

Minutes of a meeting of Council on Monday 23 March 2026

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Council members present:

Councillor Arshad	Councillor Azad
Councillor Brown	Councillor Chapman
Councillor Clarkson	Councillor Diggins
Councillor Djafari-Marbini	Councillor Fouweather
Councillor Fry	Councillor Gant (Sheriff)
Councillor Goddard	Councillor Henwood
Councillor Hunt	Councillor Jarvis
Councillor Kerr	Councillor Latif
Councillor Lygo	Councillor Malik
Councillor Miles	Councillor Max Morris
Councillor Muddiman	Councillor Mundy
Councillor Munkonge	Councillor Ottino
Councillor Powell	Councillor Pressel
Councillor Qayyum	Councillor Railton
Councillor Rawle	Councillor Rehman
Councillor Robinson	Councillor Rowley (Deputy Lord Mayor)
Councillor Sandelson	Councillor Linda Smith
Councillor Roz Smith	Councillor Smowton
Councillor Taylor	Councillor Turner
Councillor Upton (Lord Mayor)	Councillor Waite
Councillor Yeatman	

Also present for all or part of the meeting:

Caroline Green, Chief Executive
Tom Hook, Deputy Chief Executive - Citizen and City Services
Tom Bridgman, Deputy Chief Executive - Place
Nigel Kennedy, Group Director Finance
Emma Jackman, Director of Law, Governance and Strategy
Jonathan Malton, Committee and Member Services Manager

Hannah Carmody-Brown, Committee and Member Services Officer

Paula Redway, Culture and Community Development Manager

Alistair Rush, Interim Group Finance Director

James Watkins, Housing Policy and Projects Officer

None

None

None

Apologies:

Councillor(s) Altaf-Khan, Corais, Harley, Hollingsworth, Jupp, Regisford and Stares sent apologies.

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

116. Apologies for absence

Councillor Harley, Councillor Hollingsworth, Councillor Regisford, Councillor Stares, Councillor Altaf-Khan, Councillor Corais, and Councillor Jupp sent apologies.

Councillor Djafari-Marbini, Councillor Latif, Councillor Rehman, Councillor Yeatman and Councillor Turner would be arriving late.

117. Declarations of interest

Councillor Jarvis noted that in relation to motion 18C, he is a member of the Unite Union but explained that he holds no formal or decision-making power with the organisation.

Councillor Ottino, Councillor Arshad and Councillor Rowley noted they were also members of the Unite Union.

118. Minutes

Council resolved to **approve** the minutes of the meetings held on 26 January 2026 and the budget meeting of Council on 23 February 2026.

119. Appointment to Committees

There were no new appointments to committees.

120. Announcements

The Lord Mayor reminded Council that all Member SIM cards had now been delivered and would require swapping unless alternative agreements had been made with the Democratic Services team. Council was also reminded of the Lord Mayor's Quiz due to take place on Friday, 27 March and The Lord Mayor informed Council of her visit to Oxford's twin city with a delegation of arts organisations. The Council's new Section 151 Officer, Alistair Rush, was introduced.

Councillor Mundy and Councillor Yeatman joined the meeting.

The Deputy Lord Mayor noted his recent time spent with volunteers across the city who support children to enjoy reading; he expressed his thanks.

The Sheriff informed Council that he had presided over the ceremony of nine new freemen.

Councillor Diggins joined the meeting.

The Leader of the Council made two announcements. Firstly, Council was informed of the proposed civic office holders for the next municipal year: Councillor Munkonge as Lord Mayor, Councillor Upton as Deputy Lord Mayor, and Councillor Linda Smith as Sheriff. Secondly, Council heard a statement relating to the Ultimate Picture Palace which had been a recent concern for many Members and a historic success story for Oxford. The Leader of the Council outlined that since 2022 it had been a community-owned independent cinema after over 1200 local investors bought shares in order to protect the art deco building which dates back to 1911. It has been listed as a community asset since 2025 and as grade 2 listed since 1994; details of this were provided to emphasise the value of the Ultimate Picture Palace. Council heard that the owners of the site, Oriel College, no longer intend to keep the UPP as a community-owned cinema and a campaign has arisen locally to persuade them otherwise. The Leader of the Council emphasised to Members that there is a possibility Oriel College may submit a planning application for a change of use for the site, and any Members who sit on the Planning Committee must be mindful of whether support given to such campaigns will prejudice or be perceived to prejudice the open-minded assessment of any future applications. It was noted that the Council wishes the campaign every success.

Councillor Arshad left the meeting.

The City Rector reflected on events associated with 25 March throughout history, noting that the date historically marked the start of the new year. Council also heard that in Lord of the Rings, 25 March marked the date which the ring of evil was destroyed and the City Rector expressed hope that this could apply to the present context in which adults and children are experiencing so much sadness. Members of Council were urged to seek out hope and compassion.

121. Public addresses that relate to matters for decision at this meeting

None.

122. Urgent Business

None.

123. HRA Policies: Electrical Safety, Legionella Management

The Director of Housing has submitted a report to approve the following policies: electrical safety, and legionella policies to ensure the maintenance of the housing stock.

Councillor Linda Smith introduced the report, noting that these two HRA policies add to the suite of policies Council has previously considered. Council understood the importance of these policies for setting out what tenants, lease holders and shared owners can expect from the Council as the landlord to ensure the safety of their homes. The report and policies also provide transparency and accountability. Councillor Linda Smith summarised the actions taken by the Council to meet the high standards required through the Regulator for Social Housing; these were summarised in detail.

There were no questions from Council.

Councillor Linda Smith moved the report. Upon being seconded by Councillor Brown, the recommendations were put to a vote and agreed.

Council resolved to:

1. **Approve** the Electrical Safety Policy
2. **Approve** the Legionella Policy

124. Allocations Scheme Review

The Director of Housing has submitted a report to approve the new draft Social Housing Allocations Scheme for Oxford, following public consultation.

