

Remote meeting

Minutes of a meeting of Council on Monday 22 March 2021

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Council members present:

Councillor Lygo (Lord Mayor)	Councillor Goddard (Deputy Lord Mayor)
Councillor Wolff (Sheriff)	Councillor Altaf-Khan
Councillor Arshad	Councillor Azad
Councillor Aziz	Councillor Bely-Summers
Councillor Brown	Councillor Chapman
Councillor Clarkson	Councillor Cook
Councillor Corais	Councillor Curran
Councillor Fry	Councillor Gant
Councillor Garden	Councillor Gotch
Councillor Haines	Councillor Hayes
Councillor Henwood	Councillor Hollingsworth
Councillor Howlett	Councillor Humberstone
Councillor Kennedy	Councillor Landell Mills
Councillor Malik	Councillor Munkonge
Councillor Pressel	Councillor Rowley
Councillor Simmons	Councillor Linda Smith
Councillor Roz Smith	Councillor Tanner
Councillor Tarver	Councillor Taylor
Councillor Tidball	Councillor Turner
Councillor Upton	Councillor Wade

Apologies:

Councillors Djafari-Marbini, Lloyd-Shogbesan, McManners and Simm sent apologies. The minutes show when Councillors who were absent for part of the meeting arrived and left.

89. Declarations of interest

Minute 94 – Cllr Altaf Khan declared that this affected a property listed as his declared disclosable pecuniary interest and he would leave the meeting and take no part in the debate on this item.

Minute 95 – Variation of Hackney Carriage Tariffs - Cllr Malik declared that this affected his declared disclosable pecuniary interest and he would leave the remote meeting and take no part in the debate on this item.

90. Minutes

Council agreed to approve the minutes of the ordinary meeting held on 25 January 2021 and of the budget meeting held on 17 February 2021 as true and correct records.

91. Appointment to Committees

The Leader of the Council, Cllr Brown, announced and Council noted changes with immediate effect:

- Planning Review Committee - Cllr Pressel to take the seat allocated to the Labour Group;
- Standards Committee – Cllr Tanner to take the seat allocated to the Labour Group;

both replacing Cllr Azad following her becoming an independent non-group councillor.

92. Announcements

The Lord Mayor welcomed Caroline Green to her first meeting as Chief Executive.

He thanked councillors who would not be standing in the May 6th elections for their commitment to the Council and wished all those standing for re-election good luck.

He noted that 23 March, the anniversary of the UK's first Covid lockdown, was a national day of reflection to remember those who had died of Covid in the past year. As well as remembering those lost, he paid tribute to all those who had volunteered to help their communities during the pandemic.

He had taken part in online events and meetings including for Holocaust Memorial Day; meetings with the High Sheriff and Lord Lieutenant; online annual European Reception to welcome Oxford residents from other European countries; and with and in support of the Lord Mayor's charities.

He reminded councillors to join in his *Move with Mayor Mark* campaign

At the Lord Mayor's invite, the City Rector, Rev Anthony Buckley said the national day of reflection was an opportunity to remember those who had lost loved ones and were suffering ill health, and thanked council staff for their work and commitment that this year brought to the fore.

The Sheriff and Deputy Lord Mayor had nothing further to report.

The Leader of the Council Cllr Brown, said that the city flag would fly at half mast on 23 March for national day of reflection, and thanked staff and councillors for their work during the pandemic in the past year.

The Chief Executive outlined for Council the constraints on service and resourcing pressures on the council and its workforce including the extra demands on council services and additional requirements as a result of the pandemic, and the long term economic and health impacts increasing pressure on services and finances.

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

There were no addresses or questions.

94. Additional HMO licensing scheme renewal

Cllr Altaf Khan, having declared this item related to his disclosable pecuniary interest, left the online meeting for the duration of this item and returned to the meeting at the start of the next item.

Council considered the report of the Head of Regulatory Services and Community Safety submitted a report to Cabinet on 10 March which provided the results from the consultation exercise carried out for the proposal to renew the HMO Licensing Scheme and sought approval from members to designate the whole of the City as subject to additional licensing under section 56(1)(a) of the Housing Act 2004 in relation to the size and type of HMO specified in the recommendations of the report for 5 years commencing on 10 June 2021.

The Cabinet Member for Planning and Housing Delivery, Cllr Hollingsworth, introduced the report, proposed the recommendations and answered questions.

The recommendations were agreed on being seconded and put to the vote.

Council resolved to adopt the proposed fees and charges structure for both mandatory and additional HMO licences attached at Appendix 6 of the report.

95. Variation (increase) of the current Hackney Carriage Tariffs (table of fares)

Cllr Malik, having declared this item related to his disclosable pecuniary interest, left the virtual meeting for the duration of this item and returned to the meeting at the start of the next item.

Council considered the report of the Head of Regulatory Services and Community Safety to the General Purposes Licensing Committee on 22 September 2020 asking for approval of a variation of the current Hackney Carriage Table of Fares from the City of Oxford Licensed Taxicab Association (COLTA), set out at Appendix 5 of that report.

The Chair of the General Purposes Licensing Committee, Cllr Clarkson, introduced the report, proposed the recommendations and answered questions. The recommendations were agreed on being seconded and put to the vote.

Council resolved to

- **approve** the application from COLTA to vary the Hackney Carriage Table of Fares and
- **approve** the changes to the table of fees as proposed by COLTA and as set out in Appendix 5 of the committee report.

96. Pay Policy Statement 2021

Council considered the report of the Head of Business Improvement setting out the Annual Pay Policy Statement.

The Cabinet Member for Customer Focused Services, Cllr Chapman, introduced the report, proposed the recommendations and answered questions.

Council resolved to approve the Annual Pay Policy Statement 2020/21 as attached at Appendix 1 of the report.

97. Questions on Cabinet minutes

a) Minutes of meeting Wednesday 10 February 2021 of Cabinet

Minute 144 - Zero Carbon Council by 2030

Cllr Wolff asked for clarification of the carbon emissions goals and targets: were these a reduction of 10% per year or to zero carbon by 2030

Cllr Hayes clarified that the reduction was 10% of the current baseline each year to achieve zero carbon by 2030, also supplemented by external funding, and more detailed calculations were set out in the report.

Minute 145 - Programme approval and allocation for Public Sector Decarbonisation Funding

Cllr Simmons welcomed the successful bid and asked if investment in a solar farm qualified for this funding or if it failed to meet the eligibility criteria due to the payback period.

Cllr Hayes replied that there was an exception to the normal 10-year payback period for solar farms.

Minute 146 – Housing management system

Cllr Wade asked about cost recovery from the contractor and in 'lessons learned' what these were and would they

Cllr Rowley replied that more details on these were in the confidential appendix to the report.

b) Minutes of meeting Wednesday 10 March 2021 of Cabinet (to follow)

Minute 158 – Scrutiny Committee reports

Cllr Gant said that in his view the responsibility for representing the views of the Scrutiny Committee rested with the Chair of the Committee and not with Cabinet members observing the Scrutiny meeting. He asked if the Cabinet Member agreed.

Cllr Hollingsworth confirmed that the Cabinet minutes were a correct record, and he had intended no criticism of the Chair, committee or the report: he had reporting his own views and corrected an inadvertent factual error in the committee's report.

Cllr Simmons said he considered there was a misalignment between the aspirations for zero carbon in the Council's business plan the priority 4 in the Local Plan targets and this merited further discussion.

Minute 164 – Zero Emission Zone

Cllr Gant asked about the enforcement for the ZEZ area and regime and what cameras would be used.

Cllr Roz Smith asked how blue badge holders applied for exemptions from charges for driving within the ZEZ to allow them to park in disabled bays close to shops.

Cllr Hayes said he could provide written answers to both questions.

98. Questions on Notice from Members of Council

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

These along with summaries of the 13 supplementary questions and responses asked and given at the meeting are set out in the minutes pack.

The meeting broke for 20min during this item, and Cllrs Haines and Malik left at that point.

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

Council heard 4 addresses and Cabinet Members read or summarised their written responses (set out in full in the minutes pack)

1. An address by Kaddy Beck – The 'Save Bertie' Campaign
2. An address by Oliver de Soissons – Oxford National Park (supporting Motion d on the agenda)
3. An address by Micaela Tuckwell – Representing 'Save The Sheaf' campaign organisers
4. An address by Fiona Steel – Representing: Good Food Oxford on developing a Food Strategy (supporting Motions a and h on the agenda)

100. Partnership report - Oxfordshire Resources and Waste Partnership

Council considered the report on behalf of the Cabinet Member for Customer Focused Services, Cllr Chapman, on the Oxfordshire Resources and Waste Partnership.

Cllr Chapman introduced the report, noting that the partnership would meet on 12 April 2021. In answer to questions he noted:

The impact of the proposed Environment Bill and regulatory framework would be clearer once the Bill and timetable were published. There was currently a complex credit system for waste and recycling and the County Council were keen to make savings, so this council to be vigilant to ensure it was not penalised for excellent recycling rates.

He accepted the importance of the circular economy (noted in the report, but lacking action points) and would raise this with the partnership.

Recycling rates were at a record level for the city and the increased rates were excellent. Comparing a city with a large student and transient population to other Oxfordshire districts, largely rural with small towns, was not comparing like with like.

Council noted the report.

101. Scrutiny Committee update report

Council had before it the report of the Scrutiny Committee Chair, Cllr Gant, who introduced this.

Council noted the report.

102. Motions on notice 22 March 2021

Council had before it 8 motions on notice submitted in accordance with Council procedure rules and reached decisions as set out below.

Motions agreed as set out below:

- a) Developing a Food Strategy (proposed by Cllr Simmons, seconded by Cllr Wolff; Cllr Simmons accepted the amendment proposed by Cllr Tidball and Cllr Hayes)
- b) Housing and Homelessness (proposed by Cllr Hollingsworth, seconded by Cllr Djafari-Marbini)
- c) Call on the Government to repeal the Vagrancy Act (proposed by Cllr Gant, seconded by Cllr Wade)
- d) Support for a new Oxford National Park (proposed by Cllr Wolff, seconded by Cllr Simmons; Cllr Wolff accepted the amendment proposed by Cllr Hayes and Cllr Tarver)

Motions not taken as the time allocated for debate had finished:

- e) Financial security (proposed by Cllr Hayes, seconded by Cllr Humberstone)
- f) Proportional Representation to ensure every vote counts (proposed by Cllr Garden)
- g) Adopting an advertising and sponsorship policy which supports responsible consumption (proposed by Cllr Simmons, seconded by Cllr Wolff)
- h) Against Food Poverty (proposed by Cllr Tidball)

a) Developing a Food Strategy

Cllr Simmons, proposed the submitted motion as set out in the agenda and briefing note. He confirmed that he and the original seconder (Cllr Wolff) accepted the amendment proposed by Cllr Tidball and Cllr Hayes as set out in the briefing note.

