

Minutes of a meeting of Council on Monday 20 March 2023

www.oxford.gov.uk



Council members present:

Councillor Fry (Lord Mayor)	Councillor Lygo (Deputy Lord Mayor)
Councillor Rowley (Sheriff)	Councillor Arshad
Councillor Aziz	Councillor Brown
Councillor Chapman	Councillor Clarkson
Councillor Corais	Councillor Coyne
Councillor Diggins	Councillor Douglas
Councillor Dunne	Councillor Fouweather
Councillor Gant	Councillor Goddard
Councillor Hall	Councillor Hollingsworth
Councillor Hunt	Councillor Jarvis
Councillor Kerr	Councillor Landell Mills
Councillor Latif	Councillor Malik
Councillor Miles	Councillor Morris
Councillor Muddiman	Councillor Mundy
Councillor Munkonge	Councillor Pegg
Councillor Pressel	Councillor Railton
Councillor Rawle	Councillor Rehman
Councillor Sandelson	Councillor Linda Smith
Councillor Roz Smith	Councillor Snowton
Councillor Thomas	Councillor Turner
Councillor Upton	Councillor Waite
Councillor Walcott	

Also present for all or part of the meeting:

Caroline Green, Chief Executive
Tom Hook, Executive Director (Corporate Resources)
Tom Bridgman, Executive Director (Development)
Stephen Gabriel, Executive Director (Communities and People)

Nigel Kennedy, Head of Financial Services

Mish Tullar, Head of Corporate Strategy

Marcia Ecclestone, Deputy Monitoring Officer

Alice Courtney, Committee and Member Services Manager (Interim Acting)

Celeste Reyeslao, Committee and Member Services Officer

Apologies:

Councillor(s) Altaf-Khan, Djafari-Marbini, Hayes, Humberstone and Nala-Hartley sent apologies.

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

99. Declarations of interest

Item 13: Questions on Notice from Members of Council (ET3 - Jericho Wharf)

Cllr Brown: stated that she had an interest relating to Jericho Wharf; she indicated that she would leave the room during the consideration of that question.

Cllr Hollingsworth: stated that he had an interest relating to Jericho Wharf; he indicated that he would leave the room during the consideration of that question.

100. Minutes

Council agreed to approve the minutes of the special and ordinary meetings held on 30 January 2023 and of the Budget Council meeting held on 16 February 2023 as a true and correct record.

101. Appointment to Committees

Council agreed to appoint with immediate effect:

- Scrutiny Committee – Councillor Douglas to the vacant seat.

102. Announcements

The Lord Mayor welcomed Cllr Sandy Douglas to the Council following the recent by-election. He reminded Council of the Lord Mayor's Charity Quiz Night and urged Members to attend; he thanked the North Parade Market for the promises and gifts which had been contributed. The Lord Mayor noted that Susan Sale, Head of Law and Governance was leaving the Council and expressed his thanks to her on behalf of the Council for her service and wished her well in her new role.

The Deputy Lord Mayor thanked the volunteers at the Civic Reception in Witney which he had attended together with the Sheriff. Relating to admission to the Freeman of Oxford, the Deputy Lord Mayor was pleased to announce that he had the opportunity to submit a nomination for the Lord Mayor's Childe; he had nominated an individual from the Children in Care Council.

The City Rector thanked the Lord Mayor for the privilege of being alongside him on many occasions in the last year. He addressed Council on the impact of its decision-making on younger generations and acknowledged councillors' commitment, conscientiousness and wisdom in the work they do, for which he said future generations would be thankful.

Cllrs Chapman, Landell Mills and Turner joined the meeting.

The Sheriff thanked those involved in the Civic events in the previous week. He also thanked the Oxford Polish Community for their kind invitation to the language school. The Sheriff thanked those involved in the Witney Citizen of Year Award; he commented how nice the event was and wondered if there would be an opportunity for Oxford City Council to do something similar.

Cllr Corais joined the meeting.

The Leader made a statement on behalf of Council condemning the Immigration Bill and highlighting that the Bill sought to do the opposite of what Oxford sought to do as a city of sanctuary. The Leader announced the following nominations for Civic Office-holders in the 2023/24 municipal year:

- Cllr Lubna Arshad – Lord Mayor
- Cllr James Fry – Deputy Lord Mayor
- Cllr Mark Lygo – Sheriff

Cllr Dunne joined the meeting.

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

There were no addresses or questions.

Council agreed to consider Items 8 and 9 next on the agenda, followed by Item 7, then Item 10 and the remainder of the agenda as listed.

104. Street Trading Policy and amendment to Constitution Part 5.7(b)

Council considered a report from the Head of Regulatory Services and Community Safety requesting that Council adopt the Street Trading Policy following the review, public consultation process and recommendation from the General Purposes Licensing Committee and agree a concurrent amendment to the Council's Constitution Part 5.7(b).

Cllr Mundy, Chair of the General Purposes Licensing Committee introduced the report and proposed the recommendations.

The recommendations were agreed on being seconded by Cllr Upton, Cabinet Member for Health and Transport and put to the vote.

Council resolved to:

1. **Adopt** the Street Trading Policy at Appendix B with effect from 01 April 2023.

2. **Amend** Part 5.7(b) of the Constitution as set out at Appendix C with effect from 01 April 2023.

105. Pay Policy Statement 2023

Council considered a report from the Head of Business Improvement requesting Council approve the Annual Pay Policy Statement.

Cllr Chapman, Cabinet Member for Citizen Focused Services introduced the report, proposed the recommendation and answered questions.

The recommendation was agreed on being seconded by Cllr Brown, Leader of the Council and Cabinet Member for Inclusive Economy and Partnerships and put to the vote.

Council resolved to:

1. **Approve** the Annual Pay Policy Statement 2023/24 as attached at Appendix 1.

Cllr Linda Smith joined the meeting.

106. Housing, Homelessness & Rough Sleeping Strategy 2023-28

Council considered a report from the Executive Director (Communities and People) seeking approval of the Housing, Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy 2023-28 with associated appendices.

Cllr Linda Smith, Cabinet Member for Housing introduced the report, proposed the recommendations and answered questions.

The recommendations were agreed on being seconded by Cllr Brown, Leader of the Council and Cabinet Member for Inclusive Economy and Partnerships and put to the vote.

Council resolved to:

1. **Adopt** the Housing, Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy 2023-28 and its associated appendices;
2. **Adopt** the Strategy's Action Plan for 23-24; and
3. **Delegate authority** to the Executive Director (Communities and People), in consultation with the Cabinet Member for Housing, to update the Action Plan when required.

107. Constitution Review 2022/23

Council considered a report from the Head of Law and Governance requesting Council approve the recommended changes to the Council's Constitution following an annual review of the Constitution overseen by a Cross-Party Constitution Review Working Group.

Cllr Brown, Leader of the Council and Cabinet Member for Inclusive Economy and Partnerships introduced the report, proposed the recommendations subject to the

addition of 'or s151 Officer' after 'Monitoring Officer' at proposal 15 set out in Appendix A of the report and answered questions.

The recommendation was agreed on being seconded by Cllr Mundy and put to the vote.

Council resolved to:

1. **Approve** the list of proposed amendments to the Council's Constitution listed in Appendix A, subject to the minor amendment set out above, with effect from 17 May 2023;
2. **Delegate authority** to the Head of Law and Governance to amend any further wording and/or numbering that is identified as being inconsistent with the changes approved by Council.

Cllr Jarvis left the meeting.

108. Designation of Interim Monitoring Officer, and Appointment of Returning Officer and Electoral Registration Officer

Council considered a report from the Head of Paid Service seeking approval to designate the Council's Interim Monitoring Officer and to appoint a Returning Officer and Electoral Registration Officer.

Cllr Brown, Leader of the Council and Cabinet Member for Inclusive Economy and Partnerships introduced the report, proposed the recommendations and answered questions.

The recommendation was agreed on being seconded by Cllr Turner, Deputy Leader (Statutory) and Cabinet Member for Finance and Asset Management and put to the vote.

Council resolved to:

1. **Designate** the newly appointed Interim Head of Law & Governance, Rhian Davies, as the Council's Interim Monitoring Officer with effect from 03 April 2023;
2. **Appoint** Caroline Green, Chief Executive and Head of Paid Service, as the Council's Returning Officer and Electoral Registration Officer with effect from 03 April 2023.

109. Questions on Cabinet minutes

a) Minutes of the Cabinet Meeting held on 8 February 2023

Minute 117 – Implementing the Covered Market Masterplan

In response to a question from Cllr Roz Smith, Cllr Brown, Leader of the Council and Cabinet Member for Inclusive Economy and Partnerships advised that she did not think the question was appropriate at this point, because the Masterplan was not the Lettings Strategy of the Covered Market. She added that, in terms of the Lettings Strategy, units were let and there were signs up on some of the units indicating who the new tenants were. She advised that if Cllr Roz Smith had particular concerns relating to specific units, these could be looked into in more detail.