Councillor Linda Smith introduced the report and emphasised the housing affordability issues in Oxford. Council understood that despite efforts, demand for social housing continues to be greater than the supply; over 3900 households are currently on the local housing register. Councillor Linda Smith outlined that allocation of social housing must be fairly and transparently and explain the steps within this report designed to support this. Council understood that that allocation scheme had completed a consultation period and improvements had been identified and implemented; much of the existing allocation scheme was understood to be working well and has been retained.

Councillor Arshad rejoined the meeting.

Councillor Fouweather welcomed the report but queried how the new allocation scheme would fit with the Council's existing damp and mould policy. Councillor Linda Smith noted that separate policies to manage damp and mould were approved by Council in November 2024 and the matters are also taken seriously.

Councillor Fouweather suggested that allocations scheme, as set out, does not pay attention to the damp and mould policy as people affected would not be automatically given increased allocation. Councillor Linda Smith explained that that the Council does not wish for any property to be affected by damp and mould, therefore people will be moved as required on a case-by-case basis, but the allocation scheme does not automatically make provision for this as a normal scenario.

Councillor Fouweather queried what impact the implementation phases of the Social Housing Act 2023 would have on the new allocations scheme in 2026 and 2027. Councillor Linda Smith committed to setting out a detailed response in writing.

Councillor Miles requested clarification relating to the qualification of tenants who live in social housing outside of the city but need to relocate or commute in order to work in Oxford. It was suggested this could cause hardship. Secondly, Councillor Miles asked how far outside of the city people must live for the relevant clause to apply. Councillor Linda Smith explained that this would be considered on a case-by-case basis and committed to write with a detailed response.

Councillor Rowley welcomed the improvements to the allocation scheme as set out in the report and asked, in relation to page 126, whether any changes have occurred for those families with children between the ages of 18 and 22. Councillor Linda Smith explained that there would be no changes for existing tenants, but that those bidding for a new property would be affected.

Councillor Linda Smith moved the report. Upon being seconded by Councillor Brown, the recommendations were put to a vote and agreed.

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Council resolved to:

1. **Approve** the new draft Social Housing Allocations Scheme for Oxford;
2. **Delegate authority** to the Director of Housing, in consultation with the Cabinet Member for Housing and Communities, to authorise the date on which the Allocations Scheme is implemented, noting the explanation and timelines in paragraph 23;
3. **Delegate authority** to the Director of Housing, in consultation with the Cabinet Member for Housing and Communities, to make minor changes to the Allocations Scheme in order to comply with changes to legislative and statutory

guidance, related Council policies (approved by Cabinet) and to make technical changes to ensure the effective and efficient functioning of the scheme.

125. Annual Pay Policy Statement

The Head of People has submitted a report for Council to approve the Annual Pay Policy Statement.

Councillor Chapman introduced the report noting that it is a legislative requirement to seek Council's approval and summarised that the report sets out the agreed two-year local pay agreement with Unison and Unite which takes effect from 1 April 2026. Council understood that this includes a cost of living pay aware of 3.5% or £1500, whichever is higher, and a further 3% from 1 April 2027. Councillor Chapman thanked all those involved in the negotiations and encouraged Council to celebrate the report. Further features of the pay deal were also summarised in detail.

Councillor Taylor, noting that Oxfordshire County Council does not pay the Oxford living wage, asked what can be done to reassure officers of their future salaries given the incoming changes resulting from Local Government Reorganisation. Councillor Chapman outlined that the future local government structure is currently unknown but suggested that traditionally, salary deals are taken across to new authorities for a period to ensure some stability for staff. This pay deal would therefore likely apply to existing Oxford City Council and Oxford Direct Services staff in the immediate period following Local Government Reorganisation.

Councillor Chapman moved the report. Upon being seconded by Councillor Arshad, the recommendations were put to a vote and agreed.

Council resolved to:

1. **Approve** the Annual Pay Policy Statement 2026/27 as set out in Appendix 1 to this report
2. **Agree** the proposed pay agreement for April 2026 and April 2027 reached with Unison and Unite as set out in paragraph 3.

126. Questions on Cabinet minutes

a. Minutes of the Cabinet meeting held on 11 February 2026

Councillor Turner joined the meeting during this item.

There were no questions.

b. Minutes of the Cabinet meeting held on 18 March 2026

Councillor Snowton, in reference to the Integrated Performance Report, asked whether noted unbudgeted excursions under ICT costs, are now being more effectively managed in the medium term. Councillor Chapman set out the four main cost areas in this category and emphasised the unexpected costs incurred from the cyber incident last year. Councillor Turner also emphasised that many of the costs noted within the report would be one-off.

Councillor Rehman joined the meeting

127. Questions on Notice from Members of Council

71 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 32 supplementary questions and responses asked and given at the meeting are set out in the minutes pack.

Councillor Lygo left and rejoined the meeting during this item.

Councillor Gant left the meeting during this item and did not return.

The Lord Mayor suggested items 15, 16 and 17 be considered before the break.

128. Outside organisation report - Partnership report on the Oxfordshire Children's Trust Board, and the Council's work for Children and Young People living in the city

The Director of Law, Governance and Strategy (Monitoring Officer) and the Transition Director have submitted a report to update Council on the arrangements and board for The Oxfordshire Children's Trust and the Council's work for Children and Young People in the city.

Councillor Munkonge introduced the report, noting that the report summarises the collaborative work undertaken to improve health, wellbeing and outcomes for children and young people across Oxfordshire. A summary of this Council's work was provided and Councillor Munkonge also highlighted key challenges which remain in relation to improving SEND services.

Councillor Turner reflected on several examples of positive and inclusive work of this district council and asked whether as well as targeted initiatives, whether more general

opportunities for all young people could be supported. Councillor Munkonge confirmed that there would be more opportunities.

Councillor Miles asked whether future updates could include information on the city centre playground proposals. Councillor Munkonge confirmed this is a rolling project.

Council noted the report and the documents appended to it.