Cllr Tidball then seconded the amended motion.

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

Council resolved to adopt the following motion:

Council recognises the commitment made to ensuring nobody in Oxford went hungry. Knowing that the pandemic would exacerbate inequalities, this Council established five Locality Response Hubs, a food depot at Rose Hill Community Centre, and, with partners the Oxford Hub, Oxford Together.

Council further recognises that this Council:

- Gave over 11,000 emergency food parcels to communities between March and August 2020; working with communities and Oxford Brookes University, these food parcels were nutritious and culturally appropriate.
- Worked to strengthen relationships with SOFEA and a network of charities and community partners, such as Oxford Mutual Aid, Oxford Community Action, Good Food Oxford, the Oxford Mosques and Syrcox, to support Oxford's food system.
- Secured food pipelines, along with access to Community Larders and low-cost food for those who needed it, and £145k of grant funding to support organisations to sustain this system when the Council transitioned from food parcel delivery. Took care to call all those in receipt of a food parcel and worked with them to access food vouchers and the network of food banks and larders.
- Committed to providing Free School Meal vouchers when the Government refused to provide Free School Meals during October half-term, and continued to work with partners to help people access food through the Winter Support Grants.

More can be done. Supermarkets have significant food waste. Tackling food poverty and reducing waste to deliver a net Zero Carbon City go hand in hand.

This Council backs concerted and coordinated action to address food poverty and resolves to continue to work with partners, as we have throughout the pandemic, to develop a county-wide strategy that addresses the causes of food poverty as part of our wider anti-poverty work. This should include the following:

- The Head of Community Services bringing a report to Cabinet with proposals for commissioning a Food Strategy to address the causes of food inequality in Oxford, exacerbated by the pandemic taking into account:
 - The National Food Strategy;
 - The considerable work undertaken by this Council to address inequality and to tackle food poverty during the pandemic;
 - Being a signatory to the Oxford Good Food Charter;
 - The excellent work of Oxford's voluntary sector to tackle food poverty;
 - Recommendations on achieving a self-sustaining community food system and Council's role in supporting this.

- Bringing together the views and knowledge of our food network partners to better understand the current root causes of food poverty, and a shared action plan to implement meaningful solutions.
- Tackling child food poverty by campaigning to address holiday hunger, increasing take up of free school meals and access to food larders for families with children.
- Continuing to use relationships with supermarkets to divert surplus food to those in need and minimise waste to help eliminate Oxford's contribution to climate change by 2040 or sooner, in line with the Zero Carbon Oxford Charter and recommendations of the Citizens' Assembly on Climate Change.

b) Housing and Homelessness

Cllr Hollingsworth, seconded by Cllr Aziz proposed the submitted motion as set out in the agenda and briefing note.

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

Council resolved to adopt the following motion:

This Council notes with horror the decision by the Government to make sleeping rough sufficient grounds for deportation from the UK; nothing could expose the callous brutality of the current Conservative administration more clearly than this.

The Council also notes that in addition to long-standing and indisputable evidence linking both homelessness and poor quality housing with poor mental and physical health, poorer educational outcomes and worse life chances, it is becoming clearer that overcrowded homes are likely to be a significant factor in both the spread of Covid and deaths from the virus.

This Council notes that overcrowding is just one factor that has been identified as leading to the higher rates of people from BAME backgrounds becoming critically ill and dying from Covid-19 and the work Shelter and The Big Issue have done to highlight the government's own figures that black people are 'three times as likely to experience homelessness'. The pandemic is intensifying the housing crisis and widening inequalities for these groups.

The pandemic has demonstrated that we are only as safe as our most vulnerable member; those with no recourse to public funds must have access to public services including housing services with no fear of deportation.

The Council further notes that the 'everyone in' campaign at the onset of lockdown showed that it is possible to end rough sleeping with sufficient political will and funding, and also notes that over the last 70 years it is only when council housing was being built in sufficient volumes alongside market housing that enough homes for everyone were provided.

This Council believes that nobody should have to sleep rough on our streets, and that having a secure, safe and affordable home is a basic human right for all.

This Council believes that the Government should have used the publication of the long-delayed Social Housing White Paper to address properly both the moral imperative to end rough sleeping, and the equally important need to provide genuinely affordable and secure homes for all, and condemns the failure to do so.

This Council therefore asks that:

- the Leader of the Council writes to the Home Secretary to demand that Government abandons their proposals to make sleeping rough a ground for deportation, and instead to properly fund local authorities, health services and support providers to ensure that no one in Oxford, or anywhere else in the UK, has to sleep rough on the streets;
- all members of Council support Shelter's campaign for a mass programme of social housing building, with 200,000 new homes a year being required to address a backlog that has built up over decades;
- all members of Council endorse efforts by Oxford City Council and the other local authorities in Oxfordshire to provide enough affordable housing to meet the needs of our current and future citizens.

c) Call on the Government to repeal the Vagrancy Act

Cllr Gant, seconded by Cllr 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:

On 21 June 1824 Parliament introduced "An Act for the punishment of idle and disorderly persons, rogues and vagabonds", commonly known as the Vagrancy Act. It was a response to the increasing number of homeless urban poor following the end of the Napoleonic Wars some nine years earlier, and made it an offence to sleep rough or beg. Campaigners including William Wilberforce condemned the Act from the start because it did not take individual circumstances into account.

But, astonishingly, almost two centuries later, it remains in force. Nor is it just a forgotten relic: in 1989 there were 1,396 convictions under the Act; in 2014 three men were prosecuted under the Act for taking cheese, tomatoes and cake from a bin outside a supermarket in Kentish Town (later dropped by the CPS).

In 2017 the Government announced a review of the law, but made no progress.

In March 2020 Layla Moran MP tabled the Vagrancy (Repeal) Bill. The campaign was joined by many leading organisations in the field, including Shelter, St Mungo's, Crisis, and very many others. However, the Government took no steps to progress the bill.

On 25 February this year the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government Robert Jenrick MP told the House of Commons that the Vagrancy Act should be "consigned to history" and described it as "antiquated" (though did add, worryingly, "We should consider carefully whether better, more modern legislation could be introduced to preserve some aspects of it").

Layla Moran MP welcomed the direction of his comments and pointed out cross-party support for the repeal Bill: "Liberal Democrats and politicians on all sides have been urging him to repeal this law for years and years. So now he has to keep his word and scrap the Act as soon as possible. Our cross-party bill can be adopted at a moment's notice and would receive widespread support."

This Council

- Welcomes the apparent commitment of Robert Jenrick MP to consign the Vagrancy Act to history, and joins the cross-party group of MPs in urging him to expedite the Repeal Bill as soon as possible;
- Re-states its belief that criminalising homelessness is never part of the solution to a complex problem;
- Commits to improving the supply of social-rented homes through house purchase or renovation of underused/unused properties, and to pursue additional funding from MHCLG;
- Explores by way of a report to Cabinet from the Interim Director of Housing the setting up or supporting a Social Enterprise Lettings Agency to link landlords with homeless people, and provide ongoing support to both landlords and tenants;
- Asks the Leader to write to Layla Moran MP as sponsor of the Vagrancy (Repeal) Bill communicating its wholehearted support for the Bill and its speedy passage through Parliament.

d) Support for a new Oxford National Park

Cllr Wolff, seconded by Cllr Simmons proposed the submitted motion as set out in the agenda and briefing note.

Cllr Wolff accepted the amendment proposed by Cllr Hayes as set out in the briefing note.

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

Council resolved to adopt the following motion:

Oxford City Council has committed to increasing biodiversity and is supporting calls to double tree cover across the county, including developing Oxfordshire's first Local Nature Partnership in partnerships with others.

Oxford City Council takes an ambitious Natural Resource Management approach which will outline what we need to do to sustainably enhance biodiversity. It is important that we examine the needs of our varied ecosystems and maintain vitally important habitats and species in our city.

In the recommendations from the [Oxford Citizens Assembly on Climate Change](#), the first by a UK city, enhanced biodiversity was addressed as one of five themes and seen as central to the overall net zero vision of Oxford. It was recognised that tackling climate change and ecological breakdown together was important. Assembly Members were positive about creating more biodiversity and green space. The strong sentiment emerging from citizens was to make our communities among the greenest in the country, which is exciting ambitious and achievable.

The City Council owns and manages over 600 hectares of accessible green space in the city and surrounding area, including a country park, 33 nature areas and over 60 urban parks. The City has 12 Sites of Special Scientific Interest, covering 278 hectares

and including Port Meadow (which has been meadowland for at least 4000 years), Wolvercote Common, Shotover Country Park, and Lye Valley Nature Reserve.

Council notes that Bioabundance, a local community interest company, has put together a plan for a 36sqmile National Park to the northeast of Oxford in response to a call from the Government, in its Environmental Bill and in its 10-point plan; the Green Industrial Revolution, for the creation of new National Parks.

Bioabundance's asking local authorities, the Oxfordshire Local Enterprise Partnership, businesses, charities and environment groups to work together to make this happen for Oxfordshire.

Bioabundance say that the nature recovery zone would halt the catastrophic loss of wildlife and reduce the detrimental effect of large new developments around Oxford. The right kind of trees would be planted to promote carbon capture and natural flood defences.

Bioabundance say that the proposed Park encompasses Otmoor and the ancient royal forests of Bernwood and Stowood. This is a beautiful area with few major roads, between Oxford, Bicester, Kidlington and Wheatley. Over a quarter of a million people live within 10 miles of this area. Easy access would be offered through a new network of sustainable transport links, including foot and cycle paths from train stations and from Park and Ride.