Minute 118 – Allocation of Preventing Homelessness Grant 2023-24

In response to a question from Cllr Smowton, Cllr Linda Smith, Cabinet Member for Housing advised that the position relating to the severe-looking reduction in the number of Full Time Equivalents was dependent on funds being made available from the Government to fund the Council's work. She said that the reduction could be as bad as set out in the report, but she hoped it would not be and cited the Council's success in applying for Government funding in previous years. She highlighted that there were no guarantees at this point.

Minute 119 – Oxford Local Plan 2040 Focused Consultation on Housing Need

In response to a question from Cllr Smowton, Cllr Hollingsworth, Cabinet Member for Planning and Housing Delivery advised that the HENA consultation was a live consultation as part of the consultation on the Local Plan 2040. He confirmed that he was aware of the comments made by South Oxfordshire and Vale of White Horse District Councils and that Oxford City Council's response to those comments was on the Council website. He added that the Council was setting up to maximise housing provision within the city, which was consulted on during the first part of the Regulation 18 consultation on the Local Plan 2040. He further confirmed that the Local Plan 2040 Regulation 19 consultation was scheduled for the end of the year.

b) Draft Minutes of the Cabinet Meeting held on 15 March 2023

Minute 132 – Development of a Biodiversity Strategy for Oxford

In response to a question from Cllr Gant, Cllr Railton, Cabinet Member for Zero Carbon Oxford and Climate Justice advised that the Biodiversity Strategy was due to be delivered next year; the officer time was budgeted for, but work such as the extra site audits recommended by the new Climate & Environment Scrutiny Panel was not currently budgeted for because the Strategy was not yet written. She added that the Strategy did not yet exist so it did not have Key Performance Indicators (KPIs), but confirmed that she was very keen to have KPIs in the Strategy which were measurable, once it was written.

110. Questions on Notice from Members of Council

24 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 4 supplementary questions and responses asked and given at the meeting are set out in the minutes pack.

Cllrs Brown and Hollingsworth had declared an interest in relation to question ET3 on Jericho Wharf and left the meeting during consideration of that question.

Council agreed to consider items 16 and 18 next on the agenda before the 30 minute break and then return to the agenda as listed.

111. Outside organisation/Committee Chair reports and questions

a) The Oxford Strategic Partnership

Cllr Thomas joined the meeting.

Cllr Brown, Leader of the Council and Cabinet Member for Inclusive Economy and Partnerships introduced the report which presented the annual update on the Oxford Strategic Partnership.

Council noted the report.

b) Oxfordshire Local Enterprise Partnership

Cllr Brown, Leader of the Council and Cabinet Member for Inclusive Economy and Partnerships introduced the report which provided an update on the work of Oxfordshire Local Enterprise Partnership (OxLEP) and answered questions.

Council noted the report.

c) Health & Wellbeing Board/Health Improvement Board

Cllr Upton, Cabinet Member for Health and Transport introduced the report which provided the annual report on the work of Oxfordshire Health and Wellbeing/Health Improvement Board.

Council noted the report.

d) Scrutiny Committee update report

Cllr Smowton, Chair of the Scrutiny Committee, introduced the report updating the Council on the activities of the Scrutiny function. He congratulated Cllr Hunt on the first meeting of the new Climate & Environment Scrutiny Panel, which emphasised the importance of the topic to the Council.

Council noted the report.

112. Additional Loan Finance for Oxford West End Developments (OxWED LLP)

Council considered a report from the Executive Director (Development) seeking approval to secure a budget to allow the City Council to lend OxWED up to £750,000 to support continuing work on the Oxpens project and in particular preparing (and subject to LLP Member approval and planning permission) implementing the Delivery Strategy for the Oxpens development.

Cllr Turner, Deputy Leader (Statutory) and Cabinet Member for Finance and Asset Management introduced the report, proposed the recommendation and answered questions.

The recommendation was agreed on being seconded by Cllr Hollingsworth, Cabinet Member for Planning and Housing Delivery and put to the vote.

Council resolved to:

1. **Agree** to include £750,000 in its capital budget to allow the City Council to loan these funds to OxWED to continue work on the Oxpens project in accordance with the LLP Members agreement, and in particular preparation and (if planning permission is granted) implementation of the Delivery Strategy.

113. Delivery of Affordable Housing

Council considered a report from the Executive Director (Development) seeking further project approvals and delegations to enable the continued delivery of more affordable housing in Oxford.

Cllr Linda Smith, Cabinet Member for Housing introduced the report, proposed the recommendation and answered questions.

The recommendation was agreed on being seconded by Cllr Hollingsworth, Cabinet Member for Planning and Housing Delivery and put to the vote.

Council resolved to:

1. **Approve** a revision to the HRA capital budget of an additional £825,000, with the realignment of budgets and schemes within the HRA new build programme, in order for the schemes listed below to be delivered within the capital programme funded predominantly from borrowing. This additional spend to be profiled into 2024/25.
 - a) Increase Northfield Hostel budget by £3.25m (see paragraph 52)
 - b) Increase Lanham Way budget by £361k (see paragraph 53)
 - c) Reduce East Oxford Community Centre budget by £700k (see paragraph 54)
 - d) Close Juniper Close scheme (see paragraph 55)

The meeting broke for 30 minutes at the conclusion of this item.

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

Cllr Jarvis re-joined the meeting.

Council heard four addresses and one question. Cabinet Members provided a verbal response, or read or summarised their written response.

The addresses, question and responses are set out in full in the minutes pack.

1. Address by Nicola Smith – Plant-based food and sustainable farming motion.
2. Address by Ian Middleton – Plant-based food and sustainable farming motion.
3. Address by Judith Harley – ODS Vandalism in Cowley Marsh Park
4. Address by Jocelyn Wogan-Browne – Oxford Flood and Environment Group - Oxford Flood Alleviation Scheme
5. Question from Judith Harley – New Park Bench Installation in Cowley Marsh Park

The Lord Mayor thanked the speakers for their contributions.

115. Petition submitted in accordance with Council procedure rules - Save Tumbling Bay

Council considered a petition meeting the criteria for debate in accordance with the Council's petitions scheme stating:

We the undersigned petition the council to Preserve the historic character and shape of Tumbling Bay swimming pool on the River Thames, and ensure that ladders or steps continue to be provided into the water.

We call on Oxford City Council to:

- *Preserve the historic character and shape of Tumbling Bay river pool by seeking to repair or replace the existing wall.*
- *Ensure that ladders continue to be in situ to allow people to get out of the river safely.*
- *Work with local residents to explore ways in which funds could be raised to pay for the renovation work.*

Tumbling Bay is a much loved Victorian river swimming pool on a backwater of the River Thames just behind Botley Park in West Oxford.

For over 150 years local children have learned to swim in the pool. The north wall is in need of repair and the site has been fenced off for several months. The Council's current plan is to smash up the existing wall to produce a sloping bank that will erase this valuable piece of local heritage.

While no longer an official bathing spot, Tumbling Bay is very much enjoyed by local residents. Hundreds of people swim there in the summer and a small number all year round. It is safer than the river as there are no boats going past. It is also part of our local history.

Alice Icely, one of the petition organisers, addressed Council.

Council debated the petition. Following debate, Cllr Munkonge, Deputy Leader and Cabinet Member for Leisure and Parks, seconded by Cllr Hunt, proposed that Council note the petition and undertake further engagement with local residents regarding Tumbling Bay. This was agreed on being put to the vote.

Council resolved to:

1. **Note** the petition.
2. **Undertake** further engagement with local residents regarding Tumbling Bay.

116. Motions on notice 20 March 2023

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

Motions agreed as set out below:

- a) Four Day Week (proposer Cllr Kerr, seconder by Cllr Pegg, amendment proposer Cllr Chapman, amendment seconder Cllr Arshad)
- b) Plant-based Food and Sustainable Farming (proposer Cllr Dunne, seconder Cllr Hollingsworth)

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

- c) Use Car Parking Site for Solar Farms (proposer Cllr Fouweather, seconder Cllr Miles, amendment proposer Cllr Railton, amendment seconder Cllr Hollingsworth)
- d) Consultation on the Sale of Council Art Works (proposer Cllr Miles, seconder Cllr Smowton, amendment proposer Cllr Brown, amendment seconder Cllr Diggins)

a) Four Day Week (proposed by Cllr Kerr, seconded by Cllr Pegg)

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

Cllr Chapman, seconded by Cllr Arshad, proposed the amendment as set out in the briefing note.

Council debated the motion and amendment. Following debate, and on being put to the vote, the amendment was agreed.

On being put to the vote the amended motion was then agreed.

Council resolved to adopt the following motion:

Council notes

1. From June to December 2022, a sixth month pilot of a four day working week was carried out in the UK. This pilot saw 61 organisations with almost 3,000 workers trial the introduction of reducing working hours for staff while maintaining 100% of pay. This trial was the largest of its kind in the world to date, and saw companies introduce a 'meaningful' reduction of hours for staff up to the implementation of a four day week. It was carried out by Autonomy, the 4 Day Week Campaign and 4 Day Week Global.¹
2. Participating organisations in the trial spanned a wide range of sectors including marketing, charities, finance, healthcare, manufacturing, construction, engineering and the arts.²
3. 92% of the organisations participating in the four day week trial have continued its implementation beyond the pilot period. 30% of the participating organisations have already decided to make the change in working hours permanent.
4. The trial found that 39% of workers were less stressed, 71% had lower levels of burnout, 60% said it was easier to balance paid work and care responsibilities, 62% found it easier to balance work and social life. The number of workers leaving participating companies decreased by 57% over the trial period.