129. Outside organisation report - The Oxford Strategic Partnership

The Director of Law, Governance and Strategy (Monitoring Officer) and the Transition Director have submitted a report to update Council on the work of the Oxford Strategic Partnership, 2024 to 2025.

Councillor Brown introduced the report and thanked those officers who had contributed. Council understood that partnership's priorities are regularly reviewed to ensure work is as effective as possible and the report summarised work within the last year; examples were provided.

Councillor Miles noted that a small budget is assigned this workstream and asked what the money is used for specifically. Councillor Brown noted the budget covered necessary secretariat costs. Councillor Miles queried how many days work this equated to; Councillor Brown committed to offering a more detailed written response.

Councillor Fouweather asked where the OSP fits alongside the Greater Oxford Development Corporation, and whether the Leader agreed that it demonstrates bureaucratic overload. Councillor Brown noted that all the parallel bodies mentioned are important and hold different responsibilities and aims which sometimes positively overlap; a summary of each was delivered.

Councillor Mundy, in reference to point 49 of the report and Zero Carbon Oxford, asked whether a positive example is being set for how the local authorities can support decarbonisation. Councillor Brown confirmed that current work does set a positive example and referred to examples connected to local leisure centres and the council's housing stock.

Council noted the update report.

130. Scrutiny Committee update report

The Chair of the Scrutiny Committee has submitted a report which updates Council on the activities of scrutiny and the implementation of recommendations since the last meeting of Council.

Councillor Powell introduced the report, noting that the Scrutiny Committee had been busy in recent months, making a total of 41 recommendations, including those from the Budget Review Group. Council heard a summary of topics discussed including the nighttime economy, devolution, and fly tipping and that 24 recommendations had been agreed by Cabinet. Councillor Powell thanked the Committee, Cabinet Members, and supporting officers.

Councillor Malik asked why the Scrutiny Committee had not considered improvement to the nighttime economy in the city centre. Councillor Powell explained that the Committee's discussion had been informed by the report from the Cabinet Member which had indicated an already extensive focus on the city centre.

Councillor Jarvis, as a member of the Scrutiny Committee, suggested that recommendation 5 on the nighttime economy did not accurately align with the discussion held by the Committee. Councillor Powell acknowledged this and committed to contacting the Cabinet Member to update the wording of the recommendation to make the necessary inclusions.

Councillor Miles thanked Councillor Powell for chairing the Committee this municipal year and asked whether a summary of the urgent decisions taken would be provided, as promised last year. Councillor Powell committed to ensuring this would be included the annual report of the Committee.

Council noted the report.

Following the conclusion of this item, Council adjourned and took a break from 18.30 to 19.00.

The meeting resumed at 19.00

131. Public addresses that do not relate to matters for decision at this Council meeting

Council heard 2 addresses and Cabinet members responded.

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

Councillor Turner rejoined the meeting following the break during this item.

Councillor Roz Smith left and rejoined the meeting during this item.

Councillor Latif joined the meeting during this item.

132. Petition submitted in accordance with Council procedure rules - Save Our Museum

Council had received one petition.

Council heard one address and the Leader of the Council response.

The full text of the petition, the address, and the response are enclosed within the minutes pack.

Councillor Brown introduced the report and outlined an amendment to the fourth recommendation set out in the report. Council understand the report now sought agreement to recommend to Cabinet that further opportunities to provide free access to the Museum to local people be explored.

The Lord Mayor reminded Council that 15 minutes were available for debate.

Councillor Muddiman noted her personal commitment to securing a sign from the Botley Road bridge for display at the museum. She expressed her hope that residents will be able to visit the exhibition for free and emphasised her belief that free entry to national museums should be ensured, as initially introduced by the Government in 2001. The impacts of the cost-of-living crisis on people's ability to access cultural activities was noted and the importance of the walk-in principle was emphasised. Councillor Muddiman informed Council that in December 2025, the Hodge review of the Arts Council England recommended that charging should only be enforced for international tourists when visiting museums; it should remain free for all UK residents.

Councillor Snowton noted his support for keeping entry to the museum free and expressed the view that the cost of ensuring this would be marginal to the Council. Councillor Snowton emphasised the need to ensure a fair balance between free access to cultural assets for residents and supporting a healthy council budget.

Councillor Malik noted his concern in relation to contradictory figures presented in previous discussions and asked what action is being taken to correct this.

Councillor Turner noted his ideal preference that the Museum would remain free, however emphasised the need for the Council to make considered financial choices whilst protecting and promoting cultural and historical assets. Council Turner suggested that the appropriate channel for changing the museum free would have been the Budget Council meeting.

Councillor Hunt supported Councillor Muddiman's suggestion that the walk-in principle should be supported and suggested that additional effort is made to signpost tourists and the public to the museum and to emphasise Oxford's cultural quarter. Furthermore, Councillor Hunt suggested that separate free and paid exhibitions be created to support access for all and to retain an income stream for the museum.

Councillor Miles suggested that some of the paintings held in the Town Hall that do not support or align with the Council's values be sold in order to fund the preservation of other aspects of the city's history that do align with the council's values, such as the museum.

Councillor Taylor disagreed with Councillor Miles' suggestion, suggesting it did not support a long-term viable solution.

Councillor Miles explained that reinvestment of these assets could support income and shares could generate a better financial return to support the Council's service delivery costs.

Councillor Yeatman noted concern that charging for museum entry could reduce attendance rates which would reduce opportunity to consider other activities which could be sufficiently income generating. Councillor Yeatman expressed concern that insufficient time was spent considering the options before reaching the decision to charge an entrance fee.

Councillor Brown responded to comments raised during the debate and in response to concerns, outlined the regular free entry days which are still offered to the public across the year. In response to Councillor Malik, Councillor Brown explained that the figures considered by Cabinet and Council were accurate, and that regrettably some inaccurate figures were provided via an FOI request which has now been rectified. Councillor Hunt's suggestion of additional signage was welcomed and encourage all Members to promote the museum to ensure it is available and accessible to all groups.

Councillor Brown proposed the report, as amended. Upon being seconded by Councillor Snowton, the recommendations were put to a vote and agreed.

