeting...

Change to

Motions will appear on the agenda in the order that will rotate between different political groups and an independent at each meeting...

### **4.6 Ward member decisions**

a) Each member of the Council will (subject to the budget being approved annually by Council) be allocated an amount of money to spend in their ward (ward Member Budgets). Members representing wards not covered by a parish council may also be allocated a neighbourhood portion of Community Infrastructure Levey (CIL) monies. If the ward member changes during the year without their full allocations being designated (including any allocations carried forwards from the previous year), the replacement ward member will be able to allocate the remaining balance.

Change to

a) Each member of the Council will (subject to the budget being approved annually by Council) be allocated an amount of money to spend in their ward (ward Member Budgets). Members representing wards not covered by a parish council may also be allocated a neighbourhood portion of Community Infrastructure Levey (CIL) monies. In wards where a parish council is located the equivalent (CIL) budget will be remitted to the parish council. If the ward member changes during the year without their full allocations being designated (including any allocations carried forwards from the previous year), the replacement ward member will be able to allocate the remaining balance.

Community Infrastructure Levey (CIL) monies awarded to parish councils via housing developments, should be spent in respective parishes to mitigate the problems associated the said housing developments, or for the benefit of parishioners living in the vicinity of the said housing development(s).

The Monitoring Officer gave the following advice on the proposed amendment:

- i. The amendment to 11.18 d) could be debated by Council
- ii. The amendment to insert text in paragraph 4.6 a) confirmed something that already happens
- iii. The amendment to insert a second paragraph of text at 4.6 a) was not a matter for the Council's Constitution. Parish councils are not bound by the City Council's Constitution and the rules governing CIL allocations are set out in the Community Infrastructure Levy Regulations and parish councils allocating CIL monies would be responsible for abiding by those regulations.

Following this advice amendment i) above was seconded and debated by Council. On being put to the vote the amendment fell.

Councillor Chapman then moved the recommendations as set out in the agenda and the briefing note, which were agreed on being seconded and put to the vote.

**Council resolved to:**

1. **Note** the list of amendments that the Monitoring Officer has made using delegated powers detailed in Appendix 1;
2. **Approve** the list of proposed amendments to the Constitution detailed in Appendix 2 and highlighted in the draft Constitution at Appendix 3;
3. **Adopt** the revised Oxford City Council Constitution attached at Appendix 3; and
4. **Delegate authority to the Head of Law and Governance** to amend any further wording and/or numbering that is identified as being inconsistent with the changes approved by Council.

*Councillor Malik left the meeting at the end of this item and Councillor Iley-Williamson arrived during this item.*

## **76. Questions on Cabinet minutes**

### **a) Minutes of meeting Thursday 19 December 2019 of Cabinet**

There were no questions on these minutes.

### **b) Minutes of meeting on 22 January 2020 of Cabinet**

**Minute 126 Connecting Oxford:** Councillor Gant sought clarification on the detail of the Cabinet discussions on possible exemptions (6<sup>th</sup> bullet point) and also the locations of the bus gates and the extent to which they might vary from the map. Councillor Hollingsworth explained that there would always be compelling cases for exemption from individual areas or groups but that these had to be taken in the context of their impact on the overall scheme. He confirmed that the timing and exact positioning of bus gates was open for discussion but could not be varied to any great extent before impacting their effectiveness as a tool for traffic reduction.

Councillor Gant suggested that consideration should be given to extending the Work Place Parking Levy to include other sites across the whole city. Councillor Hollingsworth endorsed that suggestion and went on to confirm that the Cabinet minutes reflected the difference of opinion between the cabinets of the City and County councils.

Councillor Hollingsworth, in response to a question from Councillor Roz Smith, confirmed that the Urban Design and Conservation officers were kept fully aware of the Connecting Oxford proposals but undertook to discuss the matter specifically with the Heritage Officer. Finally he made it clear that the success of Connecting Oxford depended on the simultaneous implementation of bus gates and revised bus services.

*Councillors Lygo and Pressel left the meeting at the end of this item.*

## **77. Questions on Notice from Members of Council**

31 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.

*Councillor Hayes left the meeting at the end of this item.*

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

There were 5 addresses and 1 question to Council:

1. Address by Magdalene Sacranie, City of Compassion
2. Address by Oxford Community Forum, Licensing of Private Sector Homes
3. Address by Nigel Day - UN Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons
4. Address by Alistair Morris – Climate Emergency and allotments
5. Address by Artwell - Barton British Legion Site
6. Question by Artwell – Citizens' Assembly

The Lord Mayor thanked those speaking.

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.

## **79. Outside organisation/Committee Chair reports and questions**

### **a) Oxford Strategic Partnership**

Council had before it the report of the Chief Executive outlining the work of the Oxford Strategic Partnership.

Councillor Brown, Leader of the Council introduced the report and answered questions. She confirmed that the reference to the Low Carbon Oxford sub-group was not a new organisation but had been in existence for some time.

Council noted the report.

*Councillor Tidball left the meeting during this item.*

### **b) Oxford to Cambridge Arc update**

Council had before it the report of the Assistant Chief Executive outlining the partnership working between Local Authorities and Local Enterprise Partnerships on the Oxford to Cambridge Arc.

Councillor Brown, Leader of the Council moved the report.

Council noted the report.

## **80. Scrutiny Committee update report**

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

The Chair of the Scrutiny Committee, Councillor Gant, moved the report which updated Council on the work of the committee and its standing panels; and of the work of the two review groups on the Budget and the Climate Emergency. He thanked the scrutiny officer and all those who had attended committees and panels for their work. In response the Lord Mayor thanked Councillor Gant for his contribution as the Chair of the Scrutiny Committee.

**Council noted the report and the appendices.**

## **81. Motions on notice**

Council had before it eight 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) Supporting refugee children
- b) Licensing Private Rented Sector Homes
- c) Car parking and vehicle management city
- f) International Treaty to Prohibit Nuclear Weapons

The following motion fell:

- d) Bicycle Mayors

Council agreed to the withdrawal of the following motion:

- e) Climate Partners

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

- g) Local Electricity Bill
- h) Homelessness Charter

### **a) Supporting refugee children**

Councillor Simmons, seconded by Councillor Arshad (speaking on behalf of Councillor Djafari-Marbini) and supported by Councillor Garden, 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:**

Council notes that, the world is experiencing the largest refugee crisis since World War Two with UNHCR figures of 68.5m people forcibly displaced. Over half of these are children, many unaccompanied.

Whilst in the EU we have been subject to the Dublin regulation which allows lone children within the EU to apply for legal family reunion with relatives elsewhere within the EU. So, for example, a Syrian orphan who arrives in Greece hoping to find a brother in Oxford has the right to apply to be reunited with him. But when we leave the EU, we will no longer be covered by the Dublin regulation.

In December 1938, the first Kindertransport arrived in Harwich, England. Through this scheme, Britain welcomed 10,000 child refugees, in just 10 months including Alf Dubs (a Labour peer and former MP).

When Theresa May's withdrawal bill was going through parliament, Alf Dubs brought an amendment in the Lords that received cross-party support in both houses. This obliged the government to negotiate that the terms of the Dublin regulation would continue after we left the EU.

However, in Boris Johnson's withdrawal bill, published just before Christmas and passed unamended, the rights of refugee children to be reunited with their families had been removed.

The only option remaining to them is to engage with illegal traffickers or take other dangerous routes. Lack of safe routes to the UK will only lead to further suffering for hugely traumatised children.

Lord Dubs is attempting to reintroduce the amendment into the withdrawal bill before the UK leaves the EU on 31 January 2020 and will no doubt continue to lobby for something with an effect similar to the Dublin regulation to be reinstated if this current attempt fails.

As a City of Sanctuary with a proud record of welcoming refugees and asylum seekers, Oxford deplores the removal of the so-called 'Dubs amendment' from the withdrawal bill.

## **We ask the Leader to:**

- 1. urgently write to the City's MPs and the Secretary of State for the Home Department demanding that the rights of refugee children available under the Dublin regulation be reinstated.**
- 2. write to the Leader of Oxfordshire County Council asking them to support the Safe Passage 'Our Turn' Campaign and commit to a target of ten at risk refugee children per year for the next ten years as part of a fully funded Government vulnerable children's resettlement scheme.**

## **b) Licensing Private Rented Sector Homes**

Council had before it the original text of the motion proposed by Councillor L Smith (set out in the agenda and briefing note) and amendments proposed by Councillor Wade (set out in the briefing note).

Councillor Wade, seconded by Councillor Gant, proposed her amendment to the new text of the motion. After debate and on being put to the vote the amendment was declared lost.

Councillor L Smith, seconded by Councillor Taylor, proposed the submitted motion without amendment.

After debate and on being put to the vote the motion as set out below was agreed.

### **Council resolved to adopt the following motion:**

This Council notes that:

- The private rented sector is continuing to grow in Oxford, over 30% of Oxford residents rent their home privately.
- This council has a strong record of taking action to improve privately rented homes in our city.
- We were the first in England to use discretionary powers to require every House in Multiple Occupation to be licensed to operate and this has successfully driven up standards.
- We currently use the 2004 Housing Act to regulate the rest of the private rented sector. We carry out 250 inspection visits a year and serve over 300 enforcement notices against poor landlords. However, the last stock condition survey showed that the private rented sector in Oxford has twice the national level of disrepair.
- Local authorities currently have the power to implement licensing for all privately rented homes in no more than 20% of their area or to licence no more than 20% of the privately rented stock. The consent of the Secretary of State is required to approve any licensing scheme which exceeds this 20% rule.

This council believes it should have more powers to enforce minimum property standards and protect tenants.

This council supports a city-wide licensing scheme in order to ensure all Oxford landlords are fit and proper persons and all properties let to the residents of our city meet minimum standards and are a safe place to call home.

This council believes that extending licensing to cover all privately rented homes in the city will continue to improve standards, reduce carbon emissions, drive out rogue landlords, reduce anti-social behaviour and ensure all rented homes are safe to live in.

**This Council therefore resolves to ask the Cabinet Member to continue discussions with the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government (MHCLG) to make the case for a city-wide licensing scheme for every property in the private rented sector, and with Government agreement bring forward a plan**

**to introduce a requirement for every privately let property in Oxford to be licensed.**

**c) Car parking and vehicle management city**

Council had before it the original text of the motion proposed by Councillor Gant (set out in the agenda and briefing note) and amendments proposed by Councillor Hollingsworth (set out in the briefing note).

Councillor Hollingsworth, seconded by Councillor Turner, proposed his amendment to the text of the motion. After debate and on being put to the vote the amendment was declared carried.

Councillor Hollingsworth, seconded by Councillor Turner, proposed the amended motion.