Council believes

1. We should continue to take steps to improve the working conditions of our own staff, while maximising the quality of the services we deliver.
2. The Council has over many years played a significant role in improving pay and working conditions throughout Oxford, through using its considerable influence with initiatives such as the Oxford Living Wage.
3. The Council should continue, expand and extend its work driving improvements for workers across our city.

¹ <https://autonomy.work/portfolio/uk4dwpilotresults/>

² Page 17: <https://autonomy.work/wp-content/uploads/2023/02/The-results-are-in-The-UKs-four-day-week-pilot.pdf>

Council resolves:

1. To request that the Chief Executive and other relevant officers continue to discuss with its trade unions ways of improving the retention and recruitment of its employees including discussing ways of working.
2. To request that the Leader and Cabinet Member for Inclusive Economy and Partnerships continues to discuss with the LEP (of which she is a director) and with South Cambridgeshire District Council (whose leader she meets with regularly) any relevant learnings from their involvement in running the four day week trial.
3. To request that the Leader as part of her work on the Oxfordshire Inclusive Employment Partnership (OIEP) finds out if there are any other employers in Oxford considering trialling a four day week for their own employees, particularly any with a large directly employed customer service workforce.

b) Plant-based Food and Sustainable Farming (proposed by Cllr Dunne, seconded by Cllr Hollingsworth)

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

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

Council resolved to adopt the following motion:

Council notes that:

- The global scientific consensus is that humans have heated the climate at a rate that is unprecedented, and we are heading towards mass extinction not just for ourselves but of entire eco systems if we do not change our actions today.³
- Oxford City Council is committed to reducing its impact on the environment and to becoming carbon neutral by 2030.⁴
- We have a duty as leaders in the city to empower the local community to make changes that can mitigate climate catastrophe and help preserve the vitality of our planet for future generations.
- The UK's agriculture produces 10% of the country's greenhouse gas emissions and makes up 70% of land use. Modern agricultural practices are a central driver for habitat and biodiversity loss and the UK is one of the world's most nature-depleted countries.⁵
- In the UK we eat twice as much meat and dairy as the global average which is not sustainable as there is not enough land in the world to meet this demand without destroying our natural world.⁶

³ https://www.ipcc.ch/report/ar6/wg1/downloads/outreach/IPCC_AR6_WGI_Press_Conference_Slides.pdf

⁴ https://www.oxford.gov.uk/news/article/1705/council_outlines_how_it_aims_to_become_a_zero_carbon_council_by_2030_at_the_latest

⁵ <https://www.rspb.org.uk/globalassets/downloads/documents/conservation-projects/state-of-nature/state-of-nature-uk-report-2016.pdf>

⁶ <https://www.greenpeace.org.uk/news/how-much-meat-should-i-be-eating/>

- Plant-based sources of protein have much smaller carbon footprints than animal-based ones, even when comparing locally raised meat to imported plant foods.
- Farm animals across Europe are producing more emissions than cars and vans combined.⁷
- Our relationship to food is still an overlooked factor to the climate crisis yet it is the quickest and cheapest step to help tackle the climate crisis if we reduce our meat intake.
- The necessary change to confront the climate crisis needs to tackle existing inequalities in society while acting urgently.
- To protect and enrich jobs in Oxford, we should work closely with local farmers and plant-based food organisations to move to more sustainable farming methods and local produce that promotes plant-based food.

Council agrees to:

- Request that the Cabinet Member for Health and Transport:
 - Works with local farmers to support, promote, and encourage their move to create more sustainable plant-based produce.
 - Recognises the benefit of sourcing food locally from producers who follow sustainable principles.
- Request that the Executive Director (Communities and People) submits a report to Cabinet with options to form a plant-based localised free food service by funding community groups who are already doing this work to transform Oxford into a more environmentally sustainable economy which will also tackle food poverty.
- Follow Oxfordshire County Council's lead by ensuring that food provided for internal councillor events are entirely plant-based and food provided at all council catered events and meetings include plant-based options, preferably using ingredients sourced from local food surplus organisations.⁸
- Call on Cabinet to request that the Council's Climate Action Plan be updated to state that all catering provided at Council events and functions from April 2023 will have plant-based options.
- Call on the Shareholder group to work with all Council run companies to encourage moving to having plant-based catering options by April 2023.

⁷ <https://www.theguardian.com/environment/2020/sep/22/eu-farm-animals-produce-more-emissions-than-cars-and-vans-combined-greenpeace>

⁸ Oxford City Council stopped catering for council meetings a year ago so plant-based catering would be for the few remaining internal council events.

Following consideration of this item, the Lord Mayor, seconded by the Deputy Lord Mayor, proposed a motion without notice under the Council's Constitution Part 11.19(j) to adjourn the meeting. On being put to the vote, the motion without notice to adjourn the meeting was agreed.

- c) Use Car Parking Sites for Solar Farms (proposed by Cllr Fouweather, seconded by Cllr Miles, amendment proposed by Cllr Railton, amendment seconded by Cllr Hollingsworth)**

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

- d) Consultation on the Sale of Council Art Works (proposed by Cllr Miles, seconded by Cllr Smowton, amendment proposed by Cllr Brown, amendment seconded by Cllr Diggins)**

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

The meeting started at 5.00 pm and ended at 9.15 pm

Lord Mayor

Date: Wednesday 17 May 2023

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.

This page is intentionally left blank

To: Council
Date: 20 March 2023
Report of: Head of Law and Governance
Title of Report: Questions on Notice from members of Council and responses from the Cabinet Members and Leader

Introduction

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

Questions and responses

Cabinet Member for Inclusive Economy and Partnerships; Leader of the Council

SB1 From Cllr Landell Mills to Cllr Brown – City Centre Action Plan

Question

How are the measurable Key Performance Indicators and Budgets listed in the council’s City Centre Action Plan performing in practice?

Written Response

The City Council is overseeing and tracking the plan on behalf of multiple stakeholders – it is important to note that the City Centre Action Plan has been created by the Council on behalf of the whole city centre.

Regarding Key Performance Indicators, these have been listed as a project outcome against each project with

SB1 From Cllr Landell Mills to Cllr Brown – City Centre Action Plan

	<p>project start timelines noted.</p> <p>An overall governance approach has been set up to monitor and assist the delivery of the projects in the Plan. The Plan is tracked by an overarching monitoring document and each project has an assigned project lead and defined actions. If a project is underway, the lead is asked for regular updates. Additionally, each quarter, officers from across the Council meet to discuss the Plan and support/add input to projects in hand. As new opportunities arise for the City, these projects are noted so that consideration, through the governance process, can be given to their addition. All of the projects due to start in 2022 have started, with some already delivered.</p> <p>Regarding budget, there was no assigned budget for the majority of projects, and the aim is to have them close to ready so that funding opportunities can be applied for as they arise. Some projects don't require funding, just time resources and those resources are allocated as time allows.</p>
--	---

SB2 From Cllr Jarvis to Cllr Brown – County Boundary Review

Question	Written Response
<p>Is the City Council intending to create its own cross party working group to look at the County boundary review?</p>	<p>Staff in Law and Governance will be setting up a cross party County Boundary Working Group. This follows the procedure that the Council has followed for the last few decades for boundary reviews that have covered Oxford. It will be politically balanced (three Labour, one Liberal Democrat and one Green Member) and will consider whether a scheme can be recommended and put to Council for approval.</p> <p>Each political group has already been asked to put forward its nominees.</p>

ET1 From Cllr Miles to Cllr Turner – ESG Policy for Investments	
<p>Question</p> <p>What is the council’s environment, social and governance (ESG) policy for its investments in shares or bonds?</p>	<p>Written Response</p> <p>The Council is not investing in shares or bonds and has no plans to do so. Treasury investments in shares is not permitted in the currently approved credit and counterparty list which was approved by Council at its meeting on 16th February 2023. The investment in bonds is permitted in line with the strategy, however no investments are held or are planned. That being said, if there were to be any investments in bonds then the Environmental, Social and Governance (ESG) Policy approved as part of the treasury strategy would apply. In accordance with the policy, ESG risks are considered to be an important overlay to the investment process, thereby improving future sustainability of investments. The Council, when holding meetings with counterparties, always has ESG as an agenda item and uses its investment capabilities to persuade and pressurise counterparties to improve their policies and deliverables in respect of ESG.</p>
<p>Supplementary Question</p> <p>You note that if there were to be any investments in bonds then the Environmental, Social and Governance (ESG) Policy approved as part of the Treasury Strategy would apply. My understanding is that the Treasury Strategy is from 2016-17 and refers to an ethical investment policy which is from 2015-16, which is very vague and my knowledge of ESG policies is that they are a bit more specific. With this in mind, what are the details of the ESG Policy and does the Cabinet Member acknowledge that it is not detailed enough and therefore agree to review and update the ESG Policy for the</p>	<p>Verbal Response</p> <p>The ESG Policy as it stands was set out in an appendix which Council voted on in the Budget meeting, so I would refer the Councillor to that, which should guide her; but also a commitment we gave was to evolve the ESG Policy as more data became available on which to base it. So it is not just the longstanding ethical investment policy that would apply, but also the ESG Policy included in the appendix which we voted on.</p> <p>The Councillor may not have noticed the appendix we voted on, but if she has any questions after looking at it then she is very welcome to turn to me and the</p>

ET1 From Cllr Miles to Cllr Turner – ESG Policy for Investments

Council later on this year?

officers and we will try and help.