Council asks the Leader to consider a statement of support for the new Oxford National Park after more information can be gathered, and to ask the Interim Executive Director (Communities) to bring a paper to Cabinet to reflect on this information and consider how the Council might get involved further and explore the value of extending the proposed Park to include adjoining land (for example, Shotover).

e) Financial Security

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

f) Proportional Representation to ensure every vote counts

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

g) Adopting an advertising and sponsorship policy which supports responsible consumption

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

h) Against Food Poverty

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

The meeting started at 6.00 pm and ended at 9.30 pm

Lord Mayor

Date: Monday 26 July 2021

Decisions on items of business take effect immediately: Motions may be implemented immediately or may require further budget provision and/or reports to Cabinet before implementation. Details are in the Council's Constitution.

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To: Council

Date: 22 March 2021

Title of Report: Questions on Notice from members of Council and supplementary questions.
Written and verbal 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 was 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 and Housing the Homeless

1. From Cllr Wolff to Cllr Rowley – SWEP access	
Question	Written Response
<p>I welcome the more recent opening of COVID-safe SWEP provision during cold weather and understand that most rough sleepers are allocated a SWEP room in advance.</p> <p>However, would the Portfolio Holder agree that expecting those still requiring a room to turn up at O’Hanlon House between 11pm and midnight is an unreasonable requirement in freezing weather?</p> <p>Will he agree to re-considering this?</p>	<p>We believe the process is the best way to provide covid-safe emergency shelter at short notice. SWEP is basic accommodation to provide people a place to sleep inside during adverse weather conditions. At present, because of the risk of infection we are providing SWEP in individual rooms across a number of sites. Volunteers are used to staff it who may have been working that day.</p> <p>When SWEP is triggered for a night, this is notified to the Council’s partners by 10am that morning. The St Mungo’s Outreach Team then spend the day attempting to make all rough sleepers aware, and allocate them into rooms. This process continues until 5pm when a list of people who are anticipated to access SWEP is produced, called the “Anticipated List”. This list is shared with the Council’s Rough Sleeping Team, and Aspire and Homeless Oxfordshire, who are providing SWEP accommodation this year, along with St Mungo’s. This allows the providers to make arrangements for that evening, and understand any particular needs people may have, or risks posed.</p> <p>The venues are accessible to people on the Anticipated List from 9pm until 11pm. It is only at 11pm when it is known what spaces remain available at the venues. This is why people who were not on the Anticipated List are directed to approach O’Hanlon House at 11pm so they can be directed to a space at one of the venues, or be allocated the room available at O’Hanlon House. In practice, organisations providing SWEP venues try to operate flexibly. If someone turns up at one of the venues between 9pm and 11pm, who is not on the Anticipated List and all spaces haven’t been allocated, they may be accommodated if after assessing any risks, the provider is satisfied that the venue is appropriate for the individual. SWEP accommodation is not accessible after midnight.</p> <p>Pushing the times back would mean having large numbers of people in venues earlier in the evening without any structured activities or recreation opportunities available which could be challenging for SWEP staff to manage.</p> <p>The SWEP policy is reviewed annually in conjunction with partners early in autumn, so access arrangements will be considered again at this point.</p>

Cabinet Member for City Centre, Covered Market and Culture

2. From Cllr Wade to Cllr Clarkson - Investigation into tourist coach management	
Question The 21/22 Budget provided a sum of £20,000 for this project as part of the General Fund Capital programme. Would the Cabinet member confirm the start date for this work and when the final report can be expected?	Written Response The budget was originally drafted with the anticipation that an effective survey and engagement could happen in Summer 2021 with a key element being a survey of coaches. However, due to the additional national lockdown and Government Roadmap we do not think we will be able to gather the information needed to inform an effective strategy. We have not yet fixed a start date for the work but we hope that early work and engagement can happen towards the end of 2021/22 running into 2022/23. In the interim we are exploring temporary solutions with the county council.
Supplementary question There is concern that this summer there will be lots of 'staycations' and lots of UK tourists coming to Oxford, including by coach. I don't think we can delay this work and would like to know that the start date will be soon. If large numbers of UK tourists do arrive soon what will be done to manage coaches and tourists?	Verbal response I have been speaking to Experience Oxfordshire and attended seminars on the likely tourism patterns. The view is that coach travel likely to take a long time to recover due to anxiety about traveling in such close travel proximity to others. The anticipated pattern is UK residents visiting in small family groups. The vast majority of the problems are with coaches bringing large numbers of foreign tourists for just an hour or two. I can look at bringing the investigation forward, but it is likely to be premature as we think it unlikely that this pattern of visitors will pick up until 2022 or 2023

Cabinet Member for Customer Focused Services

3. From Cllr Landell Mills to Cllr Chapman – Parks maintenance contractors	
Question Why won't the City Council allow local Oxfordshire landscape contractors an	Written Response ODS (Oxford Direct Services) are a wholly-owned company of Oxford City Council, and it is therefore entirely consistent that ODS are used first for any works

3. From Cllr Landell Mills to Cllr Chapman – Parks maintenance contractors	
opportunity to undertake some of the City's parks maintenance	<p>for which they have the skills and capacity. It is vital to maintain and grow that in house capacity because that is what gives ODS credibility to undertake external commercial work, which builds non council income and the company dividend.</p> <p>It does use sub-contractors where necessary, but that is only where in house capacity cannot do the job. ODS are by their very nature a 'local' contractor, thereby benefitting Oxford through the circular economy and supporting essential council services through any dividends delivered</p>
Supplementary question	Verbal response
The parks' 'friends of...' groups often raise funds for capital projects to improve the parks. Will they be required to use ODS for the work or can they get competitive quotes from other suppliers?	The work can be done by subcontractors, but the Council must apply a level of supervision to comply with Health and Safety and other regulatory requirements and to secure ongoing maintenance which will be carried out by the Council's contractors. So there will be the core work plus these extra elements and ODS will need to be involved. We will try to keep that to a minimum as far as possible.

Cabinet Member for Finance and Asset Management; statutory Deputy Leader

4. From Cllr Simmons to Cllr Turner – Park and Ride revenues	
Question	Written Response
What does the Portfolio Holder think the impact will be on the City Council's Park and Ride revenues now that the Eynsham Park and Ride has been given the go ahead?	Included within the Medium Term Financial Plan for 2021-22 is around £5.3 million gross income from car parks, including £1.3 million from park and rides and more specifically £390k from Peartree Park and Ride. The impact of the Eynsham Park and Ride on the Peartree facility is likely to depend on a number of factors. These include: the fee for the bus fare, whether customers are required to pay for their parking, the terms and conditions of the site, the frequency of the bus service and the overall journey time. Without knowing these elements, it is difficult to predict how many customers will opt to use this facility. That having been said, the parking service is modelling a number of scenarios and these will be refined once further information is known.

Cabinet Member for Green Transport and Zero Carbon Oxford; non-statutory Deputy Leader

5. From Cllr Wolff to Cllr Hayes – Local Electricity Bill/ community renewable energy

Question	Written Response
<p>Community-scale renewable energy offers huge potential to accelerate the low-carbon transition but in the UK, it is being blocked by wildly disproportionate costs and unfair regulations.</p> <p>Power for People is campaigning for the Local Electricity Bill which, if made law, would empower community energy groups to start up and sell their clean electricity to local people. This would simultaneously strengthen local economies and tackle climate change. Places like Oxford, with strong community engagement around renewable energy, would see enormous benefit.</p> <p>Will the Portfolio Holder write to the Minister of State for Business, Energy and Clean Growth and local MPs expressing support for the Local Electricity Bill and asking them to lobby for the Bill to become law?</p>	<p>I wrote to the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy in July 2020 to confirm the Council’s support for the Bill and to ask for the Government’s backing.</p> <p>In the same month I also wrote to both Oxford MPs and asked for their support for the Bill. Both expressed their support for the principles the Bill was seeking to achieve; however the MP for Oxford East wanted its wording clarified to prioritise <i>renewable</i> generation.</p> <p>Indeed, I have been linking up with the campaign group Power for People and only last week I took part in a roundtable with Anneliese Dodds MP about community energy generation and supply.</p> <p>The Council’s position is also that provision should be made in the Bill to ensure that it only applies to renewable energy and excludes fossil fuel projects.</p> <p>Oxford City Council has a strong track record on renewable energy and supports measures that would make deployment less challenging.</p> <p>The equivalent of over 10% of the Council’s electricity demand is met by rooftop solar installed across the estate, with ambitions to go further in line with the Council’s net zero goals.</p> <p>Oxford City Council has supported a number of community renewable energy projects across the City and was instrumental in setting up the Low Carbon Hub.</p>

6. From Cllr Wolff to Cllr Hayes – Hydrogen fuel

Question	Written Response
<p>The City Council (along with other owners of commercial and residential property) faces an enormous challenge in reducing carbon dioxide</p>	<p>The Council will monitor developments in hydrogen infrastructure and consider its use in the delivery of the Council’s plans to net zero.</p> <p>Small hydrogen fuel cells are being trialled at a</p>

6. From Cllr Wolff to Cllr Hayes – Hydrogen fuel

emissions from the use of natural gas for space heating in its buildings (especially historic and hard-to-treat properties).

Up until the early 1970's hydrogen (in those days produced from fossil fuels) formed 50% of the UK's domestic 'coal gas' supply and there is no technical reason why hydrogen (made from renewable sources which, when burned, create no carbon dioxide) cannot entirely replace natural gas. The EU recently made hydrogen a central part of its Green Deal and the UK Government has recently declared its intention to create a £240m 'Net Zero Hydrogen Fund' and introduce local neighbourhood hydrogen heating trials in 2023.

As far as I can see, hydrogen does not feature in any of the Council's carbon reduction plans.

Can the Portfolio Holder reassure Council that developments in hydrogen infrastructure will be monitored and the use of hydrogen considered in the Council's own plans?

couple of Oxford City Council housing blocks to produce electricity and heat. These use natural gas to create the hydrogen but use the fossil fuel more efficiently and do not create air pollution that arises from combustion of gas.

At the moment it is not viable to start generating our own green hydrogen for use in a specific Council building.

Zero carbon hydrogen can be made from renewable electricity (electrolysis of water). This technology is developing albeit currently with high costs. Hydrogen could be produced at a larger scale from existing industrial processes to split fossil gas, where the carbon produced in the process is captured and stored in geological features such as north sea oil/gas fields. UK trials and studies to date are focussed in the north east of England and Scotland for this reason.

It is likely that hydrogen may be best used, initially, to decarbonise energy intensive industries like cement and steel, or large scale vehicles production where it is very difficult to electrify.