After debate and on being put to the vote the motion as set out below was agreed.

**Council resolved to adopt the following motion:**

Council notes that a key thread in policy thinking around traffic management since the early 1970s in our city has been limiting the availability of parking.

Reducing commuter car parking through the implementation of Residents Parking Zones, setting planning policies to minimise and now reduce the levels of car parking in new developments, the creation of the country's first formal park and ride system and the capping of public car parking spaces in the city centre have been and continue to be critical parts of Oxford's planning and transport policies.

Charges for all City Council car parks have been set with the primary objective of encouraging the use of park and rides, of public transport and of active modes such as walking and cycling wherever possible.

As planning and transport policies continue to move away from the provision of parking for private cars in Oxford, the number of parking spaces will fall, and the Council's medium and long-term financial planning reflects this reality.

**Council therefore asks the Cabinet Member to:**

Work with officers to continue to refine and develop transport, planning and car parking policies that

- Continue to reduce private car use and enhance the environment of ~~in~~ our city
- Continue to prepare and make provision for the financial implications of following such a policy

**d) Bicycle Mayors**

Councillor Wolff, seconded by Councillor Simmons, 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 not agreed.

**e) Climate Partners**

Council agreed that this motion should be withdrawn.

*Councillors Donnelly, L Smith and Turner left the meeting.*

**f) International Treaty to Prohibit Nuclear Weapons**

Councillor Tanner, seconded by Councillor Rush, proposed the submitted motion as set out in the agenda and briefing note.

On being put to the vote the motion was agreed.

**Council resolved to adopt the following motion:**

Oxford City Council has been a long-standing member of the Nuclear Free Local Authorities (NFLA) which has been working for over three decades to promote multilateral nuclear disarmament.

Oxford City Council is particularly concerned about the huge cost to the taxpayer of nuclear weapons, the risk posed by the regular transport of nuclear weapons on Oxfordshire's roads and the continuing threat of nuclear war.

NFLA has worked with Mayors for Peace and the International Campaign to Abolish Nuclear Weapons (ICAN) to promote the International Treaty to Prohibit Nuclear Weapons (TPNW). Over two thirds (122) of United Nations member states have agreed the TPNW.

Council regrets that the Governments of the existing nuclear weapon states, including the UK, refuse to support the Treaty. Council fully supports the TPNW as one of the most effective ways to bring about long-term and verifiable multilateral nuclear disarmament.

Oxford City Council calls on the United Kingdom Government to lead a global effort to prevent nuclear war by:

- Renouncing the option of using nuclear weapons first;
- Cancelling the programme to replace its entire Trident nuclear arsenal with enhanced weapons;
- Actively pursuing a verifiable agreement among nuclear-armed states to reduce and then eliminate their nuclear arsenals by supporting both the Treaty to Prohibit Nuclear Weapons and the 'Good Faith' Protocols within the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty.

**Oxford City Council asks the Chief Executive of the Council to write to the Foreign and Commonwealth Office of the incoming UK Government and Oxford's newly elected MPs to inform them of this resolution and urge them to take appropriate action.**

**g) Local Electricity Bill**

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

**h) Homelessness Charter**

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

**The meeting started at 5.00 pm and ended at 9.40 pm**

**Lord Mayor .....**

**Date:**

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**To:** Council  
**Date:** 27 January 2020  
**Title of Report:** Questions on Notice from members of Council and responses from the Cabinet Members and Leader

## 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 will be 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 Gotch to Councillor Rowley – Housing delivery

##### Question

The City Council has a poor record over 10 years for building social housing — the surrounding District Councils have built more — perhaps because the City has been sitting on such sites as Elsfeld Hall (part of a 2 site deal) and Warren Crescent (following tests last year, now confirmed as no danger to Lye Valley nature reserve); both sites received planning consent more than 5 years ago. Moreover, building

##### Written Response

There are significant land and cost constraints on developing sufficient social housing in Oxford, and whilst the Council and Registered Providers have maintained a delivery programme, the surrounding districts have the advantage of many more sites that tend to be a lot easier to develop (for example, the Warren Crescent site is awaiting the consent of the Secretary of State to move a notional footpath, that has never been marked out on the ground, a few metres to one side). Fluctuations in Government policy affecting Councils have also been a significant problem.

## 1. From Councillor Gotch to Councillor Rowley – Housing delivery

social housing on City owned underoccupied garage sites has been discussed for 8 or 9 years, with practically nothing built. When are the JCB's going to start building houses and reducing the waiting lists?

Oxford is the only Council in Oxfordshire that manages social rented housing, and the only one which requires social rented housing to be part of developments, as opposed to "affordable" housing at up to 80% of market rent; though the District Councils do acknowledge the need for social rented housing and there are encouraging signs that their thinking is now beginning to reflect this. However, Oxford still has much more social rented housing than any of the Districts, and this gives us the ability - and the obligation - to improve the City's housing stock for the benefit of tenants and the climate.

A number of barriers to the Council developing more housing were removed in the HRA self-financing deal in 2012, and the Council responded by building 112 new Council Homes completing in 2015 - and in the HRA 2015/16 budget introducing an ambitious £100m new build and estate renewal plan partly funded through the greater borrowing allowed. In the same year, however, the Government announced a four-year 1% rent reduction, Pay to Stay and High Value Asset Levies which then restricted funding available again.

The Council has set up a Housing Company that is expected to provide greater resilience to sudden Government policy changes. It is delivering 354 new council homes at Barton, and additionally the Council's Housing Revenue Account currently expects to buy over 1,000 new homes from the company to be built over the course of its current business plan, with nearly 800 of these being Council homes at social rent.

This new programme is already delivering new homes at Barton; at the Rose Hill sites construction is under way; and construction is soon to start on a number of other sites, including Elsfeld Hall. Further sites continue to be identified to ensure a sustainable development programme going forward, including garage sites – with proposals for one such site being approved by Cabinet in November.

Additionally, we continue to bring empty homes back into use; from having the highest number of empty homes in Oxfordshire ten years ago, we now have the lowest number, and the number of

## 1. From Councillor Gotch to Councillor Rowley – Housing delivery

empty homes in Oxford has declined by well over half in that period.

## 2. From Councillor Wade to Councillor Rowley – The impact of Government interest rates on social housing delivery

### Question

In the days before the election the Government raised the interest rate for council borrowing by one percent, making it more difficult for councils to finance new council houses. How has this affected our social housing plans?

### Written Response

Through the LGA, the Growth Board and our interactions with government we continue to lobby in relation to the increase in the Public Works Loan Board interest rates with respect to affordable housing delivery.

This increase required a necessary review of the Housing Company Business Plan and the Council's financial modelling.

The Housing Company is currently borrowing and repaying approximately £600m over the next 10 years, and this increased cost has added approximately another £10m to borrowing and the overall cost of the proposed developments.

However, the number of units proposed for delivery has not been reduced, and the proposed levels of council housing have not been diluted. The debt redemption period has been increased and housing company operating surplus margin has reduced from an average of 18% down to 15%, which presents greater challenge and risk, but has not required a change to the delivery programme.

**3. From Councillor Simmons to Councillor Clarkson – Oxford Guild of Tour Guides and Experience Oxfordshire**

<b>Question</b>	<b>Written Response</b>
<p>As the City Patron of the Oxford Guild of Tour Guides, it has come to my attention that the Oxford Guild of Tour Guides is in an unfortunate dispute with Experience Oxfordshire, the city's award-winning Destination Management Organisation. Would the cabinet member update Council on the current situation and provide us with her understanding or what has gone wrong, and why?</p>	<p>While this is a matter for Experience Oxfordshire and the Oxford Guild of Tour Guides, officers have sought an update from Experience Oxfordshire. I will also be meeting the Oxford Guild of Tour Guides to hear their concerns.</p> <p>I understand from Experience Oxfordshire that as part of a continuing review of its services they made a decision to change the commission the Guild of Guides were paid on public tours as their costs had increased due to significant investment and increased costs in new systems, marketing and trade contracting. However Experience Oxfordshire are, I understand, confident that these changes should result in no significant loss in revenue to the guides, due to associated tour price increases and increased volume sales. However, the Guild of Guides executive, on behalf of the majority of their members, have decided not to agree to the new terms and therefore to end their longstanding relationship with Experience Oxfordshire.</p> <p>I understand that from 6 January 2020, Experience Oxfordshire have sought to work with alternative experienced guides to undertake the delivery of Oxford Official Walking Tours. However, Experience Oxfordshire have made it clear to the Guild of Guides and the individual guides that are members of the Guild, that should they wish to continue to work with the DMO under the new terms at any point in the future then the door is always open. As a result several individual guides, who are members of the guild, have now agreed to Experience Oxfordshire's new terms and are continuing to provide high quality tours of the City.</p>

**4. From Councillor Wade to Councillor Clarkson – Experience Oxfordshire subsidy**

<b>Question</b>	<b>Written Response</b>
<p>At the Budget meeting in February 2019 our Liberal Democrat Group strongly</p>	<p>Over the past 9 years the City Council has provided over £1.8m of tax payer subsidy to Experience Oxfordshire. The decision to cut</p>

<b>4. From Councillor Wade to Councillor Clarkson – Experience Oxfordshire subsidy</b>	
<p>opposed the phased withdrawal of the Council subsidy to Experience Oxfordshire. Is the Cabinet Member aware that this has led to EO having to increase fees and charges across private sector partners to which there is much resistance and could result in the organisation not being continued to be supported. Will the Cabinet member now work to restore EO's subsidy in full?</p>	<p>Experience Oxfordshire's subsidy was a difficult budget decision, based on the on-going financial pressures the Council is facing, which have not changed, and the need to protect core Council services.</p> <p>Our aim is to support the organisation to become more sustainable, and this, alongside the difficult financial position of the Council, means that we will not be in a position to fully restore the previous subsidy. However, the City Council is working closely with Experience Oxfordshire on the future relationship between us and the nature of any support from us following the conclusion of the current agreement in March 2021. Part of the shift towards the organisation becoming more sustainable will require a greater contribution from other partners, including private sector organisations.</p>
<p><b>Supplementary question</b></p> <p>Is the Cabinet Member aware that Experience Oxfordshire has been subsidising the Visitor Information Centre and this is now under threat for the next financial year.</p>	<p><b>Verbal response</b></p> <p>We are aware of the situation and we have held meetings with Experience Oxfordshire about the Visitor Information Centre and we are in discussion with them about potential funding models.</p>

<b>5. From Landell Mills to Councillor Clarkson – Boswells and the City Centre</b>	
<p><b>Question</b></p> <p>Boswells is to close. We are saddened to hear of the forthcoming closure of this Oxford institution. Does the Councillor accept that the loss of Boswells is due in large measure to increased competition from Westgate, where there is ample cheap car parking, contributing to the ongoing undermining of the collective retail offer from George Street and Cornmarket. Is the City Council developing new plans for the Cornmarket and St George area to ensure</p>	<p><b>Written Response</b></p> <p>I was deeply saddened to hear the news that Boswells is to close, not least because of the impact this will have for staff there, some of who have worked at that store for a long time.</p> <p>I do not agree that the opening of the Westgate has led to the closure of Boswells. Indeed, rather, the Directors of Boswell referenced the draw of Bicester Village and cited “the pressures of online retail and changing shopping habits” as key factors in their decision. The Westgate Centre has brought scores of new brands to Oxford city centre with associated new jobs.</p> <p>The issues facing the high street are being seen across the UK and while we did see a slight decline in footfall in Oxford in 2019, Oxford's city</p>

**5. From Landell Mills to Councillor Clarkson – Boswells and the City Centre**

its ongoing viability as a commercial and shopping area? What is the timetable and brief?

centre is performing well ahead when set against its counterparts both regionally and nationally levels. Moreover, footfall is well up on levels recorded prior to the Westgate opening. The Council's audit of vacant units shows that 30 businesses have opened retail, food & drink or services businesses in the city centre since the summer. Of those, 5 are in Cornmarket and George Street, and agents for the majority of the remaining vacant units on those two streets are in active discussion with would-be occupiers.