ET2 From Cllr Smowton to Cllr Turner – Companies’ Dividends**Question**

Could you please list the (number and value of) dividends paid by the council’s companies to the council since they were founded?

Written Response

ODS has delivered 2 dividend amounts since incorporation in 2018, one in respect of 2018-19 in the amount of £1.247 million and one for £600k in respect of 2020-21. Their business, like most businesses, was severely affected by the impact of the COVID pandemic. The 2021-22 statement of accounts is still subject to external audit and no dividend has been declared in respect of this year although I understand that one will be, once the accounts have been signed off. It should be noted that in addition to the dividend return which is derived from surpluses and efficiencies from company operations, ODS pays the Council for support services provided, interest on vehicles purchased and depot rentals, which over the 6 year period of the contract are estimated to be around £30 million.

OX Place have yet to achieve a surplus since their incorporation in 2016 although they are forecast to do so in 2022-23. The expectation of dividends from the company from surpluses in the next 4 years is estimated at £13.4 million and it is worth noting that up to 31-3-2023 accrued interest margin (i.e. the difference between the rate at which the Council borrows to the rate at which it lends to OX Place) is estimated at around £2.6 million. There are significant advantages to receiving income in this way.

ET3 From Cllr Smowton to Cllr Turner – Jericho Wharf**Question**

What lessons does the council take away

Written Response

The application in question was not

from the planning committee having been overturned at appeal regarding the housing and community centre at Jericho Wharf [20/01276/FUL]? The result has been years of dereliction and then finally a permission granted with zero affordable housing – how can we avoid similar outcomes in future?

solely providing housing and a community centre at the former boatyard site. In accordance with the allocation policy, this was a mixed-use scheme that was seeking to provide residential uses, community centre, boatyard, public realm, and works to the canal. The range of uses within the mixed-use scheme make this a complex site in terms of delivery.

Although the site has been derelict for some years, it is important to note that planning permissions for redevelopment have been granted in the past but none of these have been delivered.

Any proposal for the site must be considered against National and Local Planning Policy unless material considerations state otherwise. The provision of affordable housing is a key objective for the Council, and the policies in the Local Plan set out what is required from qualifying sites such as this.

However, as per paragraph 58 of the NPPF and Policy H2 in the Local Plan, where it can be robustly demonstrated through a viability appraisal that it is not possible to provide affordable housing within the scheme we have to consider these matters.

In determining the application, officers felt it was sufficiently demonstrated through the viability appraisals that the scheme could not afford to deliver affordable housing along with all the other important uses that are being sought on the site, specifically the boatyard, new community centre, public space, bridge, public realm. It was on that basis that the application was put to committee with a recommendation to approve the application along with a review mechanism that would look to capture any additional value not envisaged in the viability work as a financial contribution towards affordable housing. The committee was not persuaded by the viability report conclusions and refused the application.

	<p>Through defending the appeal, the Council commissioned a further review of the viability work submitted by the applicant and found it only to be marginally viable, albeit to a greater degree than the conclusions of the previous viability report. The Inspector however was not persuaded by this work and has allowed the appeal. The review mechanism has been retained which will secure affordable housing contributions in the event that the scheme achieves a greater value than envisaged in the viability work.</p> <p>In many respects this is how the planning system is meant to work, officers present a recommendation to Planning Committee, which then undertook a thorough and robust decision-making process and based its decision on a sound planning basis. The viability report challenges some of the assumptions held regarding the profitability of development when there are multiple other requirements such as community centre, boat yards and so forth. However, as explained above, this is a unique site with unique challenges clearly not replicated on other sites.</p>
<p>Supplementary Question</p> <p>I note that what has happened here is that officers have recommended a particular application in one direction, the Planning Committee has then unanimously disagreed with them and the Planning Inspector has then overturned the Planning Committee's decision and agreed with our officers. What seems important to me is that if you review the video of the Planning Committee's meeting, it is clear that there was nothing close to a meeting of minds happening here. It wasn't a case of officers and councillors getting into a very detailed discussion as to exactly why they disagree on the question of the viability report and that disagreement being fully worked out. It seemed more a case that there were fairly brief statements on both sides and then what</p>	<p>Verbal Response</p> <p>It is probably for the Planning Committee to reflect when it considers all of the information on any planning appeal – particularly where appeal is successful; but I would draw two conclusions from it.</p> <p>Members would need to think carefully before going against officer advice, which I know they do, but equally that is why the system of planning appeals exists. Members will sometimes disagree and it may be after a lengthy discussion on the detail, but also Members are entitled in the planning process to take a different view on issues of principle and, as the Councillor noted, that happened unanimously and then it is people's good right to appeal which is the process and that's the law of the land.</p> <p>The Government has various nasty</p>

<p>turned out to be a very expensive and torturous decision seems to have been taken on the basis of this. So my question is what shall we do about that? That could mean training for councillors or a sub-committee thereof of the Planning Committee, it could mean mechanisms for officers to engage more closely and tightly with that committee and to improve that meeting of minds between the two sides. But what lesson ought we to take?</p>	<p>punitive things that it does if you keep having your decisions overturned and I am not aware that we are anywhere near those sort of special measures. Instead I think this was probably quite an exceptional case and something of a one-off. I hope that might provide the Councillor with a little bit of reassurance.</p>
---	--

Cabinet Member for Leisure and Parks; Deputy Leader of the Council

CM1 From Cllr Miles to Cllr Munkonge – Public Water Fountain Provision	
<p>Question</p> <p>How many public drinking water fountains are there in the city on city owned parks or land? Of the total number, how many are disused, and how many are functioning? Given the potential for extreme temperatures this summer and in future years, what plans does the council have to renovate or install additional public water fountains?</p>	<p>Written Response</p> <p>There are three drinking water fountains in the city owned parks (at Florence, Bury Knowle and Cutteslowe Parks). The one at Cutteslowe is currently out of order, but we are working to get this back working as soon as possible. There are no additional funds identified at present to install further fountains.</p> <p>Several the city’s parks also have kiosks or nearby facilities such as leisure or community centres where people can access free drinking water. The city installed the drinking fountains as part of the ‘Refill’ campaign, which aimed to advertise places and spaces in which free drinking water could be accessed; this included restaurants and shops.</p>
<p>Supplementary Question</p> <p>You noted that the water fountain in Cutteslowe Park is out of order currently. Could you put a timeframe on when that would be mended please?</p>	<p>Verbal Response</p> <p><i>A written response will be provided after the meeting.</i></p>

CM2 From Cllr Roz Smith to Cllr Munkonge – Children’s Scooter Parking	
Question	Written Response

<p>How many children’s scooter parking stands are currently installed in City Council owned parks and what is their capacity?</p>	<p>We do not currently have specific children’s scooter parking stands and have not seen any increased demand from our communities for these at this time. We do however have cycle parking at our parks that can sometimes be used for this purpose.</p>
---	---

Cabinet Member for Inclusive Communities and Culture

SA1 From Cllr Jarvis to Cllr Aziz – Gender Neutral Toilet Provision

<p>Question</p> <p>Can the portfolio holder provide an update as to what steps have been taken to introduce gender neutral toilets in Council buildings following the passing of the ‘Becoming a trans inclusive Council’ motion in November 2021?</p>	<p>Written Response</p> <p>Officers would consider this when we are undertaking any development works and a budget is identified.</p> <p>In our main Council building, the Oxford Town Hall, officers will review options of if and how gender neutral toilets can be included in the next phase of development works.</p> <p>For private events at the Town Hall when they are outside normal opening hours, we have been able to change the use of the current toilets for that event into gender neutral toilets, which were important for the success of the event.</p>
---	--

SA2 From Cllr Pegg to Cllr Aziz – Asylum Seekers at Kassam Stadium

<p>Question</p> <p>Can the portfolio holder provide an update on the welfare of asylum seekers housed at the Kassam Stadium by the Home Office and the support being provided to them by the Council?</p>	<p>Written Response</p> <p>The Council leads the multi-agency response and holds fortnightly meetings with partners and the management of the hotel, which is directed by the Home Office. There are currently no issues of concern regarding the welfare of the asylum seekers and the Council continues to work with local organisations, community groups and charities to provide education, advice, clothing and social activities, we extend our thanks and gratitude to everyone for their work. The Council is committed to</p>
--	--

	its values of working towards Oxford being a city of sanctuary and a city where asylum seekers and refugees are welcome.
--	--

SA3 From Cllr Rawle to Cllr Aziz – Household Support Fund	
Question	Written Response
In light of new guidance for the Household Support Fund that states cash grants can be used as part of support, will the council be issuing cash grants, as was advised by many organisations that gave evidence to the Child Poverty Review Group?	We are constantly reviewing how we distribute the Household Support Fund with the County and neighbouring districts. We believe that our blended approach of using the City’s advice centre network as well as direct support through our locality teams is performing well. We provide support through energy vouchers, food vouchers, essential items purchasing and other essentials covered by the criteria which minimises the need for cash payments.