Hydrogen could be an appropriate technology for some larger vehicles, where EV battery technology works less well - such as trucks, RCVs, buses, or constant duty vehicles like ambulances.

Use of the national gas network is a route to wider use of hydrogen with existing infrastructure and appliances. If mixed with fossil methane, up to 20% hydrogen could be introduced. The majority of Oxford's buildings currently fitted with gas boilers would be able to take advantage of any national approaches to increase the amount of hydrogen in the gas blend.

7. From Cllr Simmons to Cllr Hayes – 'net zero carbon'

Question

Following the Portfolio Holders refusal to follow the recommendations from Scrutiny Committee to adopt standard carbon accounting and target-setting practices, and the Portfolio Holder's refusal to subject any carbon claims

Written Response

The City Council has appointed Professor Nick Eyre of the Environmental Change Institute as Scientific Advisor to provide independent, expert advice relating to its goal of tackling the climate emergency, including target setting. This will strengthen the Council's evidence-based decision making and approach to net

7. From Cllr Simmons to Cllr Hayes – ‘net zero carbon’

to independent audit (as we do with our financial accounts), how can members of the public be confident that any claims of ‘net zero carbon’ are legitimate?

zero.
The definition of net zero is an emerging field and the Council will be guided by best practice and Professor Eyre’s scientific advice.

Supplementary question

I am not aware we have agreed a definition of net zero as yet. Have we received any guidance as yet from Prof Eyre?

Verbal response

There’s nothing further to report as yet.

8. From Cllr Simmons to Cllr Hayes – Incineration of recycling

Question

A recent Channel 4 Dispatches Report (broadcast 8th March) uncovered the ‘dirty secret’ that some of the recycling collected by local authorities (as high as 45% in the case of Southend-on-Sea) ends up being incinerated.

Will the Portfolio Holder let members know what the figure is for Oxford?

Written Response

Oxford City Council in partnership with ODS are committed to recycling. We work with recycling and waste outlets that track waste all the way through the process, and we are provided with regular data. Great emphasis is placed on ensuring the quality of the recycling we collect, and the overwhelming majority is reprocessed through the recycling streams.

When the wrong items are put into the mixed recycling collections these are considered contamination. That waste that cannot be recycled is removed and disposed of, usually through incineration. As Councillors will note from the table below, we are doing a lot better than Southend-on-Sea. Our incineration figures are in the low single digits.

We positive encourage citizens through active communication to recycling well, by placing items in clean, loose and squashed.

Oxford City recycling data

	Total Weight	Rejected Weight	% Incinerated
Sep-20	1298.16	25.54	1.97%
Oct-20	1387.16	48.06	3.46%
Nov-20	1168.74	43.18	3.69%
Dec-20	1325.94	25.40	1.92%
Jan-21	1382.30	22.76	1.65%
Feb-21	1050.56	47.18	4.49%
YTD	7612.86	212.12	2.79%

9. From Cllr Simmons to Cllr Hayes – Sustainability Strategy review

Question

The Local Government Association (LGA) and the UK Stakeholders for Sustainable Development recently launched a guide to help councils engage with the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) at a time when many are starting to re-think the role of local government in leading places and empowering people. Councils such as Newcastle, Liverpool and Bristol have already sought to embed the SDGs in their wider sustainability planning with Bristol producing a 'City Playbook' to share their experiences with other local authorities.

Will the Portfolio Holder agree to review the Council's wider sustainability strategy in the light of these new LGA/SDG resources?

<https://local.gov.uk/our-support/climate-change/climate-action-council-plans>

<https://www.bristolonecity.com/sdgs/reports-and-documents/>

Written Response

The Council is in the process of updating its Sustainability Strategy. As part of this process it will consider LGA resources on the Sustainable Development Goals.

10. From Cllr Simmons to Cllr Hayes – Maps of LTNs in Cowley area

Question

Even for a keen campaigner such as myself, I am finding it difficult to source detailed maps of the current and planned low traffic neighbourhoods (LTNs) in Cowley, Church Cowley and Temple Cowley. It is not surprising therefore that when I visited Church Cowley recently (by bike!) and spoke to residents and businesses they had no idea of the preferred car and lorry routes in and out of the area.

It is possible for the City Council to coordinate with the County Council and provide links to suitable maps on the City Council's website?

Written Response

Officers have spoken to the County Council and asked that these maps relating to the County's proposals are more widely publicised on this matter and will arrange for links to be made available on the City Council website.

Supplementary question

Could the information be circulated to councillors as it is difficult to locate anything useful on the websites?

Verbal response

Once the websites are updated we will circulate links to all councillors

11. From Cllr Landell Mills to Cllr Linda Smith – Park maintenance monitoring

Question	Written Response
<p>How is the Cabinet Member monitoring the performance of ODS with Park maintenance?</p>	<p>The Head of Service for Communities sits on the Council's strategic client board for ODS.</p> <p>The Council's Active Communities Manager and Green Space Development Manager meet regularly as a client function with ODS to talk through operational performance.</p> <p>The Council's two Green Space Officers also undertake regular spot checks and patrols of our Parks and Open Spaces.</p> <p>Information gathered through these inspections and those undertaken by ODS is used to inform future maintenance programmes, which are agreed upon with the OCC Green Space Development Manager.</p> <p>In addition to this, the Council, through the Green Space team, undertake an annual external audit of the Council's play areas through ROSPA to ensure that they are safe and appropriate maintenance action undertaken.</p> <p>ODS carry out routine maintenance inspections, including those of compliance such as ROSPA and Legionella and Legionella records are monitored by OCC through a specialist contractor.</p>

12. From Cllr Landell Mills to Cllr Linda Smith – Green Flag scheme

Question	Written Response
<p>Will the City Council be adopting Green Flag in 2021-2022?</p>	<p>The Green Flag scheme is no longer being adopted within 2021-2022. This was identified as a saving for this year onwards in the 2019-20 budget setting process.</p> <p>We are confident that the relevant maintenance standards will continue to be maintained.</p>
Supplementary question	Verbal response
<p>Is there no desire to return to taking part in the Green Flag scheme?</p>	<p>There is no budget for this at the moment. We don't expect this to have any impact on maintenance. We will simply forego having the pleasure of the award.</p>

13. From Cllr Simmons to Cllr Hollingsworth – Seacourt Park and Ride value for money

Question

Does the Portfolio Holder still think that the £6m+ spent extending Seacourt Park and Ride represented good value for the taxpayer money now that the Eynsham P&R has been given the go ahead?

Written Response

There has been no change in the payback period since I last answered a question on this subject, and so there is no change in my opinion on the value for money of the project. The aim of the expansion of the Seacourt Park and Ride, as explained in considerable detail during the feasibility, project planning and planning application stages, is to provide additional capacity for park and ride parking at a site where spaces are at a premium. The main access route to Seacourt is either along the A34 or the A420. The proposed new Eynsham site is along the A40 corridor, is designed to deliver modal shift from car to park and ride along that corridor. Moreover the planning process for the Seacourt extension took into account the Eynsham Park and Ride, which had been proposed originally in the Oxfordshire LTP4 published in 2016. The two schemes are therefore not in competition, but complementary to one another, as they serve different catchment areas.

14. From Cllr Wolff to Cllr Hollingsworth – Live music venues

Question

Although I would not expect the Portfolio Holder to comment on a particular planning application, what is the Council doing more generally to protect the diminishing number of live performance venues in the City Centre (such as The Wheatsheaf) - already hard hit by COVID - from closure?

Written Response

For the avoidance of doubt I want to take this opportunity to make clear that I will not be able to sit on the planning committee if and when this application comes before it. My personal support for the retention of music venues of all types and sizes is long-standing and well known. Indeed I think I feature in the very first issue of Nightshift speaking in support of a planning application to ensure that a music venue could continue to operate at a viable capacity. I have provided advice to a range of individuals and organisations leading the campaign to prevent the Wheatsheaf from closing, and given that and my known position on any planning application to close music venues I think on this issue my ship of pre-determination sailed many years ago! Nonetheless I concur with the councillor's advice that others should not preclude themselves from sitting on the relevant planning committee.

In policy terms, Local Plan Policy V6 encourages the development of new venues for music, and Policy V7 was

14. From Cllr Wolff to Cllr Hollingsworth – Live music venues

written specifically to protect cultural venues from changes of use. The new Local Plan also introduces an 'Agent of Change' principle in policy RE8, meaning that any new development that is sensitive to noise proposed near a noise generating existing facility like a music venue has to take responsibility for noise and vibration attenuation, rather than having that responsibility fall on the venue.

Live music venues have been among the worst hit by Pandemic related restrictions, unable to open for the last year. We have supported them through 'Retail, Hospitality and Leisure Grants' of up to £25k and then following the second and third lockdowns by offering grants for 'National Restrictions Grants' for Closed businesses with both monthly and larger top up payments. Smaller 'Sector' grants for any eligible businesses have been offered by seeking out eligible licensed premises. Officers are also now looking into the use of 'Additional Restrictions Grant', which is more discretionary in nature, to specifically target those businesses worst affected in the next round of grants offered in this fund. Many of the available grant schemes for Closed businesses have a 31st March deadline so we are sending reminders to businesses on this. Culture Fund Grants are also available

15. From Cllr Wolff to Cllr Hollingsworth – Tesco, Cowley Road closure during construction

Question

During the planning application process for 19/01821/FUL (Tesco, Cowley Road) residents were assured that the store would remain open during construction. Paragraph 4.2 of the Planning Statement confirms this intent; "At present, the building is two storeys in height with a Tesco store at ground floor level and associated retail storage and staff facilities at first floor. This proposal will retain the operation of Tesco at ground floor (throughout construction) and construct 4 floors above."

Understandably, residents were therefore concerned to hear – via the press - that the store will now be closing for 30 weeks.

Written Response

Although the Planning Statement said that it was the applicant's intention for the store to remain open during the construction, it is not possible to use the planning process to compel the store to remain open during the construction phase. It may have been the intention at the time of the application for the store to remain open, but changes are often needed once contractors are appointed and methods of construction are reviewed in more detail. The decision to close the store for the duration of the construction period is a matter for the owner of the property to decide themselves. Whether or not the store remained open during the construction period would not have

15. From Cllr Wolff to Cllr Hollingsworth – Tesco, Cowley Road closure during construction	
Were Council officers consulted on this change?	formed a material planning reason against which the application could be approved or refused, or a condition imposed.