The upcoming City Centre Vision and Action Plan will feature proposals for Cornmarket and George Street, including on public realm, dwell space and developing an identity. In the meantime, City Council officers continue to work closely with landlords, agents and existing businesses on initiatives to further strengthen their offer and the streets' vitality.

**6. From Councillor Wolff to Councillor Clarkson – City Centre Public Attitudes Survey**

**Question**

How many people responded to the Public Attitudes Survey on the City Centre and how many of those objected to the only transport related question being that concerning "cyclists riding irresponsibly"?

**Written Response**

We had a great response with 1577 members of the public completing the survey about behaviours in the City Centre. Previously, these behaviours had been defined using a Public Spaces Protection Order, which included breaching the existing ban on cycling through Cornmarket and Queen Street between 10am and 6pm. The survey was not anti cyclist in any way and the intention was to find out whether or not people still think cycling through pedestrian areas should continue to be restricted. We are also very interested in anti social behaviour by motorists and will take comments on this subject into account when we review all the feedback, which is extensive.

**Supplementary question**

How many of the 1577 responses actually objected to the transport related question?

**Verbal response**

A written response will be circulated.

**7. From Councillor Wade to Councillor Turner – Stealth Tax**

**Question**

Residents complain of a 'stealth tax' by way of charges for garden and bulky waste removal, funeral services, pest control. Can the Cabinet member advise the percentage by which revenue raised from these services, together with revenue from other environmental, regulatory, licensing and planning services, has increased over the past decade? How does this compare with the rate of inflation over the same period? What is the average yearly payment made by every home in Oxford in respect of these charges on top of its average council tax bill?

**Written Response**

I am surprised that the councillor does not acknowledge an important reason for the increase in charges for particular services, which is the decade of austerity, begun by her party when in government. Our changes are by no means unique in local government, and indeed we try to keep charges fair and to a minimum. For instance, our garden waste service is provided free to those on the lowest incomes, unlike the approach taken (as I understand it) in our neighbouring Lib Dem led local authorities Vale of White Horse, and South Oxfordshire District Council, where all are charged. I am also surprised that residents have complaint of a "stealth tax" in respect of bulky item collection. I trust the councillor explained to them that it is free of charge in Oxford, unlike in neighbouring, Lib Dem led councils.

On the figures: Fees and charges increases over the last ten years vary by service, depending on the individual cost drivers. The table below summarises movements in the unit charges for the highlighted services.

	Year 1 2011/12	Year 10 2020/21	Average Annual Increase
RPI (preceding Dec)	228.4	291.9	2.8%
Garden Waste	£35	£51	4.6%
Bulky Waste	Nil	Nil	n/a
Burial Services *	£460	£700	5.2%
Pest Control **	£100	£105	0.5%

\* Adult Interment fee for resident

\*\* Flea treatment used as typical example

The increased charges for Garden Waste and Burial Services (adult interment fee) over the ten year period reflect the general increase in charge to a level which more accurately effects the actual

**7. From Councillor Wade to Councillor Turner – Stealth Tax**

cost of the service.

An analysis of the income between 2011/12 and 2018/19 the last actual full year income figures is given below. Whilst to some extent this increase in income is derived from the increase in charges, clearly there is also variation in the take up of the service as well as the service offered. For example in respect of garden waste the take up has increased significantly since it was first launched. In respect of regulatory services the council phased in its HMO licencing scheme over a number of years commencing in 2011 and the increase in planning income reflects the significant amount of regeneration in the city as well as the fact that the charges for such services are set by Government.

**Fees and Charges Income**

	2011/12 £	2018/19 £	Average Annual Increase
Garden Waste	350,872	657,399	11%
Burial Services	293,983	458,485	7%
Pest Control	47,650	65,508	5%
Regulatory Services *	1,500,620	2,367,158	7%
Planning Services **	890,252	1,818,960	13%
	3,083,377	5,367,509	9%

\* Includes Includes HMO Licencing and enforcement, Building Control, Taxi Licencing, General Licencing, Business Regulation.

\*\* Includes Planning fees and Land Charges

It would be misleading to break this down by household, because many of these charges only apply to business and landlords.

In summary income from services provided, provides a useful source of revenue for the council. It charges residents and businesses who use the service and against a backdrop of reducing Government Grant in the order of £6million over the period it is essential alongside efficiency savings if the council is to maintain all its other services that are essential to the citizens of Oxford.

**Supplementary question**

Could you provide an average figure for additional tax on each

**Verbal response**

Not able to provide a household figure for Oxford.  
Yes I believe that all neighbouring authorities all

<b>7. From Councillor Wade to Councillor Turner – Stealth Tax</b>	
household for Oxford? Do all neighbouring authorities all charge for bulky waste which is free in Oxford City.	charge for bulky waste which is free in Oxford City.

<b>8. From Councillor Wade to Councillor Turner – Unspent Government grant</b>	
<b>Question</b> The city has received a Government grant to help local businesses for the 4 years from 2017-2021. Any funds not used up during a year have to be paid back to the Government. Between 2017-19, the City paid back £111,897. This year only £73,732 has been spent so far out of a grant of £96,000. Can the Cabinet member confirm that the remaining £22,000 will be spent before the end of this financial year, or can we expect it to be paid back to the Government?	<b>Written Response</b> Yes, we look at the spend as we near the financial year end, and consider how we utilise any remaining grant. We are proactive in awarding this grant. In the first year of the scheme we like most authorities initially expected business to apply for the grant but when take up was limited we applied the account to the account direct which we continue to do. During the year businesses vacate, Rateable Values are adjusted on appeal or when a split/merger occurs and also some awards are returned where State Aid limits are reached, hence the spend can fluctuate from month to month. If we award over our grant amount then the cost of that falls to Oxford City Council, hence us always keeping a pot of money back for Rateable Value changes that we don't yet know about.  The amounts of grant awarded over the 4 year period are high in the first year and taper down to around £14k in the last year of the scheme next year. The scheme is to cover increases in business rates following the revaluation in 2017. Some businesses receive transitional relief to cover these increased costs anyway so don't need the grant. The transitional relief tapers down so at the time the businesses lose the transitional relief we don't have the discretionary grant to award. Also there is no mechanism within the scheme to roll over unspent amounts at the end of the year.  It is likely that we will top up those currently in receipt this year by a further percentage, to ensure the grant is spent, but we do need to consider changes to the current rates payable for those currently in receipt of the grant until the end of September 2020, to allow for any changes to the amount of Rates due.
<b>Supplementary question</b> With reference to the final	<b>Verbal response</b>

**8. From Councillor Wade to Councillor Turner – Unspent Government grant**

paragraph of your written response can you confirm that it will be spent in the remaining two months of the financial year?

Yes.

<b>9. From Councillor Wolff to Councillor Upton – Cyclists and markets in Broad Street</b>	
<p><b>Question</b></p> <p>Will the portfolio holder offer assurance to cyclists that future markets held in Broad Street will prioritise the retention of cycle parking provision over and above car parking provision and offer a safe cycle through-route that does not create conflict with pedestrians.</p>	<p><b>Written Response</b></p> <p>I am working closely with officers from both City and County to look at the location and layout options for future temporary markets in Broad Street. This review is considering how we could accommodate two-way cycling, and exploring options to maintain cycle parking provision in the area. Cllr Clarkson is working with the market organisers to ensure that they can maintain the good and safe operation of the market with any change of layout. Once this work has been progressed in more detail, I will engage key stakeholders to discuss the proposals.</p>

<b>10. From Councillor Harris to Councillor Upton – Gilligan report on cycling</b>	
<p><b>Question</b></p> <p>Does the Council expect to implement any part of the Gilligan report on Cycling in Oxford during 2020? If so please give details.</p>	<p><b>Written Response</b></p> <p>Cycling is a key priority for the City Council as we seek to promote its health, environmental and economic benefits for the city. The need to deliver high quality cycling infrastructure, as identified in the Gilligan report, is a long-term exercise and requires partnership working with the County Council and other key stakeholders, alongside significant infrastructure funding. It is important that we build on the report to produce costed and evidenced proposals, in order to secure the necessary funds.</p> <p>The County and City Councils' Connecting Oxford proposals, if implemented, are expected to deliver significant traffic reductions, which will create opportunities for both redesigning and re-prioritising road space in favour of more sustainable modes of travel, including cycling. To support this, by summer 2020, the City Council, working with the County Council and the University of Oxford, will commission a strategic cycleways plan for Oxford. The project will build on the Gilligan report and identify proposals for a safe, consistent and well-connected network of cycling and walking routes</p>

### 10. From Councillor Harris to Councillor Upton – Gilligan report on cycling

	<p>from surrounding towns and villages into Oxford. It is envisaged that by 2021 the partners will have deliverable route proposals to bid for government funding.</p> <p>The City and County Council are also working on a phased installation of new city centre cycle parking. Phase 1 has identified 114 new cycle racks (228 spaces), and will shortly go to consultation, with a view to delivery by summer 2020. An initial scoping exercise on potential phase 2 installations is underway.</p> <p>The County Council, as the transport authority, is preparing a Local Cycling and Walking Infrastructure Plan for Oxford. This will set out a series of measures and programmes to achieve a transformational change in the levels of cycling and the attractiveness of walking in Oxford.</p> <p>The County Council is also undertaking County-wide work in this area. In 2020 it will be developing its Oxfordshire Local Transport and Connectivity Plan which will also provide a framework for interventions in this area.</p>
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### 11. From Councillor Simmons to Councillor Upton – Headington Hill Park

<b>Question</b>	<b>Written Response</b>
Will the Portfolio Holder consider re-classifying Headington Hill Park as an arboretum; reflecting its history and informing future management practices.	<p>We would be open to exploring the possibility of reclassifying Headington Hill Park as an arboretum, but in order to do this an assessment would need to be undertaken to compare the benefits and possible drawbacks of doing so.</p> <p>This would need to include various stakeholder input and a understanding of the implementation and ongoing costs to the council before any decision could be taken.</p>

### 12. From Councillor Wolff to Councillor Upton – Public Health Funerals

<b>Question</b>	<b>Written Response</b>
How many Public Health funerals has the Council had to pick up over the last year, and is this number increasing? Are	The Council dealt with 5 Public Health Funerals in 2019. The numbers have decreased over the last 3 years. All funerals were cremations in 2019 but we do carry out burials, for example if there is a

**12. From Councillor Wolff to Councillor Upton – Public Health Funerals**

they all cremations, and are families able to attend, and retain the ashes of their deceased relatives?

religious reason. Families can attend and ashes can be collected by family members.