Council resolved to:

1. **Note** the contents of the report
2. **Hear** the address by the petition organiser
3. **Debate** the proposal contained within the petition and any relevant motion or recommend
4. **Recommended** to Cabinet that further opportunities to provide free access to the Museum to local people be explored

Councillor Jarvis, Councillor Brown, and Councillor Henwood left the meeting.

133. Motions on notice March 2026

Councillor Diggins left the meeting at the start of this item and did not return.

Council had before it 5 motions on notice submitted in accordance with Council procedure rules and reached decisions as set out below.

Motions agreed as set out below:

18b) Prisoners for Palestine hunger strikes (Proposed by Councillor Jarvis, Seconded by Councillor Mundy)

18c) Support for Mini Plant Oxford (Proposed by Councillor Linda Smith, Seconded by Councillor Ottino)

Motions taken but lost:

18a) Better use of Oxpens Bridge Funding (Proposed by Councillor Jupp, Seconded by Councillor Miles)

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

18d) Condemnation of Attempted Election Postponement (Proposed by Councillor Smowton, Seconded by Councillor Miles)

18e) Stop the War in Iran (Proposed by Councillor Powell, Seconded by Councillor Djafari-Marbini)

134. Better use of Oxpens Bridge Funding (Proposed by Cllr Jupp, Seconded by Cllr Miles)

Councillor Miles, seconded by Councillor Smowton, proposed the motion as set out in the briefing note. This was self-amended by the amendment set out in the briefing note, omitting one paragraph. Councillor Muddiman formally withdrew her amendment.

Councillor Brown, Councillor Jarvis, Councillor Diggins and Councillor Henwood rejoined the meeting during the debate of this motion.

Following the debate and on being put to the vote, the motion fell.

At the conclusion of this item Councillor Diggins left the meeting and did not return.

Council resolved to:

Reject the following motion:

Council notes:

- The cost of the Oxpens bridge has substantially increased since its original approval, and is running considerably behind other Growth Deal projects.
- c. That government has the option to repurpose the money for use in other active travel schemes and entrust the County Council to manage this.
- Government can and does vary the rules of the Deal from time to time. Thus far, government has rightly prioritised the spirit and objectives of the Deal above the letter of the agreement.
- Doubt remains that the Oxpens bridge will be able to provide a dry route to Osney Island and thereby unlock housing, due to the low-lying railway underpass in-between.
- The Growth Board (now Future Oxfordshire Partnership) was strongly urged against pursuing the Oxpens bridge project to begin with.

- £8.8 million of the funding for the proposed Oxpens Bridge came from the Government Growth Deal via Oxfordshire County Council and £1.5 million of the funding came from Homes England.
- These 2 funds should be spent on unlocking affordable homes, which this bridge does not do.

Council therefore believes it would be sensible to examine alternatives, and open a conversation with the County and/or the Ministry on options that deliver greater benefits for the residents of Oxford.

Council therefore resolves

- to ask the Leader to write to the relevant Minister, in full consultation with the accountable body for the Growth Deal funds, requesting that in the event of the bridge not going ahead:
 - That the Growth Deal be varied as necessary to permit the funds to be used for other specified purposes in Oxford;
 - That other options be explored to better employ the funds, including but not limited to:
 - Resurrecting the substantive scheme for Woodstock Road improvements to mitigate the effect of housing development to the north;
 - Revisiting the pedestrian bridge across the A40 at Barton Park which was dropped at planning stage, resulting in very real and significant safety concerns for residents;
 - Resurrecting the long-discussed plan for a foot/cycle bridge across the Thames at Jackdaw Lane, providing a safe and convenient alternative to the challenging Plain roundabout for residents of south and east Oxford.

Council notes that each of these schemes has been worked up in detail, and are thus available to re-visit, making any one of them attractive to a government which has the best interests of Oxford's residents at heart.

135. Prisoners for Palestine hunger strikes (Proposed by Cllr Jarvis, Seconded by Cllr Mundy)

Councillor Jarvis, seconded by Councillor Mundy, proposed the motion as set out in the briefing note with additional self-amendments. Councillor Ottino formally withdrew his amendment.

Councillor Arshad left the meeting and rejoined during debate of this motion.

Following the debate and on being put to the vote, the motion carried.

Councillor Djafari-Marbini left the meeting at the conclusion of this item and did not return.

Council resolved to:

Support the following motion:

Council notes

1. Since September 2024 eight remand prisoners detained as a result of alleged activities with Palestine Action have participated in hunger strikes, including at least one individual from Oxford.^[1]
2. The prisoners are expected to be on remand for over a year before they face a trial^[2], despite the CPS guidance suggesting the maximum time anyone should be held on remand is 182 days.^[3]
3. In January 2026, the last hunger strike terminated their protest, bringing the hunger strikes to an end^[4]
4. Among the demands of the hunger strikers were:^[5]
 - a) Immediate bail for the prisoners held on remand.
 - b) While they are imprisoned, for the prisoners to be able to send and receive communications without restriction, surveillance, or interference from the prison administration.
 - c) The right to a fair trial.
 - d) For Palestine Action to be de-proscribed.
5. All of those participating in the hunger strikes were detained for alleged activities with Palestine Action prior to parliament adding it to the list of proscribed organisations.
6. 71 MPs - including Oxford West and Abingdon MP Layla Moran - have signed an Early Day Motion calling for the Secretary of State for Justice to ensure the treatment of the hunger strikers is “humane” and that their human rights are upheld.^[6]
7. A number of other councils, including Belfast^[7] and Derry^[8], passed motions expressing solidarity with the hunger strikers and for the government to enter proper negotiations with the prisoners to bring an end to the strikes.

Council believes

1. It is extremely concerning that these prisoners have felt that they had no other recourse to protest against their prison conditions but to engage in hunger strikes.