16. From Cllr Landell Mills to Cllr Hollingsworth – Castle Mill Stream enforcement	
Question	Written Response
Will the City Council explain why the Council’s planning department is seeking enforcement action against the boaters on Castle Mill Stream, when the City Council could be working with them to develop low cost sustainable moorings - in accordance with City Council policy?	<p>The City Council spent many years establishing that the owners of the land in question are Network Rail, so that long-standing concerns about anti-social behaviour and a number of fatalities associated with the land could be addressed. Now that Network Rail have accepted that they are responsible for the land, they have the responsibility for regularising use of it. As part of that process they need to ensure that any moorings are suitable, and are safe; at present they are not suitable, and are not safe. The Council has provided early advice which has made clear the significant investment in infrastructure and services are required along with the need to meet the relevant planning criteria set out in the Local Plan for the site to be considered suitable for residential mooring.</p> <p>Once and only once that has been done the Council, the landowner, the Canal and Rivers Trust and other interested parties can then begin to consider and potentially develop proposals for permanent moorings, seek permission from the Environment Agency for the necessary works and the funding to pay for it. Any planning application for residential moorings in the city must demonstrate how it will meet criteria such as adequate water supply, power, sewage and rubbish disposal, access for the emergency services and must not harm the character of the area. It must also deliver mooring infrastructure which does not impact on the navigation and minimises the impact on the environment with particular regard to policy H13 in the Oxford local plan. Early discussions suggest that this site should be able to provide moorings, but that investment and careful work with the Environment Agency will be required.</p>

17. From Cllr Landell Mills to Cllr Hollingsworth – Oxpens Supplementary Planning Document	
Question	Written Response

17. From Cllr Landell Mills to Cllr Hollingsworth – Oxpens Supplementary Planning Document

Given the major changes proposed for the west of the City will the City Council be preparing a new Oxpens Master Plan Supplementary Planning Document (SPD) to help guide development?

Or will the design of this part of the city be left to Nuffield College and consultants to decide?

The Oxpens site is owned by Oxford West End Developments (OxWED), which is in turn jointly and equally owned by the City Council and Nuffield College. OxWED is responsible for designing the scheme in line with the wishes of the shareholders as expressed through shareholder meetings and the Directors appointed by the two shareholders to the company's Board. Numerous reports to the Council over a prolonged period have discussed this, so I am slightly at a loss to understand how the councillor thinks otherwise.

As reported to Scrutiny Committee on 6th July 2020 and to Cabinet on 15th July 2020 the Local Development Scheme (2020-2025) set out that the Council is developing a new SPD for the broader West End Area. The SPD will contain guidance for developers on matters such as urban design, transport and movement, and public realm. At the start of March we appointed a consultancy team lead by Levitt Bernstein to support the policy team in preparing this document. They will bring urban design and viability skills to the project, and will develop our proposals in consultation with landowners, stakeholders and local communities.

The SPD will therefore take a proactive role in coordinating development across the West End, and set high standards for achieving quality and inclusivity in the area.

18. From Cllr Wade to Cllr Hollingsworth – Land at Meadow Lane, Iffley (1)

Question

Could the Cabinet member confirm (a) the estimated net profit from sales of homes in this proposed development, and (b) the estimated annual net income from rental of market rent/affordable homes retained by OCHL*?

*Oxford City Housing Ltd

Written Response

The information sought in question (a) is confidential – exempt under paragraph 3 of schedule 12 as OCHL is a separate legal entity and therefore cannot be answered here. The OCHL Business Plan contains relevant information and the councillor can pursue the information in the confidential session of an appropriate forum, such as the Companies Scrutiny Panel.

None of the housing is proposed to be retained by OCHL, with the affordable housing being transferred to the HRA. As the precise mixture of sizes and types of properties has not yet been fixed, it is not possible to give a final figure for the annual rent level from the affordable homes. The annual rental income for each property type is determined by the government's

18.From Cllr Wade to Cllr Hollingsworth – Land at Meadow Lane, Iffley (1)	
	formula for social rent, as with all other new HRA properties.
Supplementary question What was the cost of purchasing the two parcels of land (the meadow land and the memorial field next to it)? The information is not yet on the Donnington Hospital Trust’s website	Verbal response The information about the purchase price remains confidential until the Trust publishes this.

19.From Cllr Wade to Cllr Hollingsworth – Land at Meadow Lane, Iffley (2)	
Question Could the Cabinet member confirm the number of homes which would be provided for social rent, the number of bedrooms in these homes and the estimated annual income from rental?	Written Response The precise number of homes and mix of accommodation sizes has yet to be determined. Local Plan policy SP42 requires a minimum of 29 homes on the site, and Local Plan policy requires that at least 40% of the total be social housing and a further 10% intermediate affordable housing. OCHL are currently in the process of procuring their contractor and design consultants for the scheme and once selected and approved by their Board they will begin design work. The annual rental income for each property type is determined by the government’s formula for social rent, as with all other new HRA properties.

20.From Cllr Wolff to Cllr Hollingsworth – Call-in process	
Question Most Councillors respect the quasi-judicial nature of the planning process and the need to act in a non-partisan manner; ensuring that this is both the public perception and the reality. Would the Portfolio Holder therefore not agree that there should be a change in practice around call-ins? Currently, any call-in submitted is <u>not</u> circulated by officers to all Councillors (as it used to be) with the consequence that most call-ins tend to be selectively circulated within party groups.	Written Response I’m not clear what the question is referring to. When a councillor asks for a call-in under paragraph 17.4 of the Constitution they can copy whichever other members of council they chose to in order to try to get support for that call-in. Officers have no role in circulating call-in requests, and nor should they. It is up to individual councillors to decide from whom they should seek support for a call in.

20. From Cllr Wolff to Cllr Hollingsworth – Call-in process

Supplementary question

Given that planning is non-party political does the Cabinet Member regret the lack of collegiality in the current rather more insular way of working where call in requests are not circulated widely?

Verbal response

It is up to individual councillors to decide who they wish to ask to support a call in and for me, and certainly not for officers, to decide how best to do that.

Cabinet Member for a Safer, Healthy Oxford

21. From Cllr Wolff to Cllr Upton – ‘Active Travel in the City’ group

Question

I have been told that a new group; ‘Active Travel in the City’, has been set up by, or with the active involvement of, the Portfolio Holder.

The City is already blessed with independent groups such as the Coalition for Healthy Streets and Active Travel (with 10 members including Oxfordshire Liveable Streets, Oxford Pedestrians’ Association, Cyclox, Oxfordshire Cycling Network), as well as numerous active local cycling groups, groups formed around the Low Traffic Neighbourhood proposals, and local representation from national bodies such as Sustrans and Cycling UK. In addition, the City Council has its own Cycling Forum which has been very successful in pulling together a wide array of organisations including bike shops, university sustainable transport officers, GWR, cycle delivery companies, schools, Councillors and highways officers and so on (in addition to the other organisations already mentioned).

The Cycling Forum, of which I am a founder member, has not met since before the first lockdown despite a lot of recent activity around sustainable travel (due in part to the many Government and County funded transport schemes such as

Written Response

The “Active Travel in the City” group exists, but it is not a new group. It was created several years ago in order for organisations across the city to share information about Active Travel initiatives.

The group was always focused on the ‘activation’ side of transport schemes, so the supporting measures rather than the infrastructure changes. Pre-COVID it was an informal information-sharing setting. But the County’s Local Cycling and Walking Activation Plan (LCWAP) which was drawn up in 2020 in order to support the Local Cycling and Walking Infrastructure Plan created a new focus for its activities.

Since last year the group has been re-purposed around the LCWAP and now meets when there is a particular opportunity to discuss ideas and proposals for furthering the objectives of the LCWAP. I had not attended meetings until I was invited to Chair the group a couple of months ago, with Josh Lenthall from Active Oxfordshire as Deputy Chair.

Cllr Wolff is right that a meeting of the Cycling Forum is overdue – I have been reluctant to organise one as the informal networking, which was such an important

21. From Cllr Wolff to Cllr Upton – ‘Active Travel in the City’ group	
<p>the LTNs).</p> <p>Could the Portfolio Holder confirm the existence of this new group, describe its status, purpose, membership and the reasons why it was felt necessary to further expand the number of ‘active travel’ groups?</p>	<p>part of its raison d’etre, is just not possible with virtual meetings. However, I hope Cllr Wolff will join me in working up an agenda for a meeting in April.</p>
<p>Supplementary question</p> <p>Thank you for the reply: the plethora of cycling organisations in the city shows the need for the council to have a cycling champion.</p> <p>What does the ‘active travel in the city group’ do: does it have any powers; a work plan, a constitution; what is the membership?</p> <p>What is an activation plan and in what way does it support the LCWAP</p>	<p>Verbal response</p> <p>LCWAP is an action plan complementing the LCWIP (the Local Cycling and Walking infrastructure plan). This is looking at barriers to cycling and walking and is about why people aren’t using the existing infrastructure. Actions then address these barriers: eg offering cycling lessons, bikes and helmets for children</p> <p>The group helps get people involved in this action plan and in other cycling and walking activities around the city.</p> <p>There is no official constitution: the group meets when something to discuss and action. I haven’t been involved for long, but am happy to discuss with you outside meeting.</p>

Cabinet Member for Supporting Local Communities

22. From Cllr Landell Mills to Cllr Tidball – Council Hub help for boating community (1)	
<p>Question</p> <p>Does the Council Hub help extend to the boating community - and include help with fuel for boaters living in poverty?</p>	<p>Written Response</p> <p>The Locality hub team have delivered information leaflets to the boaters and also shared communications using messaging groups such as WhatsApp. The Central hub has worked with the Canal and River Trust and the County Council to ensure signage in place at the main entry points to the waterways, reminding people to be mindful of boating residents and to maintain social distancing.</p> <p>Support funds such as the Covid Winter Support</p>

22. From Cllr Landell Mills to Cllr Tidball – Council Hub help for boating community (1)	
	Grant (that includes fuel) have also been promoted to the boating community.
Supplementary question Some members of the boating community have been hard hit by the economic impact of the pandemic, with little support How much uptake has there been of the fuel support grant, given that many boats use coal as fuel.	Verbal response I don't have the figures to hand. There are a number of schemes offering support, and I would urge any boaters in hardship to contact the council either by phoning the main number or via the website to ask about assistance

23. From Cllr Landell Mills to Cllr Tidball – Council Hub help for boating community (2)	
Question What outreach work has the City Hub and North Hub done to connect with hard to reach people in the boating community?	Written Response I refer to the answer to the previous question.