**13. From Councillor Harris to Councillor Hollingsworth – Local Plan and the climate change emergency**

<b>Question</b>	<b>Written Response</b>
<p>What amendments if any has the Council proposed to the Local Plan to reflect its declaration of a climate change emergency?</p>	<p>The Local Plan already contains a wide range of policies designed to address the need to tackle climate change, including but not limited to higher environmental standards for new buildings, charging points for electric vehicles, and the requirement for a much higher proportion of new sites to be built as car free developments. It includes policies requiring a phased approach to achieving zero carbon on new residential and student developments by 2030. These are among the most ambitious policies in the country in this area.</p> <p>The Local Plan Hearings finished last month, and we are now at the final formal stages before the adoption of the Local Plan. Once a Local Plan has been submitted – as ours was in March of 2019 – only the appointed Inspectors can make modifications to it. If the Council were to make new modifications to the Plan at this stage, the Plan would need to be withdrawn and re-consulted upon, meaning the entire process of consultation and public hearings would need to be restarted, delaying the adoption of this Plan by up to two years and therefore meaning that the ambitious new policies it contains could not be brought into force.</p> <p>Future iterations of the Local Plan can and must aim to improve standards still further, while complying with whatever the requirements of the NPPF are at the time.</p>

**14. From Councillor Henwood to Councillor Hollingsworth – Enforcement or CPO action at the Priory update**

<b>Question</b>	<b>Written Response</b>
<p>Occupied since 1445, the Priory in Littlemore has remained derelict for many years, and is now considered to be at 'risk'. The site is owned by Oxford City Council</p>	<p>Works have been agreed, and at the timing of writing are due to begin this month (January 2020).</p>

<b>14. From Councillor Henwood to Councillor Hollingsworth – Enforcement or CPO action at the Priory update</b>	
<p>and leased to Firoka, former Oxford United owner Firoz Kassam's company who also own Ozone and the Oxford United Stadium.</p> <p>As part of the original planning application, a condition was incorporated into the planning application that the applicant repair the grade II listed building. Last year Oxford City Council, sought enforcement action to make Firoka honour the agreement. Can the portfolio holder update council on the status of the enforcement action, or whether Firoka's architect(s) report can now be released to the public? Have the proposed works been agreed, and is there a commencement date?</p>	
<p><b>Supplementary question</b></p> <p>Can we have details of the breakdown of the works to be carried out?</p>	<p><b>Verbal response</b></p> <p>Yes – if the information is not restricted due to confidentiality – I will circulate to Cllr Henwood and the ward councillors.</p>

<b>15. From Councillor Wolff to Councillor Hollingsworth – Community Infrastructure Levy</b>	
<p><b>Question</b></p> <p>Constitutionally, larger decisions to allocate CIL monies are a matter for full Council. However, in practice I believe the Head of Planning Services has been authorising CIL expenditure for payments up to £500,000. I believe there also exists a schedule of forward projects earmarked for CIL funding, but I do not know whether these are prioritised in any way. Could we be told :</p> <p>a) what percentage of CIL monies are typically allocated without being brought to Council in advance?</p> <p>b) how the CIL spend is</p>	<p><b>Written Response</b></p> <p>This question is evidence of a common misunderstanding about what CIL is. This Council has always treated CIL as being one of the sources of funding for the capital programme. Decisions about what schemes to fund within the capital programme have been previously made as part of the budget, and are now made under the new capital programme approval process agreed by Council. When a scheme is approved for inclusion in the capital programme the funding source or sources are identified. There is no separate programme for CIL schemes, nor is there any 'schedule of forward projects earmarked for CIL funding'.</p> <p>CIL cannot be applied to every scheme in the capital programme, because the rules governing what CIL receipts can be used for are more restrictive than for other forms of receipt or borrowing. Each Council with a CIL scheme has</p>

<b>15. From Councillor Wolff to Councillor Hollingsworth – Community Infrastructure Levy</b>	
prioritised?	<p>to publish a list known as a Regulation 123 List of the types of infrastructure scheme on which CIL <u>can</u> be spent, but that is not a list of schemes on which it <u>will</u> be spent. It is this crucial distinction that seems to cause confusion. Government regulations on CIL, and what is permitted to be included on a Regulation 123 list, vary from time to time, and the latest guidance can be found on Government websites.</p> <p>All CIL expenditure is thus allocated in exactly the same way as any other spending on the capital programme, with exactly the same reporting and delegation arrangements, as set out in the Constitution, as for any other spending that makes up that programme.</p> <p>The prioritisation process is exactly the same as for any other spending within the capital programme, using the new capital programme approval mechanism and decision making processes.</p>
<p><b>Supplementary question</b></p> <p>How does the Council decide how much to spend from the CIL “pot” on a particular scheme?</p>	<p><b>Verbal response</b></p> <p>I have addressed this in the written answer. Each capital programme scheme follows the gateway process and the funding is agreed at Cabinet or Council. There is no “pot” of CIL money – this question reveals a lack of understanding about CIL and the Regulation 123 list. The regulations are about to change and this would be a good opportunity for a training session for members to explain the new CIL regulations.</p>

<b>16. From Councillor Wolff to Councillor Hollingsworth – Development on the sites in the 2015 Sites and Housing Document</b>	
<p><b>Question</b></p> <p>How many of the sites identified in the 2015 Sites and Housing Document have actually been developed? What is the Council doing to encourage appropriate development on those sites that still have not been developed for</p>	<p><b>Written Response</b></p> <p>The Sites and Housing Plan (not Document) for 2011 to 2026, which was adopted by this Council in 2013 (not 2015) and forms part of the current Development Plan, contains 63 different allocated sites. These sites include residential, employment, student and mixed use sites, and vary significantly in size and complexity. As the</p>

**16. From Councillor Wolff to Councillor Hollingsworth – Development on the sites in the 2015 Sites and Housing Document**

housing?

dates in the correct title of the document suggests, the Sites and Housing Plan 2011 to 2026 assumes that these 63 sites would be developed over the period from 2011 to 2026.

Of these 63 sites roughly half have been wholly or partially developed, while others have extant planning permissions with development not yet under way. All sites not commenced have been included, with updated policies where appropriate, in the new Local Plan 2016-2036 alongside newly identified and allocated sites.

Progress on sites identified in the Sites and Housing Plan has been reported each year in the Annual Monitoring Report, the most recent update of which was considered by Cabinet and Scrutiny late last year.

The projected timescales for delivery of all housing and student housing sites in the new Local Plan are set out in the published evidence base and can be found at the Council website [here](#):

[https://www.oxford.gov.uk/downloads/file/6895/0cc8 - appendix 1 - housing site trajectory](https://www.oxford.gov.uk/downloads/file/6895/0cc8_-_appendix_1_-_housing_site_trajectory).

Once the new Local Plan is adopted the Annual Monitoring Reports will measure progress against this proposed trajectory.

In seeking clarification about what the councillor was asking (as the document name and dates were confusing) it became apparent that the councillor was actually interested in the timescales for 3 of the 63 sites listed in the Sites and Housing Plan, which are in effect two sites in the new Local Plan.

The first of these - Government Buildings and Harcourt House, now SP17 – was the subject of a session at the public Hearings into the Local Plan last month, with the Inspectors making some recommendations to adjust the wording of the policy; the final wording of the policy is subject to the process of consultation on Modifications to be carried out on behalf of the Inspector next month.

The second – Union Street Car Park, now policy SP60 – is also subject to minor wording changes required by the Inspector, and will also therefore

**16. From Councillor Wolff to Councillor Hollingsworth – Development on the sites in the 2015 Sites and Housing Document**

	<p>be confirmed after the consultation on Modifications.</p> <p>My advice to the councillor is that when seeking information on specific sites the question as worded should refer to those sites.</p> <p>On the broader second question, and referring also to new sites included for the first time in the draft Local Plan 2016-2036, the Council is working in a number of ways to bring sites forward for development.</p> <p>Where the Council owns an as yet undeveloped and allocated site the Housing Company is working to bring forward development plans.</p> <p>Where sites are owned or controlled by third parties the Council's planning team are co-ordinating efforts to make sure that those sites are brought forward in as timely a way as possible, in particular where planning permissions have been granted but development work has not yet started.</p> <p>In instances where sites cannot be developed before necessary infrastructure is put in place or where additional investment is needed, work is being co-ordinated with the County Council and the Growth Board to ensure that appropriate funding – for example from the Growth deal or from the Housing Infrastructure Fund - is identified to enable development to take place.</p>
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**17. From Councillor Wade to Councillor Hollingsworth – Seacourt P&R extension costs**

<b>Question</b>	<b>Written Response</b>
<p><b>Original:</b> The initial cost of the Seacourt extension was £2m. It has now gone past £7m and currently stands at £8.2m. How long will it take to recoup this cost?</p> <p><b>Revised:</b> The initial cost of the Seacourt</p>	<p>The total approved budget to deliver the current scheme is £5,156,120. The payback period is expected to be approximately 17 years, assuming that there are inflationary increases to car parking charges, as was set out in the report to Cabinet and Council.</p> <p>In seeking clarification on where the entirely incorrect figures in the question – both as originally asked and in its revised form - had come from, it</p>