Council resolves

1. To request that the leader of the council:

- a) Write to the Secretary of State for Justice and other relevant government ministers, requesting that they, or officials representing them
 - i. Where written consent has been given by the prisoner, meet with the families and representatives of those who have been on hunger strike to discuss the conditions they have faced.
 - ii. Do everything they can to ensure that prisoners, whether they are on remand or serving custodial sentences, have their human rights respected and that they are treated humanely.
 - iii. Review, far more regularly and systematically whether any proscribed organisation still needs to be proscribed.
 - iv. In light of the High Court ruling on Palestine Action, move to de-proscribe the group and cease attempts to overturn the ruling.
 - v. Because it conflicts with an individual's right to free speech, review whether simply saying you support a proscribed organisation should be an arrestable offence.
- b) Write to local MPs Anneliese Dodds and Layla Moran requesting that they work to ensure that government ministers carry out the requests in resolves 1.

^[1] <https://www.theguardian.com/uk-news/2025/dec/16/palestine-action-hunger-strikers-may-die-without-lammy-intervention-lawyers-say>

^[2] <https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2026/jan/07/palestine-action-hunger-strikers-government>

^[3] <https://www.cps.gov.uk/prosecution-guidance/custody-time-limits>

^[4] <https://prisonersforpalestine.org/strike-ends/>

^[5] <https://prisonersforpalestine.org/demands/>

^[6] <https://edm.parliament.uk/early-day-motion/64800/palestine-action-hunger-strike>

^[7] <https://belfastmedia.com/belfast-city-council-backs-motion-supporting-palestine-action-hunger-strikers-in-england>

^[8] <https://meetings.derrycityandstrabanedistrict.com/ieListDocuments.aspx?CIId=189&MIId=2378&Ver=4>

136. Support for Mini Plant Oxford (Proposed by Cllr Linda Smith, Seconded by Cllr Ottino)

Councillor Lindas Smith, seconded by Councillor Ottino, proposed the motion as set out in the briefing note, incorporating the two amendments set out in the briefing note.

Following the debate and on being put to the vote, the motion carried.

Council resolved to:

Support the following motion:

Challenges for the automotive manufacturing sector have impacted countries including France, Italy and the UK, resulting in falling car production figures. This is driven by a number of factors, including competition from cheaper imports.

As one of the biggest employers in Oxford, a significant number of agency workers' jobs have been lost at the Mini Plant Oxford.

The plant needs to adjust to the government reinstating the 2030 ban date on new Internal Combustion Engine (ICE) models, the only models the plant currently builds. Also, due to there being no Electric models being manufactured at the Oxford plant, the Zero Emission Vehicle (ZEV) target for 2026 will potentially create a situation whereby ICE production will need to be artificially lowered to ensure BMW can hit the 33% target via imports. This is to prevent it being subject to either a £12,000 fine per car or pushed into buying credits from Original Equipment Manufacturers (OEMs) such as Tesla.

Economic growth is the number one mission of the government.

Growing the economy increases tax revenue, and is one way of funding improvements to public services.

It is vital different government departments work in harmony to support UK jobs and industry. It's especially important that the Department for Transport and the Department for Business and Trade understand what support car plants including our Mini Plant need in order to adapt to the ZEV targets and be ready for the end of new ICE vehicle production.

This council therefore resolves to ask the Leader of the Council to write to the Secretary of State for Transport Heidi Alexander to ask her to:

1. Meet with Unite the Union and its representatives at the factory to hear their concerns and to support their work to make Oxford the future home of affordable EV production.
2. Engage to as full an extent as possible with BMW on the UK's transition to electric vehicles and policies which affect demand for new vehicles and investment and jobs in the UK automotive sector.
3. Seek support for full economic re-integration with the EU, including pursuit of a customs union and European single market membership, in order to minimise friction to trade and employment.

137. Condemnation of Attempted Election Postponement (Proposed by Cllr Smowton, Seconded by Cllr Miles)

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

138. Stop the War in Iran (Proposed by Cllr Powell, Seconded by Cllr Djafari-Marbini)

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

The meeting started at 5.00 pm and ended at 8.58 pm

**Lord Mayor
2026**

Date: Wednesday 20 May

*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.*

To: Council
Date: 23 March 2026
Report of: Director of Law, Governance and Strategy
Title of Report: Questions on Notice from members of Council and responses from the Cabinet Members and Leader

Introduction

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.

Responses are included where available.

Questioners can ask one supplementary question of the Cllr answering the original question.

This report will be republished after the Council meeting to include supplementary questions and responses as part of the minutes pack.

Unfamiliar terms may be briefly explained in footnotes.

Questions and responses

Cabinet Member for Partnership Working and Inclusive Economic Growth; Leader of the Council

SB1: From Cllr Stares to Cllr Brown

Question

Will the leader of the City Council confirm the length of service of each current councillor, and will the Council publish a list showing all councillors and the number of years they have served representing residents of Oxford?

Written Response

This information is already provided and can be found on the Council's website for all current Councillors, including details of their terms of office: [Your Councillors | Oxford City Council](#).

Supplementary Question

None.

Verbal Response

SB2: From Cllr Muddiman to Cllr Brown

<p>Question</p> <p>The council co-owns OxWed, the company developing the Oxpens area. Given Oxford's housing crisis, can the portfolio holder explain why OxWed is only proposing 117 affordable and 117 open market, one- and two-bedroom flats, on this large site which they co-own?</p>	<p>Written Response</p> <p>The Oxpens site is allocated for mixed use development under Policy SP1 of the Oxford Local Plan 2036 and is a key element of Oxford City Council's vision and objectives for the West End, as set out in the West End and Osney Mead Supplementary Planning Document. The Oxpens site as a whole, which includes land and buildings not owned by OXWED, plays an important role in bringing forward a vibrant extension to the city centre.</p> <p>The site owned by the joint venture between the council and Nuffield college called OXWED LLP secured planning permission in 2025 for a mixed-use development in accordance with the policy.</p> <p>This is a complex brownfield site, which has required land assembly over several years and has very high costs to make it developable, including multi-million pound flood mitigation works that include changing the level of the site. In working up the planning application the joint venture has had to balance land use, infrastructure requirements and viability very carefully. The Council is not the single decision maker in respect of the land.</p> <p>As a city centre site adjacent to multiple different public transport hubs it is also ideal for employment as well as housing, so mixed-use is the best use of this important site.</p>
<p>Supplementary Question</p> <p>Councillor Muddiman asked how does this align with Council's aspiration for 15-minute city?</p>	<p>Verbal Response</p> <p>Councillor Brown emphasised that it would be harder to find a better example of a 15-minute city, noting the adjacency to station, park and ride, and bus station which is well connected to the county. The value of the employment site was also emphasised.</p>

SB3: From Cllr Gant to Cllr Brown

Question

The Leader of the Council has recently said in public: "...[we have] never supported the Congestion Charge, nor do we support the Workplace Parking Levy".