Cabinet Member for Housing

LS1 From Cllr Fouweather to Cllr Linda Smith – Rental Property Licensing	
Question	Written Response
Under the new Selective Licensing Scheme introduced in September 2022, what proportion of relevant properties in Oxford are now licensed by the Council? How many licences have been issued and how many applications have been rejected? What is the proportion of privately rented properties inspected and how many licences have been revoked as a result of inspection?	<p>We predicted we would receive 10,000 applications within the first year and we have already received 94% of the applications predicted (9,467 valid applications). Of those applications received, 560 final licences and 1,067 draft licences have been issued which is 17% of the total received. Once a valid application has been made, the application must be granted or refused (unless the applicant subsequently withdraws). We have issued 1 intention to refuse.</p> <p>Since the scheme commenced, we have inspected 66 properties where housing health and safety rating system assessments have been made. No licences have been revoked as a result of these inspections as that has not been</p>

LS1 From Cllr Fouweather to Cllr Linda Smith – Rental Property Licensing	
	necessary, however we have taken enforcement action in 19 properties and served 29 notices under the Housing Act 2004.
Supplementary Question Do you expect the inspection regime to expand so that the selective licensing team can look are more properties than the rather low number here (66 properties)?	Verbal Response Yes. During the lifetime of the scheme we expect 60% of private rented sector properties in the city to be inspected.

LS2 From Cllr Rawle to Cllr Linda Smith – Selective Licensing Energy Efficiency	
Question Following the introduction of the Selective Licensing Scheme, how many private landlords have improved the energy efficiency of their properties following advice or recommendations from officers?	Written Response Since the scheme began, investigations have commenced into 49 properties with regards to energy efficiency concerns and of these 23 have now taken action that improved the energy efficiency of the property. Of the remaining properties, 8 have been found to be exempt from the minimum energy efficiency regulations and investigations are continuing into the others. Grant funding for energy efficiency upgrades in the private sector will continue to be promoted to landlords.

LS3 From Cllr Pegg to Cllr Linda Smith – Homes for Ukraine Scheme	
Question Can the portfolio holder provide an update on the Homes for Ukraine scheme in Oxford?	Written Response As of 03 March 2023, approximately 397 Ukraine individuals have arrived to Oxford under the Homes for Ukraine (HfU) scheme and there are currently 213 households in hosting arrangements. Re-matching is seen as a key approach to supporting guests to stay housed across the whole County and to avoid the pressures of homelessness within respective Districts. To date in Oxford, we have re-matched 43 households into a new hosting arrangement and moved 5 into alternative accommodation, with only one current case in emergency

	<p>temporary accommodation under the HfU scheme. Our current key focus is to increase the supply of private rented tenancies. To support this work and ensure successful outcomes, we have secured additional resources to bolster capacity including 3 re-matching officers hosted by the City working across the County (as well as a prevention officer and 2 project officers).</p>
--	---

Cabinet Member for Planning and Housing Delivery

<p>AH1 From Cllr Smowton to Cllr Hollingsworth – Loss of Social Housing</p>	
<p>Question</p> <p>Is the council content with government figures showing that the number of social houses in Oxford went down by 132 over the last ten years? What is the breakdown of the 140 social housing units demolished and 532 sold over that time (e.g. lost to Right To Buy, demolished for replacement by residential development, demolished for replacement by non-residential development, etc)?</p>	<p>Written Response</p> <p>The figures quoted in the question, which appear to be taken from media coverage of a press release issued by Shelter that related to England overall, do not match data provided to the Government by Oxford City Council, or figures in the Government data tables cited by the press release.</p> <p>Figures provided by Oxford City Council to the Government, and included in Table 116 of the Government’s tables of housing data, show that the overall number of Local Authority owned social housing units was 7,624 in 2013, and 7,613 in 2022, a net decline of 11 units. Within those figures the biggest decline was 73 net units in 2014 and the biggest increase was 107 net units in 2022.</p> <p>Table 691b of the Government’s data set on housing shows that over the same ten year period from 2012-13 to 2021-22 a total of 292 homes were sold under Right to Buy. Three further properties were sold by the Council because they were uneconomic to repair.</p> <p>There are two demolitions during this period: Bradlands (2014), when 30 units were demolished and replaced by 49 units, and Cumberlege House (2016) when 15 unsuitable sheltered</p>

AH1 From Cllr Smowton to Cllr Hollingsworth – Loss of Social Housing

accommodation flats were replaced with 9 houses as part of the linked scheme with the Elsfield Way site.

Table 115 of the Government data set relates to returns from Registered Providers (Housing Associations) and shows the total combined figure for homes and bed spaces. Over the same ten year period as Table 116 there is a net reduction of 622 units/bedspaces. This seems to be almost entirely related to a single change in the return from A2/Dominion between 2015 and 2016, when 548 general needs bedspaces were dropped from their annual report, as part of an overall reduction in units/bedspaces in that year of 749. Officers believe that this was most likely to be due to a change in reporting methodology for Housing Associations, as there is no closure or demolition that appears to relate to a change of that magnitude, and are investigating further.

The current Council Four Year Plan targets for the period from 2022/23 to 2025/26 are to deliver 1,600 affordable homes of all tenures, of which 850 will be at social rents. While the figures are provisional because we are not yet at the year end and schemes are counted at practical completion stage and some schemes are under the control of Registered Providers rather than the Council, we currently believe that the outcome for this financial year will be around 400 new units of affordable housing, and around 200 new units of social housing.

AH2 From Cllr Miles to Cllr Hollingsworth – Car Free Developments**Question**

Despite the County Council's parking standards, why is the City Council still proposing the development of 'nearly car

Written Response

Parking standards are set by Local Plans, in Oxford and elsewhere in Oxfordshire. In Oxford, the policy is set

<p>free' developments rather than 'car free' developments by council owned housing companies? What steps has the council taken to obtain lessons learned about car free developments in the UK and in Europe (e.g. in Utrecht in the Netherlands)?</p>	<p>out clearly in the Oxford Local Plan 2036, policy M3, which says that developments should be zero car where there is a CPZ and specified facilities are within particular distances of the development. For developments where these two tests are not met, the parking standard is specified in Appendix 7.3 of the Local Plan.</p> <p>At the time of the drafting and adoption of the Local Plan 2036, these standards were significantly more advanced than those set down in the County Council's parking standard document. However since then the County Council has adopted a new parking standard, which now has the same tests for car free development as the City Council's Local Plan. These are set out in paragraph 4.12 of the County Council document, and are identical to the existing Oxford Local Plan policy M3.</p> <p>Furthermore, the newly adopted County Council parking standard then includes the entirety of the City Council's Local Plan parking standard as Section 5 of their document. In other words, the new County Council parking has come into line with, and has not altered, the City Council's Local Plan policies on parking.</p> <p>The City Council and OX Place have taken extensive advice on the delivery of car free and low car developments, and the impacts of those on values and on desirability for tenants. While there is substantial evidence supporting city and district centre zero car developments, there is considerably less relating to edge of town developments. Both the Council and the housing company will continue to monitor best practice and experience both within and outside the UK.</p>
--	--

<p>AH3 From Cllr Morris to Cllr Hollingsworth – Improved Amenities in Marston</p>	
<p>Question</p> <p>Does the portfolio holder agree that given</p>	<p>Written Response</p> <p>The fifteen minute neighbourhood</p>

<p>the desirability of 15 minute neighbourhoods, Marston would benefit substantially from improved amenities, such as a doctor's surgery, dentist and community centre? What steps are the Council taking to improve the proximity of key amenities to residents in Marston?</p>	<p>concept, which has been at the heart of good planning for at least a century, is being used as part of the Local Plan 2040 process to identify where particular amenities might be under-provided for across the city. While not wanting to pre-empt that work, Marston may well be one of the areas where particular amenities are further away than is desirable from people's home.</p> <p>It is important to bear in mind that the Local Plan is only one part of the process, and that for many facilities we are reliant on organisations outside the City Council to support both in principle and sometimes with funding the provision of a new amenity.</p> <p>For example, the NHS – through the Integrated Care Board – would need to give its support for the provision of a doctors' surgery and ensure that GPs and other health staff were ready to occupy it. The City Council is in close contact with the ICB and has made clear to it the importance of a clear strategy for primary health care facilities in Oxford and Oxfordshire so that we – and the other planning authorities in the county – can include appropriate site designations in our Local Plans.</p>
--	---