<b>17. From Councillor Wade to Councillor Hollingsworth – Seacourt P&amp;R extension costs</b>	
extension was £2m. It currently stands at £6.872m <sup>1</sup> . How long will it take to recoup this cost?	<p>became apparent that the Councillor had added together figures found an Oxford Mail story, apparently without reading the (entirely accurate) story itself let alone the Council report on which it was based.</p> <p>The Oxford Mail story of 5 December 2019, which the Councillor claims says that the costs of the project have increased by £1.227m, does not in fact do so. The story instead correctly reports on the details of the re-phasing of the Capital Programme as outlined in paragraph of 10 of the Q2 Integrated Performance Monitoring Report which went to the Finance Scrutiny Panel, where it explained that that part of the spending profile for the Seacourt project would be moved forward from the 2019 to the 2020 financial year.</p>
<p><b>Supplementary question</b></p> <p>My apologies for stating an incorrect figure in the original question.</p> <p>How much have the design, planning and environmental reports cost so far and are they included in the latest figure of £5.156m?</p>	<p><b>Verbal response</b></p> <p>Yes they are included and the breakdown of costs was reported to Council when it approved the budget.</p> <p><a href="#">Cabinet report on Seacourt P&amp;R</a></p>

<b>18. From Councillor Wade to Councillor Hollingsworth – Seacourt P&amp;R extension</b>	
<p><b>Question</b></p> <p>The land earmarked for the Seacourt extension is currently underwater. Canoeists have named it the Seacourt Lake. Does this flooding, now annual, affect the decision to build the extension?</p>	<p><b>Written Response</b></p> <p>The frequency, timing and duration of flood events, and the impact of the extension and of the Oxford Flood Alleviation Scheme, were fully considered at both the project development and planning stages, and were exhaustively discussed in Cabinet, Council and at the planning committees. The design of the Seacourt extension allows for seasonal flooding within the sub structure make up, via an attenuation system, as required by the</p>

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<sup>1</sup> The original question quoted a figure of £8.2m; this was corrected as shown and the source identified as an article in the Oxford Mail, 5 December 2019

<b>18. From Councillor Wade to Councillor Hollingsworth – Seacourt P&amp;R extension</b>	
	planning permission.
<b>Supplementary question</b> What amount is earmarked for the impact of the flooding on the loss of parking fees and Council credibility?	<b>Verbal response</b> <a href="#">These points are covered in the Cabinet report.</a>

<b>19. From Councillor Landell Mills to Councillor Hollingsworth – Connecting Oxford</b>	
<b>Question</b> Will the Councillor release the evidence base behind the decision not to include congestion charging in the Connecting Oxford proposal?	<b>Written Response</b> The potential costs and benefits of congestion charging were spelled out in briefings open to all councillors from the City and County Councils, and explanations of why certain options were preferred over others were included in the 2019 consultation. I'm sure that if the Councillor was unable to attend the briefings he will be able to request a copy of the relevant information.  Further, the Councillor will be aware that this question is clearly answered within the Cabinet papers on Connecting Oxford published by County and City Councils on 13 and 14 January respectively. These state that:  “The councils believe the Connecting Oxford proposals are the fairest, most effective way of reducing traffic. Alternatives such as a congestion charge have been considered but are not being progressed at this stage because a congestion charge would not achieve – and sustain – the same level of traffic reduction as traffic restrictions, particularly if it applied only to the city centre. A congestion charge covering the whole city would require a large number of enforcement cameras and involve hundreds of thousands of daily transactions; this would make it expensive to operate, with less funding available for transport improvements.  “Several individuals and organisations, including some large employers, expressed support for alternative options, including a congestion charge or expansion of the Workplace Parking Levy (WPL) area. Alternative options will be considered at the next stage, as required as part of the Department for Transport business case process. Any alternative

**19. From Councillor Landell Mills to Councillor Hollingsworth – Connecting Oxford**

options pursued would need to be deliverable and proportionate, and it is important that any WPL scheme delivers clear benefits to employers who pay for it and their employees.”

**Cabinet Member for Safer Communities and Customer Focused Services**

<b>20. From Councillor Henwood to Councillor Chapman – Motion rotations</b>	
<p><b>Question</b></p> <p>Currently only motions from individuals related to a group are rotated, this practice is dormitory and doesn't provide an equal opportunity for an independent to present a motion. Can we be updated as the whether Labour group will allow individuals who are independents be rotated.</p>	<p><b>Written Response</b></p> <p>The procedure rules set out in agenda item 12 do provide an opportunity for non-grouped independent members to submit motions to Council.</p> <p>The suggestion is that any single independent member should have the same opportunity to have their motions debated by Council as all the members of any political group collectively, which does not seem fair or equal to me.</p> <p>I can confirm that this request has been considered and is not agreed.</p> <p>It is recognised in law that councils are generally organised into political groups. Across local government procedures for meetings acknowledge the role and status of political groups. Individual non-grouped independent members are not political groups or treated as such.</p> <p>In my view the procedure rules strike the right balance by enabling individual non-grouped independent members to submit motions to Council while recognising the primacy of political groups.</p>

<b>21. From Councillor Henwood to Councillor Chapman – Constitution cross party review committee</b>	
<p><b>Question</b></p> <p>Currently only members belonging to a party belong to this committee, can a more inclusive approach be considered that will permit the participation of independent members. The constitution currently does not take into account independent councillor views.</p>	<p><b>Written Response</b></p> <p>All members of Council are able to make representations to myself as the chair of the cross party working group or to officers about the provisions of the Council's Constitution and indeed the questioner has done so.</p> <p>As the Council is organised into political groups, any informal cross-party working groups will broadly reflect the political balance of Council and as such nominations are sought from political groups.</p> <p>Non-grouped independent members are not political groups and, by definition, do not purport to represent or speak for any other members. On this basis I am not convinced of the need to change the established</p>

**21. From Councillor Henwood to Councillor Chapman – Constitution cross party review committee**

	<p>approach to cross-party working.</p> <p>That said I would be happy to commit to ensuring that the views of independent councillors continue to be given due consideration in future Constitution reviews.</p>
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**22. From Councillor Simmons to Councillor Chapman – Long Service Awards**

<b>Question</b>	<b>Written Response</b>
<p>I recently had the pleasure of presenting the Long Service Awards to City Council staff. I was surprised to learn that the City Council only gives out an award after 25 years of service. Would the leader agree with me that we should recognise shorter periods of public service as do other public bodies?</p>	<p>The current arrangements for long service awards, including the nature of awards and periods of service to be recognised, is being reviewed by the HR team. As a result, proposals for a new scheme, including associated costs, will be developed.</p>

**Cabinet Member for Supporting Local Communities**

No questions

<b>23. From Councillor Wolff to Councillor Hayes – Zero Emission Zone</b>	
<p><b>Question</b></p> <p>Would the Portfolio Holder agree that is more accurate to describe the present ‘Zero Emission Zone’ 2020 proposals to restrict vehicles and improve air quality in the City Centre as a Low Emission Zone, Ultra Low Emission Zone or Clean Air Zone (terms used by the Government and other Council’s planning similar schemes) as – in addition to the range of exempt vehicle types and the fact that restrictions only operate at certain times of the day – anyone with a polluting vehicle can enter the zone for a fee of £10.</p> <p>(Vehicle emissions have the same impact on people’s lungs whether they are paid for or not).</p>	<p><b>Written Response</b></p> <p>The terms proposed including Low Emission Zone, Ultra Low Emission Zone and Clean Air Zone are all charging schemes with established definitions. Is the Ultra-Low Emission Zone in London, backed by Liberal Democrats, any less ultra-low because polluting cars have to pay to come in and out of it? Bath and Portsmouth are Liberal Democrat councils creating clean air zones which charge polluting vehicles. Just because polluting vehicle drivers pay, does that mean those councils are not clean air zones? As far as I know Green Party and Liberal Democrat spokespeople in London, Bath, and Portsmouth, and other areas with proposed Low Emission Zones, Ultra Low Emission Zones, and Clean Air Zones are not making this criticism, so why should it apply here?</p> <p>The many experts we have consulted are completely confident that we are using a definition which is correct and justified. Our ZEZ is the only zone in the country proposed to only allow zero emission vehicles free access.</p>
<p><b>Supplementary question</b></p> <p>I have been unable to find a definition of ZEZ and so would like to which experts have given you a definition?</p>	<p><b>Verbal response</b></p> <p>I will circulate the list of experts. Seven other local authorities, with a total of 15 Green Party members, are using “ZEZ” without this challenge and I would urge the Councillor to discuss the matter with them.</p>

<b>24. From Councillor Simmons to Councillor Hayes – Oxfordshire Trees for the Future</b>	
<p><b>Question</b></p> <p>Does the Council support the Oxfordshire Trees for the Future target to double tree cover in the County as part of the Friends of the Earth national strategy to double</p>	<p><b>Written Response</b></p> <p>During the summer of 2018 Oxford City Council worked in partnership with Treeconomics to survey the trees in Oxford. Using i-Tree Eco, the team quantified the structure of Oxford’s urban forest resource and found Oxford’s urban forest contains an estimated 248,200 trees with 73 different tree</p>

**24. From Councillor Simmons to Councillor Hayes – Oxfordshire Trees for the Future**

UK tree cover by 2045? How many trees are being planted in Oxford each year and how does this align with the target?

species. That's nearly two trees per person, double the ratio for London.

Trees are important and we are committed to planting more. Planting of trees needs to be part of our response to the current climate emergency and we need to ensure of course that trees go in appropriate places and that we support a wide range of biodiversity such as grassland as this also has a very important role in carbon sequestration and the provision of wider biodiversity benefits. We must understand the impacts and potential unintended consequences of such a policy and in a city like Oxford with very limited land availability and internationally recognised grassland habitats, we must ensure we balance the needs of all ecosystems.

In the past five years the City Council has planted 7000 new trees across the city, including 2000 new trees during National Tree Week. We have worked with 'Oxfordshire Trees for The Future' to plant trees at the edge of recreation grounds across the city and we continue to work with this group to explore how we can increase tree cover further across the city.

**25. From Councillor Wade to Councillor Linda Smith – Rogue landlords**

**Question**

Was Oxford City Council one of the 100 plus councils across England awarded a share of over £2 million to target unscrupulous or criminal Landlords? Did we apply for this grant?

**Written Response**

We applied for this grant and were awarded the full amount of our bid for £70,788. This will allow us to develop a toolkit to claim back unpaid financial penalties and carry out 1,000 visits to properties in the Private Rented Sector.