The City Council Cabinet considered a paper on Connecting Oxford plan, which "...includes a workplace parking levy and traffic restrictions" [para 4]. Speaking in support of the recommendation to endorse the plan at that cabinet meeting, Cllr Alex Hollingsworth, then Cabinet Member for Planning and Sustainable Transport, described these policies as "significant and far-reaching proposals, prepared and co-produced with the County Council. The need for them could be well summed up by the point that 'doing nothing [i]s not an option.' The Council had been faced with difficult choices in the past about traffic management in the City and must do so again now... [it has] become clear that a significant number of people who would otherwise ride bicycles in the City were deterred by the fear of having to share the road with motor vehicles... [and]... One consequence of congestion in the City was that...Some bus services had already been lost and there was a risk that others might follow...The introduction of bus gates should reduce car traffic by about 40%, so lessening congestion, increasing the rate of flow and removing the need for bus lanes, provide an opportunity to improve the quality of dedicated cycle lanes and the pedestrian environment. The other important element of the proposal would be the introduction of the

Written Response

Cllr Gant introduced the Congestion Charge, with no consultation with the City Council, with city residents or with city businesses. Ever since on behalf of city residents and businesses the Labour City Council has opposed the Congestion Charge.

In terms of the Workplace Parking levy, we have always opposed extending it beyond the ring road to include BMW - and his administration on the county are now proposing to do that.

It is also the case that this could only work with the engagement with employers and their buy-in, which his administration has failed to deliver. So no, we do not support what we now feel is an unworkable policy.

<p>Workplace Parking Levy.” The City Council Cabinet accepted his recommendation and endorsed the paper.</p> <p>How do you reconcile the apparent contradiction between those statements and actions by your cabinet and your own recent statement?</p>	
<p>Supplementary Question Councillor Gant queried differences between a statement previously provided to the Oxford Mail by Councillor Brown and the policy adopted by Cabinet.</p>	<p>Verbal Response Councillor Brown referred Councillor Gant to her written answer.</p>

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<p>SB4: From Cllr Gant to Cllr Brown</p>	
<p>Question The Leader also said “...we made it 100% clear that we disagreed fundamentally with the [County Council’s] approach. We think that the policies are neither the right ones nor do we believe they are likely to be successful. We made that clear...we are of the opinion that if the bus filters are introduced in Oxford, then all local city residents should be exempt...Our views...have been continually ignored by the County Council for years.”</p> <p>Speaking officially on behalf of the cabinet of this city council, then-Cabinet member for Health and Transport Cllr Louise Upton said: “For a long time, Oxford City Council has advocated the need for measures to alleviate the impact of traffic...that is the problem these traffic filters are designed to solve...The City Council has worked with you [the County Council] ...to shape</p>	<p>Written Response Since the time that the City Council worked with a previous administration at the County Council on transport proposals, including working on measures to promote bus travel, Cllr Gant and his county colleagues have chosen to implement multiple new transport policies, all with slightly different exemptions.</p> <p>We have also had a chance to see how the Congestion Charge is working – or rather not working – for many local people.</p> <p>Therefore, it is now our view that if the County are still minded to introduce the traffic filters in the autumn this year, then they should exempt all Oxford residents.</p> <p>LGR will give the new authority – which we hope will be Greater Oxford – a chance to shape new more consistent public transport policies, working WITH local communities and businesses rather than doing TO them.</p>

<p>these proposals...with exemptions and permits that balance the absolute need to reduce traffic, with allowing business vehicles to operate and residents who can't switch to other means to drive...[these measures are] important for our environment, our health, and our economy. But most importantly we believe they are necessary to SAVE OUR BUS NETWORK [<i>Cllr Upton's capitalisation</i>]. So please support them.”</p> <p>So, far from ignoring the City Council, the County Council did exactly what the City Council robustly urged it to do. How do you reconcile these two apparently contradictory positions taken by this council?</p>	<p>We absolutely do support measures to promote bus travel – that means looking at fares, routes and frequency, not just restriction of car movements.</p>
<p>Supplementary Question Councillor Gant queried a contradiction in comments on the matter.</p>	<p>Verbal Response Councillor Brown emphasised that the City Council has worked hard to find collaborative ways of working with the County Council; unfortunately, this has been more challenging recently in relation to transport polices.</p>

<p>SB5: From Cllr Gant to Cllr Brown</p>	
<p>Question As Cllr Upton acknowledged, Cabinet members of this council were a key part of the working group which designed the traffic filters scheme, alongside their counterparts from the county council. The scheme was</p>	<p>Written Response We have now had time to see the scheme in action and the impact on local residents. As well as the interaction with the various other schemes that the county council has introduced.</p>

designed and approved jointly, including the detail of permits and exemptions. Nobody mentioned the idea of giving exemptions to all Oxford residents. Why not?	
Supplementary Question Councillor Gant queried the permits and exemptions scheme.	Verbal Response As the question was unclear Councillor Brown provided no further additions to her written response.