Cabinet Member for Citizen Focused Services

NC1 From Cllr Pegg to Cllr Chapman – Tree Removal	
<p>Question</p> <p>Can the cabinet member set out the process taken by the tree team and other officers when a tree is to be removed, including when the local members and residents may be consulted?</p>	<p>Written Response</p> <p>The below is taken from the Oxford City Council Tree Management Policy. Tree works and the associated notifications are undertaken by ODS:</p> <p><i>“The Council will inform Ward Councillors and appropriate ‘Friends Groups’ of any major tree works such as pollarding or felling <u>before</u> any works are carried out in their ward/park. This gives councillors the opportunity to raise concerns about the</i></p>

	<p><i>proposed works. If there are a large number of trees to fell in one location, the Council may also erect notices to inform the public of the proposed works.</i></p> <p><i>In the event of <u>emergency safety work</u> that must be carried out immediately (e.g. storm damage), the Council will notify Ward Councillors retrospectively.”</i></p> <p>Felling is the last resort and will only be carried out when deemed necessary by the Tree Team. However, public safety is paramount and for this reason it is sometimes necessary to act quickly and inform councillors and the public after the event.</p>
--	---

NC2 From Cllr Jarvis to Cllr Chapman – Town Hall Toilet Facilities	
<p>Question</p> <p>Will the works planned on the Town Hall include the introduction of gender neutral toilet facilities?</p>	<p>Written Response</p> <p>Phase Two of the Town Hall project is currently being scoped and we will consider the introduction of gender neutral toilets within this. A Member workshop on future options for the Town Hall will be held in due course.</p>

NC3 From Cllr Miles to Cllr Chapman – Bike Access for Recycling	
<p>Question</p> <p>What provision does the city council make for residents to access the city council recycling centres by bike?</p>	<p>Written Response</p> <p>Oxford City Council provides a comprehensive kerbside collection recycling service, a bulky items collection service and a garden waste service all delivered through ODS. We would encourage residents to use these services in the first instance for recycling.</p> <p>However, there may be occasions where residents may want to take some items for recycling to the Redbridge Household Waste Recycling Centre (HWRC) – which is operated by Oxfordshire County Council. Pedestrian access is not permitted onto any of Oxfordshire’s HWRCs as there are currently no segregated walkways to enable pedestrians to safely enter and exit the</p>

	<p>sites. However, the County Council does not state any restrictions on access by cycle.</p> <p>Oxford City Council also currently operates a number of Community Recycling Centres or bring banks across the city, typically in car parks or on other council land. All are accessible by cycle. However, the Council is planned to remove the majority of these as we have expanded the range of items that can be collected from people's homes, and some of these bring banks have become focal points for fly-tipping.</p>
--	--

Cabinet Member for Zero Carbon Oxford and Climate Justice

AR1 From Cllr Miles to Cllr Railton – Grass Verge Damage by Vehicles	
<p>Question</p> <p>On Morrell Avenue, vehicle owners accessing their repurposed front gardens as car parking are currently driving over the verges and destroying the grass and new spring bulbs. What steps are being taken by the City Council to prevent the destruction of its grass verges?</p>	<p>Written Response</p> <p>In general, maintenance of the carriageway, pavements and verges, together with parking and other highway enforcement activities are the responsibility of the Local Transport Authority – Oxfordshire County Council.</p> <p>The County Council procures ODS and other operators to undertake works – which in some areas of the city, eg. Marsh Lane, have included the installation of kick rails to protect verges from people parking vehicles.</p>

AR2 From Cllr Pegg to Cllr Railton – Local Nature Recovery Strategy	
<p>Question</p> <p>Can the portfolio holder provide an update on the Council's involvement with developing a Local Nature Recovery Strategy, and when we can expect such a strategy to be published?</p>	<p>Written Response</p> <p>It is expected that Oxfordshire County Council will be appointed local lead for the development of a LNRS by Government. We are working closely with them in the preparation for this and have in partnership with the other Oxfordshire local authorities developed a Nature Recovery Network which will form</p>

	a key part of a future LNRS.
--	------------------------------

AR3 From Cllr Kerr to Cllr Railton – Oxford’s Smoke Control Areas	
Question We know that PM 2.5 caused by wood burning is a huge health issue in Oxford, as highlighted in the City’s autumn Do You Fuel Good campaign. Is there currently any further detail on the plans for extending Oxford’s Smoke Control Areas, as referenced in the Air Quality Action Plan?	Written Response Oxford City Council has committed, under measure 22 of its current Air Quality Action Plan to “Review of Smoke Controlled Zones and implement revised government legislation for smoke nuisance”. With updated legislation on SCAs very recently published by government we are currently in the process of assessing how the new powers can assist us in reaching our targets of reduced particulate matter.

Cabinet Member for Health and Transport

LU1 From Cllr Muddiman to Cllr Upton – Encouraging Walking and Cycling on Botley Road	
Question What plans does the council have to encourage more residents to walk and/or cycle on the Botley Road, whilst it is closed at the train station?	Written Response During the periods of closure of Botley Road at the train station, pedestrians and cyclists will continue to be able to pass under the railway. Therefore, walking and cycling will automatically be even more attractive options. The City Council has continually encouraged Network Rail and the County Council (the organisations responsible for the railway and highway works) to produce as robust a set of mitigation measures as possible. Network Rail have promised to provide marshals to ensure that people walking and wheeling interact smoothly as they pass under the bridge. The periods where access under the bridge is restricted will be particularly disruptive for those with disabilities. The City Council’s Inclusive Transport & Movement Focus Group continues to engage with Network Rail, the bus

	<p>operators and both councils in order to mitigate the impacts of this period of works on those with impairments.</p> <p>One piece of good news is that the King George’s Field Active Travel route, just to the south of Botley Road, is due to open the week before the Botley Road closure begins. The new path, designed for both pedestrians and cyclists, will provide a direct, convenient and visually pleasing off-road connection between Botley and the city centre.</p> <p>King George’s Playing Field Cycle Improvements King George’s Playing Field Cycle Improvements Oxford City Council</p>
--	---

<p>LU2 From Cllr Morris to Cllr Upton – Local, Sustainable and Resilient Food Production</p>	
<p>Question</p> <p>What is the City Council currently doing to encourage more local, sustainable and resilient food production, such as through helping residents to set up food growing schemes, supporting street food growing, and community gardening groups in public spaces and allotment sites? Does the Council plan to further develop its support in this area?</p>	<p>Written Response</p> <p>Oxford City Council has signed up to the Oxfordshire Food Strategy. We are an integral part of the Food Action Working Group for Oxford (I chair it, and several city officers attend) which is developing the Action Plan to underlie the Food Strategy for the city.</p> <p>Fellow Cabinet Members Cllrs Aziz and Munkonge and I are working with the Communities team to produce some ambitious and achievable actions that we can put into the Food Action Plan to be produced later this year.</p> <p>I would like to thank Cllr Morris for the fantastic work he has done with Marston Community Gardening to develop community allotments – this is an excellent example of the kind of thing we will look at supporting.</p>

To: Council

Date: 20 March 2023

Report of: Head of Law and Governance

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

Introduction

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

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

1. Address by Nicola Smith – Plant-based Food and Sustainable Farming
2. Address by Ian Middleton – Plant-based Food and Sustainable Farming
3. Address by Judith Harley - ODS Vandalism in Cowley Marsh Park
4. Address by Jocelyn Wogan-Browne, Oxford Flood and Environment Group – Oxford Flood Alleviation Scheme
5. Question from Judith Harley – New Park Bench Installation in Cowley Marsh Park

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

1. Address by Nicola Smith – Plant-based Food and Sustainable Farming

I am Dr Nicola Smith, I have been working as a Paediatrician in the NHS since 2013, and I would like to support the proposal on Plant-based Food and Sustainable Farming.

Animal agriculture is a major driver of the climate and ecological crises which are also directly impacting human health. It is clear that a global shift to plant-based diet is necessary to avert the looming catastrophe. The Eat Lancet Commission's Planetary

Health Plate, designed to keep the food system within planetary boundaries, is 87% plant-based, with animal-derived foods are being strictly optional.

But aside from the significant impact of diet on climate change, and the subsequent consequences of this for human health, there is also substantial evidence that a plant-based diet can benefit individual health.

Poor diet is now the number one cause of death and disability in the UK, resulting in a rising burden of obesity, cardiovascular disease, diabetes, and cancer. A whole food plant-based diet has been shown to reduce the risk of these diseases, improving health and longevity, as well as reducing the burden on our health services.

A whole food plant-based diet is one consisting of fruits, vegetable, whole grains, legumes, nuts, and seeds, with few or no animal products. Following such a diet has been shown to lead to a 30% reduction in cardiovascular mortality, a 15% reduction in the incidence of cancer, and a 60% reduced risk of type 2 diabetes. The Eat Lancet Commission estimated that a whole food plant-based diet could prevent 11 million deaths annually.