**26. From Councillor Wolff to Councillor Brown – Air BnB**

**Question**

Whilst short lets such as AirBnB contribute to Oxford's hospitality industry (albeit at the risk of undermining hotel and guest house business) they do nothing to mitigate the city's housing crisis or build neighbourhood communities, and they potentially push up rents. What powers does the Council have to manage these short lets and/or limit their spread, and are we using them to the fullest extent possible? Do we check that Council-owned properties are not being sub-let on AirBnB?

**Written Response**

Our powers are limited because short lets do not require licensing and we have repeatedly called on the government to tighten the national legislation. Using a house for short lets can be a change of use in planning law but very few councils have taken any action. However, our Planning Enforcement Service does investigate cases and take action and there is currently an appeal underway against the first enforcement notice that was served. The ownership of any short let that is brought to our attention is checked as a matter of routine.

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

<b>27. From Councillor Simmons to Councillor Brown – Climate Protesters</b>	
<p><b>Question</b></p> <p>Will the Leader join with me in condemning attempts by the police — in a guide intended for use by public bodies (such as teachers, local authority officers and others) — to label climate protesters and groups such as Extinction Rebellion as extremists?</p>	<p><b>Written Response</b></p> <p>As the Councillor is aware, Oxford City Council works closely with Extinction Rebellion Oxford. At our invitation they joined the independent Advisory Group that helped establish our Oxford Citizens Assembly on Climate Change and their contributions were welcomed. We have also commended the activism of Oxford’s School Climate Strikers in helping raise public awareness of the climate emergency. Therefore, it is evident that we have a different perspective on these groups to the authors of the guide. I do however, note that the police have now withdrawn this particular piece of guidance.</p>
<p><b>Supplementary question</b></p> <p>Is there anything the Council can do to write to Government or the Police to prevent this sort of labelling in the future and to express our concerns?</p>	<p><b>Verbal response</b></p> <p>I don’t think it would be appropriate to write a letter to government or the police to complain about guidance which has been withdrawn and was outside this Council’s area.</p> <p>This Council’s view on this matter is on record and we want to continue to work with Extinction Rebellion and other campaign groups to tackle climate change.</p>

<b>28. From Councillor Wolff to Councillor Brown – Flag flying on 31 January 2020</b>	
<p><b>Question</b></p> <p>On January 31st, the day on which the UK will formally leave the European Union, I understand that Group Leaders have agreed to fly the European flag from the Town Hall as an act of defiance. Would you consider flying it at half mast as an act of mourning?</p>	<p><b>Written Response</b></p> <p>I can confirm that it has been agreed to fly the European flag on 31 January as a proud recognition of our city’s ongoing commitment to the EU. It has also been agreed to fly the flags of our twin cities in the EU on consecutive days from 3-7 February to demonstrate an ongoing commitment to our links with those cities post-Brexit.</p> <p>Flags are normally flown at half-mast to mark the announcement of a death or the funeral of an individual. As the EU is an international</p>

**28. From Councillor Wolff to Councillor Brown – Flag flying on 31 January 2020**

organisation that will continue when the UK leaves I think flying the European flag at half-mast would not be appropriate and it may be open to different interpretations, potentially implying disrespect to the EU which is clearly not our intention.

**29. From Councillor Gant to Councillor Brown – Oxford Expressway****Question**

Following the General Election last month it has been reported that Transport Secretary Grant Shapps MP has been unable to find time to honour a pre-election pledge to meet local stakeholders as part of a review of government plans for the Expressway. Given the relevance of this project to other initiatives including the Oxfordshire Plan 2050, and the previously-expressed views of this and other local councils, will the Leader join me in urging Mr Shapps to honour his commitment as a matter of urgent priority?

**Written Response**

Yes.

**30. From Councillor Henwood to Councillor Brown – Parish Council sign-up to climate emergency****Question**

Parish councils and community centres are valued public bodies that serve respective communities. Could the council leader write to these bodies asking them to consider signing up to the climate emergency, and seek advice on what these organisations are doing to combat the climate emergency?

**Written Response**

At the meeting with Parish Councils that I chaired last November we had a formal discussion of lessons from our Citizen Assembly because we know that they are keen to work with us on the climate emergency. Officers have already contacted Parish Councils to see what we do collaboratively to respond on climate emergency and to offer support.

**31. From Councillor Harris to Councillor Brown – 5G****Question**

What advice if any has the Council received on the safety of 5G radio wave transmission?

**Written Response**

The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF), Future Telecoms Infrastructure Review (FTIR), and other policy documents issued by Building Digital UK (BDUK), all refer

**31. From Councillor Harris to Councillor Brown – 5G**

to the importance of high-quality digital infrastructure to the UK economy. The delivery of full fibre broadband infrastructure, as well as mobile infrastructure, including 5G, is a priority to achieve the government's targets set out in the FTIR. The draft Local Plan has been informed by these documents and aligns with paragraphs 112 to 116 of the National Planning Policy framework (NPPF). Paragraph 112 of the NPPF states that "planning policies and decisions should support the expansion of electronic communications networks, including next generation mobile technology (such as 5G) and full fibre broadband connections.

Public Health England (PHE) has issued guidance on health and 5G, concluding that a) while it is possible that there may be a small increase in overall exposure to radio waves when 5G is added to an existing network, or in a new area, the overall exposure is expected to remain low relative to guidelines, and b) as such, there should be no consequences for public health. PHE is committed to monitoring the evidence applicable to 5G and other radio technologies, and to revising its advice, should that be necessary.

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**To: Council**

**Date: 27 January 2020**

**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 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 will be republished after the Council meeting as part of the minutes pack. This will list the full text of speeches delivered as submitted, summaries of speeches delivered which differ significantly from those submitted, and any further responses.

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

### Addresses in part 2

1. Address by Magdalene Sacranie, City of Compassion
2. Address by Oxford Community Forum, Licensing of Private Sector Homes
3. Address by Nigel Day - UN Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons
4. Address by Alistair Morris – Climate Emergency and allotments
5. Address by Artwell - Barton British Legion Site

### Questions in part 2

6. Question by Artwell – Citizens' Assembly

## Addresses in part 2

### 1. Address by Magdalene Sacranie, City of Compassion

[www.charterforcompassion.org](http://www.charterforcompassion.org)

Good Evening Lord Mayor, Council Members, Ladies and Gentlemen. Thank-you for the opportunity to address you all.

My name is Magdalene Sacranie. I would like to speak about the Charter for Compassion. I will explain what the charter is, and then speak about what it would mean for Oxford to become a City of Compassion.

In February 2008, Karen Armstrong, academic, renowned author and educator, and most importantly, an Oxford graduate, wrote the book:

“12 Steps to a Compassionate Life”.

She believes that the key to a better life and, ultimately, a better world is COMPASSION, recognizing suffering and DOING something about it. The TED organization awarded Karen Armstrong their \$100,000 dollar prize for this book and the promise to help her build a global society based on the Golden Rule and to create, launch and propagate a world-wide Charter for Compassion.

And so, 800 years after the Magna Carta, we have The Charter for Compassion. The charter is a co-operative effort to restore compassionate thought and action to the centre of political, moral and spiritual life.

On our changing fragile planet, everybody has become our neighbour and the Golden Rule, lying at the heart of all cultures, philosophies and world religions, the “ethic of reciprocity”, has become an urgent necessity.

In November 2009, the Charter for Compassion was unveiled at The Dalai Lama Centre for Peace and Education in Vancouver, which became the first City of Compassion.

The Dalai Lama who says that we need to cultivate a warm-hearted concern for ALL others, has centres here in Oxford pioneering compassion-based education programmes. The evidence shows that children and adults can increase their resilience, their social skills and their emotional wellbeing through compassion training.

In a practical manner, the Charter for Compassion works with cities, its citizens and local governments to identify areas of concern: such as, improving education, services for the elderly, elimination of homelessness and hunger, improvement of health care and social services, restoring and beautifying our green spaces as well as working collectively to create sustainable action plans.

Signing the Charter for Compassion, gives a city access to a network of more than 350 Compassionate Cities around the world, including Rotterdam and Leiden in Holland and Pune in India and Karachi in Pakistan.

This network and sharing of evidence based materials is happening as we speak.

What have the compassionate cities achieved?

In a recent interview, Karen Armstrong explained that ‘they are all dealing with many urban problems, such as racism and homelessness’ She gave the following example of when a mosque in Louisville, USA, was vandalised the Mayor appeared on TV, to ask for volunteers to help clean it up; a thousand people of all ages showed up.

In Karachi there is massive poverty and many children camp under large viaducts filled with rubble.

The Karachi compassion team asked the city council to clear the rubbish under a bridge and build a state of the art shelter for the local people. This included a classroom where University students then came to teach children from poor neighbourhoods. This is a pilot project and when it has been fully tested the city council will build similar facilities in other much needed areas.

There is so much that is fantastic about this beautiful city of Oxford. Declaring Oxford a “City of Compassion” celebrates and validates all the successes, hard work and achievements of all the 100’s of institutions, governmental and private, places of education, religion and businesses not to mention the work of charities, NGO’s and grassroots organizations---and at the same time re-focuses and re-sets the City of Oxford’s core values of always considering “the other”.

### **Response from the Leader and Cabinet Member for Economic Development and Partnerships, Councillor Brown**

I’d like to thank Ms Sacranie for her address and for highlighting the importance of compassion in public life.

I am fairly sure that all of us here were motivated to become councillors by compassion for the citizens we represent and a desire to tackle inequalities and problems that particularly affect the more vulnerable. And this is reflected in the aims and priorities that we have agreed as a council and the debates we frequently have in this chamber. As our new draft Corporate Strategy sets out – *“we prioritise tackling inequality – our services, investments and policy-making are all designed to address the social and financial inequalities across Oxford. We value diversity and seek to build community cohesion. We want to ensure all Oxford’s citizens have fair opportunities and a real share in the city’s future.”*

That principle drives the work we do, from our investment and focus on tackling the climate emergency and poor air quality; our work to prevent homelessness and support those who are sleeping rough into a life off the streets; as a City of Sanctuary accommodating and supporting refugees and asylum seekers to our support for those on low incomes and our work with and investment in our communities and community groups. We do not have all of the levers we might like to tackle some of the issues, but recognise that we can play a role in providing leadership, working in partnership with other public agencies, NGOs and businesses and influencing others as we are seeking to do through our work to promote an inclusive economy, promoting the Oxford living wage and tackling health inequalities.

I hope therefore that all of us and our residents recognise and value Oxford as a compassionate city.

## **2. Address by Oxford Community Forum, Licensing of Private Sector Homes**

Oxford Community Forum (OCF) was formed in 2012 in response to the implementation of additional Licensing scheme by Oxford City Council (OCC). OCF main purpose was to raise lack of the communication from OCC with local community during the consultation process. OCF held meetings with politicians as well as council officers raising the concerns about the implementation as well the impact of HMO additional licensing scheme. OCF later organised training sessions in collaboration with OCC for private landlords to help implement new HMO rules & regulations.