SB6: From Cllr Gant to Cllr Brown	
Question As Cllr Upton also acknowledged, the traffic filters scheme is closely aligned with the recommendations of Oxford City Council's own Citizens' Assembly on Climate Change. It, and its interim version the congestion charge, are equally closely aligned with the very clear recommendations of the County Council's Citizens' Assembly on transport. Does the Leader think the County Council should take note of the recommendations from these two assemblies in making and delivering policy?	Written Response Unlike Cllr Gant, I attended every session of the Oxford Citizens Assembly on Climate Change, the first for a city in the UK. So, I am aware that transport was not the biggest focus of that Assembly and it focused on outcomes rather than the measures to get there. An incredibly important recommendation of the Assembly was the need to communicate clearly about climate change and engage with communities. It was particularly in relation to transport policy that this was raised. The county council has singularly failed to do this in recent years.
Supplementary: None.	

SB7: From Cllr Gant to Cllr Brown	
<p>Question As mentioned above, Cllr Brown stated in respect of County Council transport policies “We think that the policies are neither the right ones nor do we believe they are likely to be successful. We made that clear.” Published modelling suggests that they are “likely to be successful”, and indeed they are being successful right now. What evidence does she have for her belief to the contrary? What modelling did she use to base that statement on?</p>	<p>Written Response We are not 5 months into the County Council’s experiment with the Congestion Charge yet, but residents and businesses across the city have expressed their unhappiness about how this is working for them. Increased journey times and huge increases in the distances people are forced to travel, are not going down well, particularly with the current increases in fuel prices.</p>
<p>Supplementary Question Councillor Gant queried what modelling was used for this analysis.</p>	<p>Verbal Response Councillor Brown reminded Councillor Gant that his question related to transport policies of the County Council, for which this Council is not responsible and she cannot respond.</p>
SB8: From Cllr Gant to Cllr Brown	
<p>Question Does the city council welcome the projected reduction in casualties by 28 per year as a direct result of the congestion charge and traffic filters?</p>	<p>Written Response I am aware of the report that Cllr Gant refers to, and I am also aware that considerable doubt has been expressed about the robustness of the projected data within it. I will personally wait until we have heard about real reductions, which will only be measurable over time, rather than projections based on very little.</p>
<p>Supplementary Question Councillor Gant asked whether the City Council welcomes the projected reduction in casualties by 2028 as a direct result of the congestion charge and traffic filters.</p>	<p>Verbal Response Councillor Brown welcomed any reduction in casualties on roads but noted doubt relating to the robustness of the data within the report.</p>

SB9: From Cllr Gant to Cllr Brown	
<p>Question Modelling which has been publicly available for a number of years clearly shows that over 95% of the projected reduction in congestion delivered by the congestion charge and traffic filters comes from journeys undertaken entirely within the city. What account did the Leader take of this data in proposing that “all local city residents should be exempt”? Was that proposal modelled or tested? What did the modelling say?</p>	<p>Written Response I would suggest that if the modelling is showing that nearly 100% of the journeys that Cllr Gant is trying to stop are city residents moving about their city, rather than commuters coming into it, then the congestion charge is not the right measure.</p>
<p>Supplementary Question Councillor Gant asked what modelling was done in relation to the matter.</p>	<p>Verbal Response Councillor Brown referred Councillor Gant to her written response.</p>
SB10: From Cllr Gant to Cllr Brown	
<p>Question Does the Leader believe that giving full exemptions from the traffic filters to all Oxford residents will continue to deliver the gains in bus productivity already realised from the congestion charge, including new routes, faster timetables and free Park and Ride travel? Has this aspect been tested with those</p>	<p>Written Response As Cllr Gant will be aware, the City Council is not the transport authority. But we have encouraged you to use the considerable sums raised by the Congestion Charge to subsidise bus fares for people in the city, not just residents of the rest of Oxfordshire through subsidising the park and ride.</p>

responsible for delivering bus services in our city? What did they say?	
Supplementary Question Councillor Gant asked whether Councillor Brown agreed that the most important factor in speeding up bus times and routes is tackling congestion.	Verbal Response Councillor Brown noted that several factors would encourage more people to use buses; cost was also referenced.

SB11: From Cllr Gant to Cllr Brown	
Question As mentioned above, Cllr Brown stated that “all local city residents should be exempt” from the traffic filters. Who exactly is meant by this? Where is the map? What modelling underpins it?	Written Response I am surprised that Cllr Gant is not aware of the boundaries of the City Council, but they can be found here: https://www.oxford.gov.uk/downloads/file/304/oxford-city-council-boundary-map
Supplementary Question Councillor Gant asked whether Councillor Brown could confirm the Oxford City Council boundary when defining residents of the city.	Verbal Response Councillor Brown referred Councillor Gant to the County Council in relation to transport matters.

SB12: From Cllr Gant to Cllr Brown	
Question Cllr Brown’s new policy on the traffic filters is not the same as the policy of the Labour group on the County Council (even though several councillors are members of both and are thus openly supporting two different policies). How do you reconcile this contradiction?	Written Response I speak for the City Council on behalf of residents of Oxford.

<p>Supplementary Question Councillor Gant requested that Councillor Brown instruct the administration to support the policies of this Council.</p>	<p>Verbal Response Councillor Brown clarified and emphasised that, as Leader of the Council, it is not her role to instruct the administration; she instead represents the Council in various capacities.</p>
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<p>SB13: From Cllr Gant to Cllr Brown</p>	
<p>Question Why has the Labour group on the County Council, which is the transport authority, not publicly endorsed the City Council's new policy on traffic filters? What advice did the County Labour group give you about the implications of your new policy?</p>	<p>Written Response I cannot answer questions on behalf of another authority, although it seems that Cllr Gant has the ability to take his role on another authority to ask questions in this council chamber.</p>
<p>Supplementary Question None.</p>	<p>Verbal Response</p>