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

24. From Cllr Wolff to Cllr Brown - Council-administered COVID business support	
Question Can the Portfolio Holder confirm whether or not The Wheatsheaf applied for and/or received one of the Council-administered COVID business support grants or loans?	Written Response I cannot answer this. Information about business grants applied for and awarded is not in the public domain, and is considered exempt (i.e. not to be disclosed in public) as it relates to the business affairs of another under para 3 of schedule 12 of the Local Government Act 1972.

25. From Cllr Simmons to Cllr Brown – Standards complaint

25. From Cllr Simmons to Cllr Brown – Standards complaint

<p>Question</p> <p>I understand that a Standards Board complaint has recently been submitted following a Facebook post by a member of this Council.</p> <p>Can the Leader please inform Council of the timeline for considering this complaint?</p>	<p>Written Response</p> <p>The procedures for dealing with Code of Conduct complaints are set out in the Councillors' conduct pages of the Council's website. Specifically the <i>Procedure for handling complaints against a councillor - indicative timescales for dealing with the different stages of a complaint</i> are set out at paragraph 9 of that document.</p> <p>The Monitoring Officer aims to complete the Assessment stage of any complaint within 25 working days of receipt of that complaint. If the complaint proceeds to the Investigation stage it may then take several weeks or months to conclude.</p>
<p>Supplementary question</p> <p>This is a rather unusual situation for election period. I would want any councillor in this position to be given a fair hearing and not left in limbo.</p> <p>Are there any changes during the purdah/ election period?</p>	<p>Verbal response</p> <p>The procedures for Code of Conduct complaints are set out in the Council's Constitution and are for the Monitoring Officer to interpret and apply.</p>

26. From Cllr Gant to Cllr Brown - Launch of the Localis report

<p>Question</p> <p>Members of this council were made aware of the launch event of the Localis paper on future governance of our city on 9 March, eight days before the event. At the time, and at the time of writing, neither the report nor the brief given to Localis were available to members. The list of speakers included only one elected representative, the leader of this council, with regional and other bodies represented by officials.</p> <p>Does the Leader agree with me that a discussion of crucial issues of this kind would have been more valuable if it had been more broadly based?</p>	<p>Written Response</p> <p>The event on the 17th March is a Localis event, not organised by the city council, though we have helped publicise it with local stakeholders.</p> <p>It is entirely usual practice for the relevant cabinet member (in this case me) to be invited to speak at events organised by third parties, and perfectly within our remit as Cabinet members to represent the views of the council on matters relevant to the city. The event is not restricted and members are able to attend and contribute to the debate.</p> <p>As the Council was informed in October 2020, the city council sponsored this piece of independent research and analysis work to look at the case for place-led growth and renewal around Oxford to inform our response to the government's expected Devolution White Paper, the emerging City Economic Strategy, our work with Oxfordshire LEP and our position in the Oxford-Cambridge Arc. Again it is entirely within the remit of cabinet</p>
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26. From Cllr Gant to Cllr Brown - Launch of the Localis report	
Does she also recognise that describing the report as a document of Oxford City Council is misleading as neither the commission, nor the brief, nor the report have been anywhere near the majority of members of this council until a few days before the launch?	<p>members or officers within their delegated authority to commission pieces of work to inform work in their areas of responsibility.</p> <p>I agree it would be entirely misleading to describe this report as a document of the City Council, because it is not, it is a Localis document. Fortunately it is not being described that way, other than by implication in this question.</p> <p>I agree that a broad based discussion of these issues for our city will be valuable and is exactly what the report and the launch are designed to achieve.</p>
<p>Supplementary question</p> <p>This document, a 'horizon scanning' report, is a report relating to this city and this council funded its production. Localis' 5 board members are all current or former tory council leaders.</p> <p>Was this a good use of funds?</p>	<p>Verbal response</p> <p>The report was an excellent use of funds: across spectrum it is a good report making the case for Oxford and investment in the city. Probably government will be more receptive to this case if made by their political colleagues. The report was well written and well received by civil servants and our partners organisations in the city, and should help to attract funding, and to not lose our voice in government circles</p>

27. From Cllr Gant to Cllr Brown – Cabinet’s policy position	
<p>Question</p> <p>In a recent document arising from the recommendations of the excellent Scrutiny Review Group report on Climate Change, Cllr Hayes committed this council to supporting “County Council applications for Controlled Parking Zones”. However, a few days earlier, Cllr Turner opposed the introduction of a CPZ in his ward. This is a rather stark public difference of opinion between two senior Cabinet members (indeed, the two deputy leaders) on a key issue.</p> <p>Which of them speaks for the Cabinet?</p>	<p>Written Response</p> <p>The Cabinet and indeed this council have committed to support the introduction of Controlled Parking Zones where there is public support following consultation. We are funding them where the county decide after consultation to go ahead. That does not of course preclude local councillors representing the views of their residents if they do NOT currently want a CPZ. They are therefore both right as always.</p>
<p>Supplementary question</p> <p>What has emerged from this seems to be a policy that says ‘where communities want it’ which risks shifting the problems of traffic and parking to less vociferous</p>	<p>Verbal response</p> <p>I and Cllr Hayes as our Cabinet Member for transport have made representations to the County Council many times on the need for consultation and a holistic</p>

27. From Cllr Gant to Cllr Brown – Cabinet’s policy position

wards. Would the leader agree we need a holistic strategic plan for traffic and transport management across the city backed up through genuine deep consultation?

approach.

It is important that we do consult on CPZs: full consultation, listening and working with communities and the County Council is the right route to take to get the best strategic transport and parking plan for the city.

28. From Cllr Gant to Cllr Brown – Oxford-Cambridge Arc governance

Question

The Leader recently warmly welcomed the government’s new paper on its vision for the governance of the Oxford-Cambridge Arc. Recognising that the Leader speaks as a member of the Growth Board and other bodies, would she however agree with me that the document in fact contains element about which we should be extremely concerned and watchful, including the suggestion of an arc-wide planning system, and the creation of a “Growth Body” with no indication of its membership or powers?

Does she share my concern that these initiatives potentially feed into emerging narrative of the centralising instincts of this government, already made plain through its actions over the SODC Local Plan, recent Planning White Paper, changes to Permitted Development rights and much else?

Will she join me in insisting that any such body, while of course having to find an effective model of governance over such a wide and disparate area, must have its decision-making functions rooted in locally elected representatives?

Written Response

I entirely agree that we need to engage with discussions about the proposed Spatial Framework and governance body for the Arc to inform government’s thinking.

If Cllr Gant has been following what I have said, then he will know that I have been consistently arguing for the last few years that the Arc needs a proper voice for cities and that it is disgraceful that the two cities after which the Arc is named, have no representation.

I was disappointed therefore that the Liberal Democrat leaders of neighbouring councils aligned with the local Conservative leaders in denying the City a space on the Arc Executive and I hope that they will not do the same again on any new body.

I and other city leaders in the Arc are continuing to argue the case for a voice for cities who have distinct and different needs and issues.

Supplementary question

Specifically, on the about new emerging Arc Growth Body, does the Leader agree on the desirability of local democratic accountability being central to this body?

Verbal response

Yes – I have consistently made the case for proper representation for this city at all levels across governance of the Arc but haven’t had support from neighbouring local authority leaders of other political persuasions.

29. From Cllr Simmons to Cllr Brown – NHS pay award**Question**

Will the Leader join me in condemning the Government for their derisory pay offer to NHS staff and other public sector workers who have worked tirelessly during the pandemic?

Will she be writing to the Prime Minister expressing this view?

Written Response

I think all of us will be disappointed that the government has utterly failed to recognise the contribution that public sector workers have made. The government promised that local government would be compensated for the costs of COVID and that has not been the case. The Labour Party and our excellent local MP, Shadow Chancellor Anneliese Dodds, have led the campaign to condemn the government's contempt for NHS staff and to challenge them over their massive underfunding of local government.

30. From Cllr Gant to Cllr Brown – Recognition for the Oxford Vaccine team**Question**

Would the Leader agree with me that the Oxford Vaccine team led by Professor Sarah Gilbert and Professor Andrew Pollard has brought incalculable benefits to public health, our economy, and the reputation of our city through their professionalism, skill and sheer hard work?

Does she agree with me that this Council should commit to honouring their work at the earliest suitable opportunity in the most appropriate way, potentially including Freedom of the City, and agree to form a cross-party group to consider options?

Written Response

I have nothing but admiration for the work of the Oxford Vaccine team and huge pride in their work. I have been privileged and delighted in my professional life to work alongside Professor Andrew Pollard and the work that they have been responsible for is currently transforming our ability to lead our lives.

The city will want to recognise the work done by the Oxford Vaccine Group and Oxford Biomedica amongst other major local contributors to the roadmap out of the pandemic.

However, we also need to be cognisant of other aspects of the pandemic too. When the time comes, we will want to commemorate those who we lost, thank ALL of those who have worked to keep us safe from care workers to refuse collectors as well as our medical staff.

We are not out of the pandemic yet and whilst I have started conversations about how we commemorate and celebrate when we are able to do so - that time is not now. We will make sure that there is engagement with opposition councillors on plans as they develop.

31. From Cllr Simmons to Cllr Brown – International Women's Day**Question**

Will the Leader join me in belatedly

Written Response

Clearly the councillor hasn't listened to the

31. From Cllr Simmons to Cllr Brown – International Women’s Day

congratulating those current and former Oxford residents honoured in the media on International Women’s Day including Sarah Gilbert (Oxford Vaccine Group), Kate Raworth (green economist), Malala Yousafzai (young women’s rights campaigner) and Emma Watson (actress, UN Goodwill Ambassador and campaigner for gender equality)?

The Leader may wish to acknowledge others that she is aware of.

video that I put out on International Women’s Day. One of the areas that it covered was women’s experience of ‘mansplaining’.

The women that Cllr Simmons mention are all outstanding contributors in their field and are rightly recognised for it. I would also like to celebrate the huge contribution that all women make every day.

My short video if Cllr Simmons cares to watch it recognised that women in leadership and in all aspects of life often have to work twice as hard to be heard, which makes their success even more creditworthy.