OCF's view in 2012, was that additional licensing scheme to register all properties with 3 plus unrelated tenants for HMO would increase the cost of rentals as well as increase homelessness as unintended consequence. In our opinion this turned out to be true.

There was Mandatory Licensing Scheme for 3 storey 5 occupants. Oxford City Council (OCC) stated in their additional licensing policy document that their first priority will be 3 storey 5 occupants' properties, we believe this was an indirect admission that OCC failed in the regulation of HMO's under mandatory powers. Another rationale for the scheme was the belief that it would have encouraged landlords to deal with the anti-social behaviour of their tenants. Given that private landlords have no legal liability for the behaviour of their tenants it is hard to see what the council expects landlords to achieve in this area.

The disharmony between HMO rules/regulations and Assured Shorthold Tenancy legislation (regarding landlord's and tenant's responsibilities) was raised by OCF to OCC. This disharmony was not really considered or addressed till today.

The consultation process of the additional licensing scheme was not, in our view, carried out properly which was highlighted to the politicians and OCC officers in several meetings. We all know how additional licensing Scheme of 3 plus unrelated individuals resulted in social engineering and family occupied properties were turned into HMOs resulting in families moving out of areas around Universities. Homelessness increased.

The self funding schemes are perceived to be for the purpose of running a department at the cost of private landlords and several overzealous prosecution were highlighted to OCC by OCF. Instead of working with landlords and targeting rough landlords, the feeling among private landlords was that OCC staffs were more pro prosecution. This was raised in several meetings with OCC.

By introducing a blanket licensing of privately owned rented properties, we believe OCC is discriminating against private sector landlords, increasing the cost of rentals for families and will drive families to the council list hence causing more homelessness. This blanket policy will certainly bring more money to the OCC coffers through the licensing fees of all privately rented properties but in our view will most definitely cause social engineering in Oxford City where poor families will be forced to move out due to higher rents caused by extra cost to landlords through HMO fees.

One wonders why OCC cannot regulate these properties through their existing powers. This policy is only proposed to charge private sector landlords for the job the OCC should have been carrying out under the mandatory powers. The council should not rush into approving a policy without seriously considering its unintended consequences. We believe that the politicians who will be supporting or proposing this policy are not considering the facts on the ground and are just driven by their one sided political views.

The OCF opposes this motion as it is also discriminatory policy against one sector of the community (private landlords) and do not cover Universities accommodations or OCC own properties, it will increase the cost of rentals as a result, increase

homelessness and in our view causes social engineering. The target of this policy are private sector landlords who are already under pressure from tax on mortgage payments and huge number of student blocks being developed by venture capitalist firms who have no local connections or contributions to local economy. Majority of the private landlords are local hard working people who have invested their hard earned money into property market.

### **Response from the Deputy Leader (Statutory) and Cabinet Member for Leisure and Housing, Councillor Linda Smith**

There is no evidence that licensing schemes push up rents. There are a large number of factors that influence rent and market conditions are always the biggest driver of rental increases. The cost of compliance, particularly for better landlords is relatively low in Oxford and if we successfully introduce Selective Licensing our aim would be to set a licence fee that is in line with other councils in the south east that only covers the cost of running the scheme.

There is also no evidence that our Additional Licensing Scheme has had a negative impact on homelessness. There are a range of issues that can contribute to homelessness and whilst one of those is the ending of a tenancy in the private rented sector there is no evidence that extending the licensing requirement for HMOs has had any impact on evictions leading to homelessness in Oxford. The requirement to have a HMO licence actually protects tenants from rogue landlords because if they living in an unlicensed HMO then the landlord cannot evict them without getting the HMO licensed. The same protection applies under Selective Licensing.

There was no failure to use our powers to licence mandatory licensable HMOs. We licensed approximately 600 HMOs under mandatory licensing and our success in improving those properties by using our licensing powers was one of the reasons why the council chose to extend the requirement to licence to every HMO in the city.

The introduction of Selective Licensing would give the Council the power, where appropriate, to add conditions to the licence for landlords to take reasonable steps to prevent anti social behaviour from their tenants. This would be a good step forward as it would ensure landlords fully co-operate with the Council and deal with anti social behaviour from their tenants.

Licensing legislation sets out clearly who is responsible for the management and maintenance of a property. The council does not accept that landlords can evade their responsibilities by arguing that their tenants are to blame because of their tenancy agreement.

There was a robust and extensive consultation process for both the introduction and renewal of the Additional Licensing Schemes. Our intention is always to consult properly and listen to what the public, tenants and landlords say. This is evidenced by the fee structure which rewards better landlords and by introducing and renewing the schemes, which were overwhelming popular with consultees.

There is no evidence that citywide licensing of HMOs has resulted in social engineering. In fact, the planning policy related to HMOs has been considered sufficiently successful to be transferred without amendment into the latest version of the local plan which has recently been approved by the government inspector.

The council has the ability under the Housing Act 2004 to charge licence fees so that its licensing scheme is self funding. The council's view is that this is an appropriate choice as it means the council tax payer does not have to pay for important regulatory work to be carried out and the costs are paid for by the people who are benefitting most from the property.

The Council is proud of its record as a robust regulator. There are stringent processes to ensure every legal case is reviewed twice before submission to our Law & Governance Team who then conduct an independent assessment including evidential tests and public interest considerations before recommending a course of action. We believe that strong enforcement plays an important role in deterring offenders and demonstrating to compliant landlords and the public that the Council will uphold minimum standards.

Nationally there is no evidence that licensing results in a decline in properties in the private rented sector and the same is true in Oxford. In some cases Selective Licensing Schemes have resulted in more properties being licensed than was originally estimated by the local authority.

The legislation covering the Private Rented Sector has increased significantly in the last few years as a result of increasing concerns over how it operates and a recognition that the sector requires significant improvement. Local authorities have been actively encouraged to use the powers given to them by the government and therefore the Council is not discriminating against private sector landlords by increasing regulation and seeking to expand licensing in the city.

The reason why University managed accommodation, councils and other social housing providers are exempt from licensing is because they have their own regulators and a high level of accountability.

Whilst we understand the concerns from landlords and recognise that licensing schemes are not universally popular with them, we do appreciate their feedback and look forward to continuing to work together in a constructive way.

**Additional verbal response from the Deputy Leader (Statutory) and Cabinet Member for Leisure and Housing, Councillor Linda Smith**

We have a Landlords Forum in the Council and generally landlords do not have any trouble making themselves heard and I know that the OCF have established communication channels with the Council and councillors. So I hope you will forgive me if I say that during the consultation my personal focus will be on hearing from tenants, the people who have much to gain from the proposed scheme and whose voices we do not always hear.

### **3. Address by Nigel Day - UN Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons**

The UN Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons (TPNW), or the Nuclear Weapon Ban Treaty, is the first legally binding international agreement to comprehensively prohibit nuclear weapons, with the goal of leading towards their total elimination.

Nuclear weapons pose an unacceptable threat to people everywhere.

This is why 122 nations voted to adopt the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons. All national governments are now invited to sign and ratify this crucial global agreement, which prohibits the use, production and stockpiling of nuclear weapons and lays the foundations for their total elimination. The UK government is refusing to support this multilateral treaty.

However, 34 countries have now ratified the treaty, and when 50 nations ratify the treaty it will enter into force.

Cities and towns can help build support for the treaty by endorsing the ICAN Cities Appeal, a commitment by cities and towns to show support for the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons and call on their governments to join.

228 cities worldwide have signed their support, including Paris, Berlin, Oslo, Sydney, LA, Toronto.

In the UK Manchester, Edinburgh, Norwich, Renfrewshire, West Dumbartonshire and Hebden Royd. A number of other cities, like Oxford, are in the pipeline.

Cities are asking for another way to resolve the nuclear arms problem. To debate and talk about the issue, not re-arm and threaten.

Oxford is a city with a great history of peaceful initiatives and commitments. There is a Peace Plaque in Bonn Square commemorating those who have worked for peace in the city.

Trident warhead convoys regularly travel past Oxford on the A34, supporting the UK nuclear weapon system. We are that close to nuclear weapons.

Last Thursday, the Bulletin of the Atomic Scientists announced that the iconic Doomsday Clock symbolizing the gravest perils facing humankind is now closer to midnight than at any point since its creation in 1947. They moved the Doomsday Clock from two minutes to midnight to 100 seconds to midnight. They stated - "Humanity continues to face two simultaneous existential dangers—nuclear war and climate change".

We are asking you to support the motion and to send a resolution showing Oxford City Council's support for the treaty.

### **Response from the Leader and Cabinet Member for Economic Development and Partnerships, Councillor Brown**

This is an issue which is taken seriously by everyone in this chamber even if they have different views on it. Many of us are very sympathetic to the aims of your organisation and we generally in this chamber work for peace. Whether this Government would listen to us on this issue is quite a different matter. We will need to see what happens when we get to the motions. Thank you for coming and giving such an eloquent speech.

#### **4. Address by Alistair Morris – Climate Emergency and allotments**

Good evening,

One year on from declaring a Climate Emergency, and I feel a bit like the fictional character Jon Snow in Game of Thrones...

" You Know Nothing, Jon Snow". I, Alistair Morris...know nothing! Who is leading, what action is being taken, what can we do..?

Why is there not a Climate Tzar? or a Climate Team, who we can be in regular contact with.? Why can't the City organise monthly briefings to its Parish councillors and Community leaders/organisations with updates and recommendations/action plans for each parish/suburb? This is what would be happening in a war; and by the advice of the government's own Committee on Climate Change we are supposed to be on a war footing.!! I just don't understand? :-(

2020 is the year of Climate, our country is hosting COP26 in Glasgow in November. This is it, this is the year we are supposed to make significant changes to how we run our economy and our lifestyle behaviour...We are already 1/12th into it! Scientists around the World are saying, its now or never!? I am just a concerned citizen, but I don't see the will, leadership, coordination, urgency and decisiveness you would expect in a war situation. There is SO much we could and should be doing right now! It involves cooperative, joined up working, between different groups and the sharing of resources big time! But, people don't seem to be taking responsibility, showing true leadership and taking decisive actions!!! ? At least, I don't see it!??

Allow community groups to plant more trees, reseed grass verges, grow more food....GIVE them the resources and equipment they need!!! Like, right NOW!? Why is everything sooooo difficult?

For example: Trees, turf removal machines, tractors, water dowsers, etc. Why not!? YOU would in a war...! If not directly, then allow council staff to help?