Plant-based diets promote health via a number of mechanisms. These foods are mostly low calorie yet have a high nutrient content; including fibre, polyphenols, unsaturated fats, and anti-inflammatory and antioxidant compounds. Plant-based foods are often low in saturated fat and have a high fibre content, and plant-based diets are associated with healthier gut microbiome and lower levels of inflammation.

According to the British Dietetic Association, well-planned plant-based diets can support healthy living at every age and life-stage. If a wide variety of healthy whole foods are included, this diet can be both balanced and sustainable.

The Oxford City Council has the opportunity to model best-practice for the local population. By demonstrating that plant-based eating can be delicious, nutritious, and the new standard, there is the potential to improve the health of the community, move towards a more sustainable future, and inspire widespread change.

Verbal Response from Councillor Louise Upton, Cabinet Member for Health and Transport

Thank you very much Dr Smith for coming to address us at Council today. We are really grateful to you for highlighting the issues around poor diet and how this is directly linked to the increasing number of people who are in poor health. Later this month, the Director of Public Health for Oxfordshire will be publishing his latest snapshot of the health of the County and it is not good. It has got worse over the pandemic of course and it will show once again that there has been a big rise in the number of people who are an unhealthy weight. That starts with 1 in 5 children in a Reception class and it just gets worse after that until more than half of adults are an unhealthy weight. We know that translates into living shorter lives with multiple health problems. Changing our diet is vitally important to fixing this and cutting back on meat and dairy products and increasing our vegetable consumption, alongside reducing junk food, is going to be absolutely key to doing that I believe. This Council signed up to the Oxfordshire Food Strategy last year and we are currently drawing up an action plan which is specifically about not just reducing the carbon footprint of food in supply chains, but how we can make it healthier – and that of course is going to involve quite a shift to plant-based diet. I want to thank you again very much indeed for coming and highlighting the health benefits of it, because I think that is an angle that often gets lost in the carbon reduction debate about plant-based diets.

2. Address by Ian Middleton – Plant-based Food and Sustainable Farming

Thank you for giving me this opportunity to speak on Cllr Dunne's motion.

The motion references the County Council's adoption of a similar policy and as the proposer of the motion that led to that, I've since been contacted by other local authorities and organisations asking for help and advice on how to do the same. So I hope it may be useful for me to offer some insights here.

Avoiding meat and dairy is the single biggest way to reduce your personal environmental impact and could cut individual carbon output by as much as 50%. That was the conclusion of a comprehensive analysis of the global impact of farming recently published in the journal 'Science', which assessed the full effects of meat and dairy production on land use, climate change emissions and water and air pollution.

According to the United Nations Environment Programme, meat production alone accounts for 18-25 per cent of the world's Greenhouse Gas emissions. If left unchecked, animal agriculture is predicted to account for 70 per cent of all global emissions by 2050.

Analysis shows that while meat and dairy provide just 18% of calories and 37% of protein, it uses 83% of farmland and produces 60% of agriculture's greenhouse gas emissions. Even the very lowest impact meat and dairy products still cause much more environmental harm than the least sustainable vegetable and cereal alternatives.

There have been suggestions that encouraging a plant-based diet is anti-farmer, but that's very far from the truth with both my motion and Cllr Dunne's including specific references to supporting local farmers and food producers.

The vast majority of the meat and dairy consumed in the UK is not locally produced, often not even UK produced. Instead it comes from intensive factory farms, both in terms of the livestock itself and the growing of feedstock, often in areas that have been cleared in some of the most environmentally sensitive regions on the planet. Cheap imported meat and dairy products from countries with far worse human and animal welfare standards than the UK also make up a considerable proportion of our average daily diet.

Whilst intensive farming can have damaging environmental consequences, smaller local farms can be part of the solution. Not only as a vital link in a more sustainable food chain, but also as stewards of the rural landscape we all need and love.

In Oxfordshire we already have roughly twice as much farmland devoted to arable compared to livestock, and growing fruit and vegetables is by far the most efficient use of land. But whilst market gardens are one of the fastest growing and profitable forms of agriculture, fruit growers are struggling to survive and need support.

I have no doubt that local farmers will continue to produce meat and dairy for the foreseeable future and no one is seeking to change that in the short term. But to make small scale farming a commercial proposition, consumers have to be prepared to pay a fair price for their produce.

By reducing our consumption of cheap, intensively farmed foods and eating less but better quality, locally produced alternatives, we can support farmers and ensure they can continue to make a living.

There have also been claims that adopting a plant-based only policy is an assault on freedom of choice. But again this is a mischaracterisation.

Neither the county council policy nor Cllr Dunne's motion seeks to restrict what people eat in their daily lives - that will always remain their personal choice. Equally it's every

councillor's choice to eat what they want. The only difference is that the councils will not be actively offering non-plant-based options.

Instead they will be setting an example by showing that even a small reduction in the consumption of meat and dairy can have a big impact on climate change public health without sacrificing our enjoyment of food.

Most of us will eat roughly 21 main meals a week. If every member of this council removed meat and dairy from just one of those meals that would be the equivalent of 16 people going fully plant-based.

Some may find they prefer to do more than that, or already do. But the aim is not to force people to make drastic changes to their diet. The point is that, in demonstrating and highlighting alternative dietary options that are already widely available, we start a conversation with people and help promote a positive behavioural shift that will have significant impacts on both health and climate change, not to mention animal welfare. A plant-based diet is also cheaper than one that has meat in every meal, something that is now hugely important for everyone, especially local authorities.

So I hope members will agree that such a lot of benefit for such a small change has to be worth doing and will support Cllr Dunne's motion, fully adopt its recommendations, and join the many other authorities who have already enacted similar policies or are likely to do so in the near future.

Verbal Response from Councillor Anna Railton, Cabinet Member for Zero Carbon Oxford and Climate Justice

Thank you Cllr Middleton for coming to address us this evening. I believe when we met previously we talked about your equivalent motion at County and how pleased I was that you had done so. I fully endorse the points you have made around the impact of intensive farming and particularly livestock farming in terms of carbon emissions. Of course, as a tier two authority we have very limited interactions with farmers relative to you at the County Council and our District neighbours. As you may have also heard in terms of our own food consumption on the City Council, much of the catering for Oxford City Councillors was removed as a budget saving measure a few years ago and all Council-run events where food is served does already have plant-based food alternatives which I have been enjoying. The Climate Action Oxfordshire Campaign, which we jointly run, is urging people to reduce their personal carbon footprint and help their wallets by cutting back on meat, if not removing it completely from their diets. Where I think we can make a real difference is continuing to encourage our residents to look at their own diets and reduce their meat and dairy consumption. After all, we don't need a handful of people like ourselves being vegan, we need millions of people doing it imperfectly.

3. Address by Judith Harley - ODS Vandalism in Cowley Marsh Park

Lord Mayor, Councillors,

Some four weeks ago Oxford Direct Services (ODS) began constructing a new cycle route through Cowley Marsh Park. In addition to “upgrading” footpaths, forcing pedestrians to share their paths with more cyclists, which is always bad for pedestrians, the new route includes the creation of two new cycle access points within the designated Nature Park section at the rear of Cowley Marsh Park. Both of these access points are completely un-necessary as they are each just feet away from existing cycle paths and accesses.

An online consultation was held on these cycleway proposals by ODS last December, which stated that ODS did not require planning permission for this, but could essentially do what they liked under permitted development. It seems that this, like many Council consultations, was a token “tick-box” gesture only. I completed the consultation and objected to these plans on the grounds that not only were these cycle routes a danger for pedestrians, but the new access points were quite un-necessary and would damage and harm the flora and fauna in the Nature Park. There was no feedback and no response to my comments, which were clearly ignored.

The construction of the new access points has damaged tree roots and branches in both sections and obliterated wild crocus plants which are found only in this area of the Nature Park. I had understood that it was contrary to the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 to damage wild crocus plants – and they have been destroyed to create a cycle access through a hole in the boundary fence used by pedestrians. ODS should just repair the hole as it is merely a few feet from this to the existing main cycle access point from the Park onto the adjoining Bridle path and cycleway which runs alongside the ODS depot.

For the past four weeks, since work on these cycleways began, I have been in e-mail correspondence about this with ODS Highways, Cllr Chewe Munkonge as Cabinet member for Parks, and my ward councillors. I have sent them photos of the damage and destruction and tried to get this un-necessary work halted. I have asked each of them to meet me in the Park to see how un-necessary are these additional cycle access points. To no avail. ODS claim that they will dig up the crocus bulbs to plant elsewhere. As this is the only spot where they flourish I doubt if they will survive elsewhere. I have asked ODS if they have a licence to do this, but have received no reply. Tree roots have been damaged and broken. Some tree branches have been cut, and I expect that more will be deemed to be in the way of cyclists. I regard this as vandalism by ODS as in my opinion there is no justification for any part of this work, and I would like to hear the Council’s justification for this.