To: Council

Date: 22 March 2021

Title of Report: Public addresses and questions taken in Part 2 of the agenda – as submitted by the speakers and with written responses from Cabinet Members

Introduction

1. In this section of the meeting, Council hears addresses and questions from members of the public about motions on Part 3 of the agenda or that do not relate directly to matters for decision.
2. 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.
3. 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.
4. 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.

1. Address by Kaddy Beck – The ‘Save Bertie’ Campaign
2. Address by Oliver de Soissons – Oxford National Park (Motion d on the agenda)
3. Address by Micaela Tuckwell – Representing: Save The Sheaf campaign organisers
4. Address by Fiona Steel – Representing: Good Food Oxford – on developing a Food Strategy (supporting Motions a and h on the agenda)

1. Address by Kaddy Beck – The ‘Save Bertie’ Campaign

There are two sites. Bertie Park is joined corner-to-corner with a second site which is currently a wasteland. The decision to build on Bertie was made because it was argued that these were one and the same, and so facilities would simply be re-provided on site. But the wasteland is not the same site. It is not a thoroughfare and it has very poor natural surveillance. Current plans are therefore to retain the playground within its current site, but to shrink it to 1/3 of its size. This will reduce to a vestige the area of

grass for supervised free play. The council aims to compensate by clearing part of the wasteland and turning the rest into a nature trail. None of this would be visible to parents supervising their children in Bertie Park.

Recreation grounds like Bertie are protected. The "equivalent reinstatement test" means that any replacement should be equal or better. This is not just council policy; it is a legal requirement. Improving the wasteland so it is somewhere for people to walk with their families is not equivalent to reinstatement. Green spaces for people to walk are not considered to be recreational spaces. Across Oxford, the council is building on green spaces precisely because they don't have either the same function or level of protection as recreational space.

We are currently unsure of proposals because the council is planning to consult us only once technical problems have been solved. But we have the huge advantage that we talk to people about Bertie. We know that a MUGA of its current dimensions with an all-weather surface is totally non-negotiable.

Deshaun Jack, who is 20, says "Bertie park is somewhere I often go with my friends to relax and express myself and stay out of trouble, because without the park there's not really much to do and it's a part of me as I was raised there".

Although we don't know the specifications of the MUGA, but we can surmise that the MUGA and the playground will inevitably be closer to the houses or flats being built. My neighbour asked about the noise problem. When I researched, I found "The closer MUGAs are to dwellings, the higher the likelihood of complaints. Fields in Trust's document "Planning and Design for Outdoor Sport and Play" recommend that MUGAs are located a minimum of 30m from the nearest residential property wherever possible. (If this is not possible), physical mitigation and careful management are key to ensuring acceptable noise levels are achieved". Building a 3m high wall was suggested! Bertie Park should be a place where our young people feel free to let go. Oxford is home to incredible privilege. The area served by Bertie Park is not. It acts as a lifeline to young people and their families.

The Oxford local Plan is based on the premise that Oxford will continue to grow. If this happens, what is the council going to do once it has built on all of its green spaces and sold all of its available land? The Oxford Mail's recent editorial said: At some point, we must draw a line and say if we want this to be a great place for people to live, then we also have to protect the things that make it great.

Oxford City Council aims to provide large quantities of affordable housing, but the SHMA it commissioned says that 40% of Oxford's population do not earn enough to buy "affordable housing". The people I talk to can see that building affordable housing is not solving the problem.

Finally. Is Oxford city council really so desperate for land that it needs to build on its playgrounds? People I talk to are not totally convinced that we have reached that stage, and suggest other brownfield sites. IF Oxford really does have to build on our playground, when should it say enough is enough? Have we reached our Amsterdam moment? Should Oxford be trying to work out how it can sustainably live within its environmental limits at the same time as ensuring that those least advantaged are able to aspire to a decent standard of living? Amsterdam is in a similar position to Oxford. Its development strategies are based on doughnut economics which aims to do just this. The Doughnut Economics model, was developed by Oxford economist and resident Kate Raworth, and is now being used by Amsterdam.

We would therefore ask that Oxford City Council

- Make sure that our young people have a safe place to play.
- Stop pitting our young people and those on the housing list against each other.
- Adopt a strategy that aims to address the high cost of housing for all who struggle to pay rent or mortgages in Oxford.
- Allow our community the opportunity to genuinely participate in a public debate of the issues.

* <https://www.cassallen.co.uk/5-steps-to-minimise-noise-from-multi-use-games-areas-muga>

Response

From the Cabinet Member, Cllr Hollingsworth

As the address rightly points out, Oxford is one of the least affordable cities for housing in this country, and our young people face acute difficulty in finding a home they can afford in the city that they grew up in. It's my view and the view of this Council that we – the current generation fortunate enough to live in this wonderful city – to do our best to make sure that our children both have places to play in their childhood AND the hope of being able to live in Oxford when they grow up and want to have children of their own. Our responsibilities do not end with the first of those.

It's unfortunate that the address suggests that 'affordable housing' is just the Government definition of a small discount from the purchase price. That is not what is proposed here, nor anywhere else in Oxford: our Local Plan policies require that at least 40% of any site should be for social housing – Council houses in other words – and a further 10% should be other forms of intermediate tenures like shared ownership or housing co-operatives. The current proposal for this site is that it will have 12 new Council homes for rent, a further 12 homes for discounted rent, and 6 homes for shared ownership, all of which would make a contribution to meeting the huge need for genuinely affordable housing for local people. I don't see how not building any affordable homes at all does anything but make the existing problem worse.

The Local Plan 2036 has a housing need that is based entirely on the need for more affordable housing for our current and future populations. We have worked with our neighbouring authorities to find sites inside the city and outside to meet that need, using criteria that were common to all. I do not think it would be fair, reasonable or workable to ask other councils in Oxfordshire to allocate sites for housing to meet the needs of Oxford, and to not do the same ourselves.

This scheme, on a site allocated for development not just in the current Local Plan but the previous one as well, makes a small but important contribution to providing genuinely affordable homes for local people. The current design retains both play areas on the main site, and creates a new nature reserve for local people on the currently inaccessible site B. That seems to strike a good balance between the demands of past, current and future generations.

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2. Address by Oliver de Soissons – Oxford National Park (Motion d on the agenda)

Dear Councillors,

Thank you for this opportunity to talk about the motion and why you should vote for it. It is vital to have the support of Oxford City Council and its strategic partnerships to get this National Park project off the ground. The park will benefit the health and wellbeing of people in Oxford. During Lockdown we have all experienced the importance of the countryside on our doorstep which we have taken for granted. It will work particularly well for people who don't have cars because the plan provides for sustainable transport access to get to the park and improved cycle routes and pedestrian paths through the land.

And these sustainable transport measures have an added benefit, you can reach the proposed Park without spending part of the day in the car adding to carbon emissions as you might if you were driving for a day out in the Chilterns or Cotswold. The increase in natural habitats within the park will lock up large amounts of atmospheric carbon.

There is long term benefit to the economy because a national park so close to the city with good sustainable transport links enhances Oxford as a desirable place to live and work.

I originally submitted my ideas about a national park for the Oxfordshire 2050 plan in 2019 and it is a sign of the times that we have all been through that people across Oxfordshire have responded so positively to the proposal. But what is really exciting is that the vision for a National Park can be realised within the framework of government policies for designated national landscapes and nature improvement area. It will also qualify for funding through transport and development plans. A national park can be fully integrated into the Regional Spatial Strategy to implement the Ox-Cam Arc and there is an even greater need for it if Oxfordshire's population were to double in line with ARC objectives.

So to help people who live here now and in the future, I ask you to vote for this motion. The new national park is a truly positive initiative that will benefit people and nature and help to tackle climate change. Thank you for listening.

Response

From the Cabinet Member, Cllr Hollingsworth

I am pleased to offer Council's support for exploring the potential for further protection and enhancement of the ancient and important landscapes of Otmoor and Bernwood, and I hope Shotover as well. These are areas which are rich in biodiversity, landscape character and are truly valued by Oxford's residents.

Of course a National Park is one of a range of designations that can be used to offer further protection and special status and as the case of the South Downs shows, something that can take decades to bring about. In the meantime the Oxfordshire 2050 Plan offers a great opportunity to look at these special areas and plan for their future which is overdue, and I look forward to putting the case to do just that.

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3. Address by Micaela Tuckwell – Representing: Save The Sheaf campaign organisers

Hello. My name is Micaela Tuckwell, and I am addressing you today on behalf of the organisers of the “Save the Wheatsheaf” campaign.

Our main goal is to raise awareness about the recent planning application to turn the established live music and comedy venue above The Wheatsheaf pub (off of the High Street) into student flats.

Whilst it is not appropriate in this meeting to discuss the details of the planning application that has been called-in to committee (we intend to speak at the meeting when this application is heard), I want to use this opportunity to talk more generally about local support for The Wheatsheaf and the local music scene.

The Wheatsheaf has been a vibrant venue and community arts hub for over 20 years and as the only purpose-built small gig venue left in the city, the strength of feeling locally about its possible loss is clear. In just under 2 weeks:

Over **1,823** people have signed the Save the Sheaf petition

2,572 people have joined the Save the Sheaf Facebook group

1,554 people have lodged objections to the planning application

It is no understatement that **Oxford is at a crisis point in terms of the erosion of the critical infrastructure that our city’s music scene needs for it to survive.**

In the next few minutes, I will talk about (1) the importance of small music venues, (2) The Wheatsheaf and the cultural and economic value it brings to the city, (3) how you can support us.

THE IMPORTANCE OF SMALL MUSIC VENUES

It cannot be understated how vital small music venues are for a city’s music scene to exist. Without small music venues homegrown talent doesn’t have a home to connect with audiences, develop performance skills and grow.

Uniquely they provide affordable spaces, essential equipment and support from professional sound engineers. They are the essential first-rung on the ladder for local amateur artists, without which local arena-filling acts like Radiohead, Foals and Supergrass would not have existed.

Without small music venues a city loses one of the few truly affordable and diverse entertainment options.

It is well known that the biggest barrier to participation in culture is cost and at an average entrance fee of £5-6, small music venues offer one of the most affordable entertainment options. They are also unique in terms of being safe, community spaces for people of all ages to meet people with shared interests, establish friendships and build communities. The loss in terms of health and well-being for residents would be irrefutable.