The British Government's number one future security concern, is food supply! We need to be enhancing, supporting and developing our city's allotments to maximise future local food production, and encouraging people to grow more of their own food. As well as working communally to be more self sufficient, and to cut down on the carbon generating international transportation of food? Is this not simple best practice?

We are at crisis point, you should be throwing all the money and resources you can at supporting local community groups, including allotments.!!! Are you able to allocate more resources/staff to help with fully restoring allotments and bringing them back to full production? Especially maintenance and upgrade of buildings, removal of rubbish(deep clean!), restoration, delineation, fencing and numbering of plots? Can there be more help with noticeboards, water storage, improving access and perimeter fencing please..? Perhaps there should be an allotments Council officer to help with this?

Finally, to borrow another phrase from an excellent BBC historical drama, The Last Kingdom "Destiny is All". NO, it isn't.! But.....

CLIMATE IS EVERYTHING.! :-)

I appreciate and respect your time, effort, commitment to public service, but please, PLEASE, get on with saving our Planet, and making Oxford a greener, healthier and safer place to live!

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

Alistair we are very lucky to have so many engaged and enthusiastic residents like you in Oxford. I am very aware that you drove the collaboration with the City Council which resulted in some 700 trees being planted on the Croft Road recreation area. So thank you. We have already begun a number of initiatives worth about £19m. We do have a dedicated climate team: The Environmental Sustainability Team.

I agree that we should do more to communicate with residents and parish councils – this was something that was raised by the Citizens Assembly.

Oxford has 38 allotment sites and I believe has the highest allotment rate per capita in the country. We are now just finalising the new 25 year leases and under those the role of the Council is going to be increased. We are going to take responsibility for all of the buildings that we originally installed, we are going to take over maintenance of trees, and increase our responsibility for ditches. We cannot do everything that you are asking for but rest assured that our commitment to allotments is huge, not least because 30% of the Cabinet have an allotment. We welcome the continued involvement of the residents.

## **5. Address by Artwell - Barton British Legion Site**

I have delivered my Independent Campaign Manifesto to most of the homes on Sandhills and Barton and this has allowed me the opportunity to talk with a wide range of the Constituents.

Never has a Constituent in Barton called for a library. Nevertheless, in last week's Oxford Mail, Labour's Cllr Rowley is pictured with a cake celebrating the opening of Barton Neighbourhood Centre's Library. (OM16/12020)

Young people have asked for Ballerina and Street Dancing facilities.

Teenagers also have asked for soundproof facilities for Band Practice and milestone Licenced facilities for Celebrations.

Adults and senior Citizens have enquired many times for Licenced premises to combat loneliness and isolation.

Others have asked for the restoration of the Neighbourhood Centre's Computer Suite which, I believe the Barton Community Association needlessly destroyed.

Non-Caucasian residents tell me that they are disappointed with the lack of Community Space for hire to host their traditional celebrations.

As Councillors are aware, Oxford is home to the game of Aunt Sally, which Oxford people like to play and watch. The City Council should be pleased to support this inclusive game and provide facilities for Aunt Sally on Barton. But a Library on Barton is, in my opinion a fine example of the Labour City Council providing what the residents have not asked for whilst ignoring facilities which the residents have specifically requested.

Despite the Labour City Councillors constantly stating that "community engagement" is welcomed the experience of the people of Barton, in the last twelve months, demonstrates the opposite in my opinion. For example, last summer the City Council spent £900,000 on the already pristine Neighbourhood Centre. Few on Barton could understand why the City Council determined that this huge sum of public money needed to be spent on Barton Community Association (BCA) administered Neighbourhood Centre; a facility which does not welcome youth or licenced activities and is largely unused at weekends.

In my opinion the £900,000 wasted on expanding the Neighbourhood Centre only assisted the Barton Community Association retail income. Barton's Library has just opened and it is already appealing for volunteers. Surely the BCA should be willing to pay Oxford's Living Wage to staff the newly opened Library? The BCA has sufficient funds. The BCA rental income is supposed to be used for the benefit of the "deprived" Constituents.

The "deprived" people of Barton are appealing one last time to the current Labour Councillors and Council Officers to support our call to refurbish the former British Legion site into an imaginative inclusive Community faculty which could benefit all the people of Barton increasing population.

## **Response from the Cabinet Member for Cabinet Member for Supporting Local Communities, Councillor Tidball**

I do not agree with the premise of your address. This Council does care. The City Council continues to improve its existing community spaces across the city, and especially in Barton with nearly a million pounds worth of investment in the existing Barton Neighbourhood Centre, which is managed by the Barton Community

Association. This investment has turned the centre into a community and health hub providing modern, improved community, health and youth space.

The City Council, Barton Community Association and County Council have worked in partnership to develop a new community library using develop funding that will improve residents wellbeing and literacy levels. The new library at the Barton Neighbourhood Centre in Barton is part of the expanded services to residents provided in partnership with the Barton Community Association.

The library had a grand opening in January with over 100 people attending and a huge amount of positive feedback has been received from residents. We want to see everyone in Barton having the same great opportunities as elsewhere in the city, and the library is another great addition to the community. The new library will expand the range of cultural services on offer to the whole community and all ages including story times, rhymetimes, a range of online services and as a venue offering and enabling council services.

Within the new Barton Park development a community pavilion has been built, also community managed, and now provides additional space for hire. There will also be a community hub in the new school in Barton Park for hire for community activities, opening at the end of 2020. This is on top of the existing hireable spaces in the leisure centre, school and neighbourhood centre, making sure that there are sufficient community facilities for existing and new residents in Barton.

The British Legion site was vacated in 2012 and the asset was only transferred to the City Council in 2018. The site was in serious disrepair and had asbestos throughout. Therefore, it has been decided to use the British Legion site to build housing to help ease city wide pressures on housing. Planning permission has been submitted to build 7 affordable homes, 3 of which will be available for social rent and 4 shared ownership. The City Council has organised for the building to be demolished in February 2020.

#### **Right of reply by the Cabinet Member for Affordable Housing, Councillor Rowley**

It was a great pleasure to be present at the opening of the library and to visit the neighbourhood centre and see the parents and children in the book section and to work with the Barton Community Association which consists of local residents who volunteer to support the community. No amount of Council spend would do any good without their contribution.

## Questions in part 2

### 6. Question by Artwell – Citizens' Assembly

Oxford's Labour Councillors took a definitive decision to transfer the Service Delivery of Oxford City Council into a Companies House Registered commercial entity called Oxford Direct Services (ODS) in 2017; without first giving the Voters of Oxford the right to vote on this major alternation. I do not believe the Labour City Councillor informed the Voters of Oxford of this privatisation in their Local Election literature.

Even more galling was that Oxford City Council had registered ODS at Companies House in 2017 months before the privatisation decision was publicly announced to privatise Oxford Direct Services to Oxford's City Council Taxpayers and Voters.

I was so outraged at this Democratic process that I wrote a complaint to the Local Government Minister, but the Minister's response was not helpful.

It appears to me that once again and without a specific mandate from the Voters of Oxford, a joint Oxford City Council and the County Council have agreed on the establishment of a

- Work Place Levy;
- Taxing cars entering Oxford City Centre,
- Creating five Bus Gates and other policies which will in my opinion increase living costs for the majority earning Oxford's Living Wage and less.

Oxford is a car manufacturing City. The Council recently celebrated the opening of the £440m Westgate Shopping Centre which has ample Car Parking. Now the Councils are seeking to be the first to Tax and Ban cars from Oxford City Centre and other parts of Oxford.

Even more troubling is the £200,000 funding which is used to pay for England's "Citizens Assembly" delegates; who are paid to attend weekend training, which comes from the Climate Lobby.

In short, the "Citizens Assembly" is in my view a Political Lobby group masquerading as the will of a "diverse" and "representative" selection of Oxford's Council taxpayers and Voters.

Oxford's Labour Executive Board Members have in my view no democratic mandate to implement the policies of the un-elected "Citizens Assembly" which appears as being a front for the Climate Lobby.

It appears perverse for the City Council to be spending £2m on a Homeless Shelter compared with the £19m on policies supported by the "Citizens Assembly." Oxford is a City with a great need to restore lost Public Services. I call on Oxford City Councillors to use the £19m on restoring Public Services.

Will Oxford City Council Elected Councillors and Executives please suspend all policies from the un-Elected "Citizens Assembly," as Labour failed to make clear in their Local Elections literature their intention to adopt policies from the un-Elected "Citizens Assembly?" This use of the "Citizens Assembly" to determine and influence Oxford City Council Policy is, in my opinion, undemocratic and must be exposed and extinguished.

## **Response from the Leader and Cabinet Member for Economic Development and Partnerships, Councillor Brown**

The questions raised here reveal a fundamental lack of understanding on a number of issues which I am happy to clarify.

Firstly, Oxford Direct Services Ltd is wholly owned by the Council as its only shareholder. It is not privatised or outsourced.

Its profits are ploughed back into funding the City's needs - a very different and much better model of public service than rewarding private shareholders.

Secondly the council is democratically elected by the residents of Oxford and on this basis has a clear mandate to take decisions about policy and services. Residents are consulted on strategies and policies as they are developed. Tackling problems of congestion and air quality have long been a stated priority for the city council and all of the policies highlighted by the questioner are subject to public consultation.

Thirdly, Citizens' Assemblies are a well-recognised form of participatory democracy which have been used by governments across the world as a means of developing citizen-led solutions to complex issues. From the outset we have been clear our Citizens' Assembly on Climate Change is solely advisory, with policy-making on appropriate responses to climate change, remaining with the City Council, Government and other statutory bodies. Assembly members were randomly selected as a representative sample of the residents of the City – a requirement of Citizens' Assemblies – with recruitment, organisation and facilitation provided by Ipsos MORI, a well-respected, independent research organisation. A wide cross-section of interests was brought together to advise the City Council on the structure and content of the Citizens Assembly, with an Advisory Group that involved Labour, LibDem, Green and Conservative councillors, academics and business as well as community representatives.

## **Additional verbal response from the Deputy Leader (Statutory) and Cabinet Member for Leisure and Housing, Councillor Linda Smith**

On a point of order I want to make a factual correction to a statement made by the speaker. We are not in the business of closing down homeless hostels. That is misinformation by various people. In fact the number of supported beds that we have had access to in recent years to place people sleeping rough has increased. Lucy Faithfull House has closed but the beds there have been re-provided in community settings throughout the city, in regular houses with support workers. Simon House has closed but is being replaced by Matilda House and the site is being redeveloped for much needed housing. That is something we can be really proud of providing high quality, supported accommodation. Most recently we have opened Floyds Row, which will have accommodation for up to 56 people from March this year.

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