I am inviting each and any of you City councillors to meet me in Cowley Marsh Park to see for yourselves how un-necessary are these access points. The damaging construction has continued despite my requests to ODS and councillors to halt this until I could address Full Council on this matter. Who on the Council authorised this work in the first place, and did they understand the area that was being proposed for damage and destruction?

I am asking the Council to halt this work and get ODS to undo the damage they have done already, which is to restore the Nature Park to its previous state, to repair the hole in the boundary fence on the Bridle path, and to return the wild crocus bulbs to their original habitat.

Written Response from Councillor Chewe Munkonge, Deputy Leader and Cabinet Member for Leisure and Parks

This track is designed to provide an important off-road, all weather surface link between Cowley/Oxford Road and the Barracks Lane cycle route network - it does not run parallel with another cycle route. Questions were raised about ecology issues and potential impacts on tree roots, planning officers contacted ODS to clarify the specifications for the works, once they were satisfied the works continued and the project will shortly be completed.

4. Address by Jocelyn Wogan-Browne, Oxford Flood and Environment Group – Oxford Flood Alleviation Scheme

Councillors and Officers, thank you for the opportunity to address you about the re-application by the Environment Agency for its Oxford Flood Alleviation Scheme.

I'm Professor Jocelyn Wogan-Browne, an Oxford resident badly flooded in 2007, and I speak for a residents' forum, the Oxford Flood and Environment Group.

We share the consensus that Oxford needs a flood scheme, and, like 91% of local residents who responded to the first consultation, we accept around 85% of the proposed measures such as embankments, bunds and new flood gates, but, like that 91% of residents, we object to serious problems remaining with the scheme's most expensive and destructive element. This is the proposed 5-kilometre channel (up to 250 yards wide) from Seacourt to the Old Abingdon Road will destroy Oxford's wildlife corridor in the green belt, devastate habitat for protected species, give poor and uncertain value for money, and cause loss of the nationally rare MG4a grassland in Hinkley Meadows: all this without fully addressing flood risks. The channel has been strongly criticized by independent expert hydrologists, botanists, environmental specialists and planners, and is intensely opposed by residents.

The EA's re-application has not adequately addressed the key issues: examples are:

1. Major flaws in the hydrological modelling. This would undermine the basis for the scheme at a planning inquiry.
2. Failure to heed advice from both the City and County council's ecologists (and wildlife groups and independent experts) that Hinkley Meadows' MG4a grassland is irreplaceable (more so than Port Meadow's). Thanks to earlier objections the EA now admits to a -1% biodiversity loss (not the legally required 10% net gain on-site that it previously claimed for substituting flood meadows with a smaller area of wetlands). It now offers no mitigation for MG4a, because there is none.
3. Failure to consider alternatives to the 5km channel, and therefore to comply with the mitigation hierarchy for endangered exceptional sites. The scheme can avoid destroying Hinkley Meadows by the alternative of having a shorter channel or even no channel. Both alternatives are shown by the EA's own figures as securing very nearly equivalent flood-risk alleviation as having the 'conceptually flawed' full channel would – but without the destruction. The other 85% of the scheme does the work.
4. Failure to comply with ten current National Planning Policy Framework directives.
5. Failure to consider the council's local plan directives about green infrastructure, and natural methods of flood prevention (OxLEP 2040 Preferred Options, ch. 4, G1,4, 5, 6; ch. 5, Set R2, for instance).

We contend that the failures in the EA's re-application will lead to

- A damaging flood alleviation scheme built on flawed hydrological modelling at enormous expense and bio-diversity cost, without being future proof, and with no fully defined or secured plan for maintenance.
- Potential reputational damage for all involved, including Oxford City Council, especially through the destruction of the irreplaceable one thousand-year-old Hinkley Meadows (a loss already internationally protested). Reputational damage will increase as recent NPPF revisions designed to lower pressure on the green belt and emphasise the priority of placemaking and beauty go forward, and as the EA pursues its twenty-first-century campaigns for flood meadow and whole-catchment solutions without channels in areas other than Oxford.

- There will also be much anger when residents who have not had time to read the application's 450 documents realize that they are losing access and amenity for up to 5 years across a vast area of greenfield and greenbelt (Schoolchildren and workers already, for instance, have to go round congested Botley Rd during Willow Walk's temporary closure- but – for years?). Already worried about bio-diversity loss across the city, residents will see 5 kilometres of hedgerows and 2,000+ mature trees destroyed along with the meadows, the collapse of the West Oxford wildlife corridor, the loss of iconic riverine Oxfordshire landscapes, and the removal of 700,000 tons of embodied carbon as the scheme area is dug up for the channel. They will suffer a permanent reduction to their greenfield space. For mitigation, they will have some partly fenced wetland (a bio-diversity loss compared with flood meadow), and – if they wait a couple of decades- some offsite saplings on land the EA has not yet secured, under a maintenance plan not yet detailed or clearly funded.
- Residents will also get some 240 HGV summer movements per day over 3-5 years carrying spoil onto the A34, entailing speed restrictions there.
- This is a poor use of £174 million of public funds, but the most destructive effects can be avoided and costs lowered with a no-channel scheme.

We ask: Does the council really want to support an expensive, flawed scheme based on faulty modelling and data that will only marginally reduce the flood risk for a tiny minority of homes at the expense of some of Oxford's greatest biodiversity treasures?

We ask you to say 'YES to the flood scheme, NO to the channel'.

Written Response from Councillor Alex Hollingsworth, Cabinet Member for Planning and Housing Delivery

Oxford has a long history of flooding. Significant floods in recent decades have caused damage to homes and businesses and closed the railway and major roads into the city. With the effects of climate change, this is only expected to get worse, with thousands more properties potentially at risk within 50 years. Oxford City Council believes therefore that a flood alleviation scheme is urgently required.

The Environment Agency (EA) and their designers have considered more than 100 combinations of options to reduce flood risk from the River Thames in Oxford. Extensive consultation has been undertaken by the EA to ensure that the proposed scheme acknowledges and addresses concerns raised by the public. The EA have considered the alternative ideas being put forward by both individuals and groups in the community, and they are confident that the design and consultation process has resulted in the best scheme for Oxford; as a partner the City Council supports this approach.

Full environmental assessment has been undertaken by the EA, and will be subject to scrutiny from consultees and regulatory bodies through the formal planning process. The City Council will provide a response to the consultation as a Local Planning Authority, but it will be the responsibility of Oxfordshire County Council as the determining body to decide whether or not the proposals are acceptable in planning terms.

As with all development proposals there will be impacts; and mitigation, compensation, and enhancement measures to address those impacts are proposed. With regards to grassland habitat, the EA recognises the importance and scarcity of the floodplain meadow habitat present in Hinksey Meadow. The impact to the existing meadow will be

minimised, with the scheme resulting in the loss of 1.33ha, with 17.8ha of lowland meadow habitat creation proposed in the surrounding landscape as compensation.

Impacts on biodiversity are being taken very seriously by the EA. Detailed surveys have been undertaken for protected species and habitats in the scheme area, and impacts of biodiversity are also being assessed through use of a DEFRA metric. OFAS will be delivering a minimum of 10% net gain, and aiming for further enhancements beyond this. The biodiversity net gain will be secured by Oxfordshire County Council as part of any planning permission granted. This approach is proposed in order to avoid loss of biodiversity, and provide betterment as a result of the scheme.

The construction process has also been considered by the EA, and measures taken to reduce disruption where possible. A haul road will be built specifically for construction traffic within the scheme area to reduce the need for lorries to drive on local roads to access different areas of the site, and a second planning application will be submitted to run alongside the main scheme application to transport excavated material from the construction site by rail.

5. Question from Judith Harley – New Park Bench Installation in Cowley Marsh Park

Earlier this year a table, benches, and shelter were installed in Cowley Marsh Park. A press release described this as “pastel-coloured covered seating ... designed by ... teenage girls ... to understand their experiences of green spaces”. This is a tacky, garish, brightly-coloured intrusion which shows no respect for the green space whatsoever. I, and other walkers, regard this installation as an eyesore. There appears to have been no consultation amongst other park users over this design, location, or construction.

This covered installation – near the children’s play area – is a magnet for drinkers, smokers, and drug users. It provides a sheltered area with a table for their goods and benches for them to sit. There is no litter bin, so the ground by the installation is often strewn with unsightly rubbish – drinks cans, food packaging, and other items. Mud is often smeared over furniture and shelter. I have yet to see any girls use this space.

My question: Will the Council remove this unsightly drug / drink / smokers shelter, close to the children’s play area; or, if not, explain how they will monitor and restrict the misuse of this shelter and keep the area clean and litter-free?

Written Response from Councillor Chewe Munkonge, Deputy Leader and Cabinet Member for Leisure and Parks

The bench was designed by local young women as part of a project to better understand and overcome barriers stopping girls and young women using public green spaces. They feel that much of the current teen provision is designed for boys and want more of an input into design of facilities for themselves. It was always understood the bench would be a prototype and sadly we have had some vandalism, but we have not received complaints about any other anti-social behaviour. The parks team are though visiting the site this week and will monitor and take action as needed.