Without small music venues a city loses all of the benefits to its economy, tourism, and liveability that a thriving music scene brings.

Small music venues attract footfall from neighbouring localities and beyond into the city, with knock on benefits to local pubs and restaurants, and support jobs for hundreds of freelance musicians, promoters and events professionals each year.

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Over the last 10 years, Oxford has lost 7 small music venues including more recently The Cellar, Deaf and Hard of Hearing Centre. All of which had the infrastructure and were the right size to put on quality, regular and affordable gigs. We now only have one small music venue left in Oxford.

THE WHEATSHEAF

The Wheatsheaf has been running a live music and comedy venue for over **20** years.

Unlike any other venue in Oxford, The Wheatsheaf has a history of embracing a very broad scope of performance, from folk and jazz to rock and metal to electronica and hip hop, via all points in between, plus a deep link with the University of Oxford's comedy societies. No single venue in Oxford works with such a variety of artists.

The best way of sharing with you the value and impact that The Wheatsheaf brings to the city is by looking at the numbers from just one year... In 2019:

- Over **11,000** people came to a live music or comedy show at The Wheatsheaf.
- **475** bands plus **94** comedy acts performed across **281** shows produced by 15 regular, local promoters in partnership with venue staff.
- The Wheatsheaf provided - often paid - opportunities for just over **2,000** amateur and semi-professional, largely local, artists to perform and created regular work for **5** local freelance sound engineers as well as pub bar staff.

Audience members generally spend **2-3** hours at a show, spending an average of **£12** (£5 on the entrance fee and £7 on refreshments and merchandise). The majority of the money spent at Wheatsheaf shows goes to Oxford suppliers (the freelance musicians, promoters, technical staff and pub).

Total economic impact of The Wheatsheaf running a live music and comedy venue in 2019 was: £132,000.

ACTIONS

Without your help The Wheatsheaf will be lost and the 1,000s of Oxford residents, workers and small businesses that rely on it for income, entertainment and well-being will be left without a venue.

I am appealing to you today for your support to save The Wheatsheaf, but also, to help us create and drive a long-term strategy for the protection and creation of Oxford's small music venues.

We call on all councillors to pledge support for,

1. The development of a Thriving Communities strategy for the arts in Oxford to include music venues
2. To ask all Councillors to support the designation of The Wheatsheaf as an Asset of Community Value, and to seek other music venues to be added to the register
3. At the earliest opportunity, to strengthen the local plan to additionally protect music venues and facilitate the replacement of lost venues
4. To ask all Councillors to support the designation of The Wheatsheaf as a locally listed heritage asset, and to seek other music venues to be added to the register

Response

From the Cabinet Member, Cllr Clarkson,

I am not in a position to comment on points 2-4 in light of the current live planning application. However, given the private ownership of The Wheatsheaf, and irrespective of the outcome of the planning process, there is nothing the council can do to stop a private business closing a function room such as this.

Much research has shown that having a thriving grass roots arts scene is one of the key factors in making small cities like ours attractive and successful. Small music venues are a springboard for up and coming talent and have significant social and environmental as well as economic impact. They also offer inclusive space for sharing diverse cultural expression and interaction and help people to feel a sense of pride and belonging in their city. Delivery of the Arts Council Let's Create Strategy 2020-2030 will require a range of spaces to be available to support the creative journey for everyone in the city. The decline in venues in Oxford over recent years is very concerning.

The current Local Plan already has strong measures to prevent the loss of cultural assets such as music and arts venues through conversion to other uses: policy V7 – “The City Council will seek to protect and retain existing cultural and community facilities. Planning permission will not be granted for development that results in the loss of such facilities unless new or improved facilities can be provided at a location equally or more accessible by walking, cycling and public transport.” Equally the Local Plan encourages the creation of new cultural facilities: policy V6 – “Planning permission will be granted for proposals which add to the cultural and social scene of the city within the city and district centres provided the use is appropriate to the scale and function of the centre.” It also prevents threats to music and arts venues by including the ‘Agent of Change’ principle, making any neighbouring development responsible for the necessary soundproofing and vibration reduction works, not a pre-existing music venue. The Local Plan is therefore already strong enough in terms of a planning policy, and does not need revision.

But the issue is that planning policies can only prevent an unacceptable change of use. They cannot compel a building owner to keep their building open, or for a landlord to let their building to a particular tenant. As with the Cellar, where the Local Plan policies successfully prevented the conversion of the space to retail in planning terms, it was the failure of the landlord to agree a lease on terms acceptable to the tenant that led to the closure of the venue.

Officers can advise on ACV status, but essentially it provides a “right to bid” if the property is put for sale, and while it can be a material consideration it won't offer any more protection than the existing Local Plan policy.

The Thriving Communities Strategy is currently in the process of being drafted. I strongly support the inclusion of grass-root music/performance spaces within the strategy and, in particular, Oxford City Council reviewing options to increase available space for this. This may be as part of our property portfolio or in partnership with those who manage other suitable assets in the city.

4. Address by Fiona Steel – Representing: Good Food Oxford – on developing a Food Strategy (supporting Motions a and h on the agenda)

By way of introduction I am Fiona Steel, and I work for Good Food Oxford, the sustainable food network for Oxfordshire. Good Food Oxford has worked in Oxford City since 2014 to support and promote a local food system that is Good for People, Good for the Planet and Good for Communities. Since the start of COVID-19 our work on Food Poverty has become a major focus and we have worked with the council and over 40 community groups such as Oxford Mutual Aid, Oxford Community Action, OX4 Free Food Crew and the Community Larders whose response to the pandemic has provided essential food support to thousands in need.

I would like to thank the Council for showing leadership in considering a Food Strategy, encompassing the key area of food poverty, for which I know there is cross-party support. Naturally in times of crisis putting food on people's plates is a priority but food alone does not solve food poverty. A food strategy will go beyond the emergency response and look at ways to build resilience into our communities, and ultimately to prevent food poverty arising. Work to address the underlying causes of food poverty is already underway in the City - a Food Strategy will ensure this is fully aligned with and will further enhance the already excellent work done by the Council on the Living Wage, Net Zero, Community Wealth Building, and Public Health agendas.

Talking about strategies can sometimes lose sight of the individuals they are trying to benefit, so before going any further I would like to share the story of some of our citizens.

Isobel (not her real name) had not previously accessed emergency food provision, prior to Covid-19. Covid-19 caused Isobel to lose half of her working hours. This loss of income combined with the additional pressure of having their three dependents at home due to closure of schools caused her to access OX4FreeFoodCrew services. This was compounded by unforeseen changes to the amount of benefits being received. The provision of fresh food by OX4FFC was vital in meeting basic food needs as well as ensuring 5 a day.

Stories such as these are widespread nationally and across Oxford City. Nationally four million people including 2.3 million children reported experiencing moderate or severe food insecurity in the last 6 months (1)

In Oxfordshire we have seen a 3-fold increase in the numbers of people accessing community food (2). In Oxford City, we estimate 4,000 people regularly access food assistance and this is only set to increase as furlough ends and unemployment continues to rise (3). Research shows significant increases in usage from families with children, and 89% of respondents cited finances as the main reason for accessing services (4).

Throughout the pandemic, the sense of community and shared endeavour has been humbling to see – with volunteers in many services working 80-hour weeks. Oxford Mutual Aid alone support 800 people every week with food parcels and over 650 families access Community larders on a weekly basis. Services have not only delivered food parcels, they have supported people to access a range of support including financial, housing and mental health services. I simply cannot commend their efforts highly enough and it has been a privilege to work alongside these amazing people.

Partnership working between the council, the voluntary sector, local businesses, colleges and schools has been exemplary and the support of the council in engaging with communities, working on a case-by-case basis with the most vulnerable and channelling emergency funds has been vital to facilitate this response.

Working together the council and voluntary sector have already started to look to the mid-long term and we need to support and guide this transition . Through programmes such as Play:Full – to address holiday hunger, and Edible Cutteslowe, partnerships are now looking beyond emergency support to engage communities in nutrition, cooking and growing projects – with the co-benefits of community engagement and wellbeing support that such programmes offer. Beyond this a food strategy would consider ways engage our local food producers and retailers in a sustainable local food system that ensures that healthy food is affordable and accessible for all and that links into plans to support a vibrant local food economy.

So to sum up why Oxford needs a Food Strategy. Since the start of the pandemic the Voluntary Sector and Councils have responded to the food needs of our communities by moving to a 'whatever-it-takes' war footing. However, as we converge on a post-pandemic 'new normal' of higher food poverty, we need to find a way of capturing the positive momentum of the community response in a long-term sustainable way that is integrated with existing programmes to address poverty and most urgently ensures that no-one in our city experiences food poverty.

Your support for this motion is vital to ensure these outcomes.

Thank you

- (1) Source: Food Foundation (2020)
- (2) Source: Good Food Oxford (2020)
- (3) Source: Oxford University (2020)
- (4) Source: Good Food Oxford (2020)

Response

From the Cabinet Member, Cllr Tidball

I would like to thank Fiona and Good Food Oxford for taking the time to make this address about such an important matter. I would also like to take the opportunity to thank Good Food Oxford and our voluntary and community partners within the community food system for their exceptional work to date within the City. They have and continue to work tirelessly together with the Council to ensure that nobody goes hungry.

As part of the Council's work to try and tackle food poverty, the Council has been looking to tackle root causal issues both through its own services and also through working with its partners such as the advice centres within the City. We recognise that due to the pandemic, some of these issues will continue to grow and that there is a need to continue this vital area of work and to work with people such as Isabel in a coordinated and joined-up way.

To that end, we are very supportive of a Countywide Food Strategy that addresses the needs of the City in particular. In doing so, we will work with our partners, including Good Food Oxford, the County Council, District Council's and community and voluntary partners, to develop this over the coming months. We also want to bring together the views and knowledge of our food network partners, including Good Food Oxford, to

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better understand the current root causes of food poverty, and a shared action plan to implement meaningful solutions. Tackling child food poverty by campaigning to address holiday hunger, increasing take up of free school meals and access to food larders for families with children will be another important strand of this work. We will also continue to use relationships with supermarkets to divert surplus food to those in need and minimise waste to help eliminate Oxford's contribution to climate change by 2040 or sooner, in line with the Zero Carbon Oxford Charter and recommendations of the Citizens' Assembly on Climate Change.