<p>SB14: From Cllr Gant to Cllr Brown</p>	
<p>Question When the administration of this council chose to oppose the congestion charge, what account did you take of the well-publicised synergies between congestion reduction and the deployment of 172 zero-emission buses, as set out in the Bus Service Improvement Plan's accompanying delivery plan?</p>	<p>Written Response When Cllr Gant's administration on the county council chose to impose the congestion charge on the City of Oxford, what account did they take of the views of the City Council, residents, or businesses in Oxford? None.</p>
<p>Supplementary Question Councillor Gant challenged that there was a contradiction between the policy and the facts.</p>	<p>Verbal Response Councillor Brown referred Councillor Gant to her written response.</p>

SB15: From Cllr Rawle to Cllr Brown**Question**

Between 2-3 weeks ago, residents in Donnington estate reported a burst or leaking pipe in the centre of Donnington Bridge Road, in front of no. 41, to Thames Water. Thames Water says this report is still being investigated. Another report of a leak further down the road reported on 5 March has the status “planning for a repair”, and notes that the company may need to work with local authorities which may take a little longer. Will the portfolio holder urge Thames Water to investigate the leak outside no. 41 urgently, act quickly on both reports if there is a risk that a leak to a pipe beneath this road could result in much greater damage to the area, and also ensure the council acts swiftly to support the repair however is necessary?

Written Response

I am happy to write to Thames Water on behalf of local residents.

Supplementary Question

Councillor Rawle requested that the Council write to Thames Water to emphasise how long residents had waited without updates and to note the impacts experienced.

Verbal Response

Councillor Brown committed to writing to Thames Water and offered to liaise with Councillor Rawle to ensure her comments be included.

Cabinet Member for Finance and Asset Management; Deputy Leader of the Council (Statutory)

ET1: From Cllr Roz Smith to Cllr Turner**Question****Written Response**

<p>How much money did the council receive from the sale of Grenoble Road strategic site to Magdalen college and what does it intend to do with the proceeds?</p>	<p>The total money the council has and will receive from the sale is confidential in line with the commercial agreement with the purchaser. However, just over 40% was received on completion in 2025 with the remainder to be paid on time milestones across a 15-year period. The proceeds form part of the councils' resources to fund the capital programme and reduce the need to borrow. Such resources are not allocated to specific projects.</p>
<p>Supplementary Question None.</p>	<p>Verbal Response</p>

<p>ET2: From Cllr Fouweather to Cllr Turner</p>	
<p>Question</p> <p>The “Greater Oxford” Proposal for Local Government Reorganisation has been prepared by the administration and Council Officers. Further to my question at an earlier Council, can the Cabinet Member update the Council:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Has any additional funding been provided by the national Government or other sources external to the Council? 2. How much has now been spent from Council funds and from which budget? <p>At the Council meeting on 24th November we were informed that £288,000 had been spent so far in the 2025/26 FY. As the constitution (18.10) requires that unbudgeted expenditure in excess of £250,000 is brought to Cabinet and/or Council could the Cabinet Member explain where and when this decision was made?</p>	<p>Written Response</p> <p>Budgeted resources by the Council for 2025-26 total £200k. In addition to this the Council have been given a £95k grant from the Government. The total spend to date on consultancy advice and other resources to prepare the LGR 3 Councils proposal, publicise the MHCLG consultation – as requested by Government - and progress the preparatory phase of collaborative working with the other Oxfordshire and West Berkshire Councils is £295,000. This is in line with the Budget allocation and because the Council budget spend is under £250k decisions could be taken by officers in line with the scheme of delegation in the Constitution.</p>

<p>Supplementary Question Councillor Fouweather noted that since November, only an additional £7000 had been spent and he requested that an audited list of expenditure be circulated to the Council.</p>	<p>Verbal Response Councillor Turner thanked Councillor Fouweather for his recognition of social media work undertaken in relation to Local Government Reorganisation and offered to provide further information as requested.</p>
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Cabinet Member for a Zero Carbon Oxford; Deputy Leader of the Council

<p>AR1: From Cllr Miles to Cllr Railton</p>	
<p>Question How much pending maintenance is required for the city's playground equipment? How does this compare to a typical year, and when do we anticipate the backlog will be cleared?</p>	<p>Written Response Play equipment repairs are usually identified at either monthly, or 6 Monthly statutory inspections. Inspections in 2025 identified c £156,400.00 worth of repairs and replacements, of which £123,582.50 were instructed during the course of the year. The remaining £32,800 will be prioritised for instruction early in 2026 financial year, planned under the play equipment capital budget. It is anticipated that this work will be completed by June 2026. Equipment replacement spend is somewhat higher than previous years, due to the wet weather conditions and accelerated degradation of timber play equipment, which will be replaced with metal equipment as part of this work</p>
<p>Supplementary Question None.</p>	<p>Verbal Response</p>

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AR2: From Cllr Goddard to Cllr Railton**Question**

When was the last maintenance check done on the playgrounds in Wolvercote and the play equipment last updated?

Written Response

Monthly Playground inspections took place in February, coinciding with this, the 6 monthly statutory inspection also took place in February. Officers are awaiting the findings of this inspection for confirmation of any repair requirements.

Lower Wolvercote Green is due to have the two new items of play equipment installed, funded through a CIL application made by the Wolvercote Commoners. Upper Wolvercote Green has no immediate works identified as being required at present.

Supplementary Question

Councillor Goddard asked when the inspection will be available and, in the event, that works were required, could this be communicated.

Verbal Response

Councillor Railton welcomed communication and committed to respond following this meeting with the relevant dates.

AR3: From Cllr Miles to Cllr Railton**Question**

The roundabout in the small children's playground on Stone Meadow was removed over a year ago because it was considered unsafe. Residents were informed that it would have been replaced in 2025 but this area is still out of action and surrounded by temporary high metal fencing. When exactly will the roundabout be replaced with new equipment and the temporary metal fencing removed?

Written Response

The Equipment will be replaced in May this year, and fencing will be removed at the same time. The delay was due to cost clarifications and longer than expected manufacturing lead time.

Supplementary Question

None.

Verbal Response

AR4: From Cllr Muddiman to Cllr Railton	
Question Will the Council commit to not fell any trees in Grandpont Nature Park during the 2026 nesting season?	Written Response The programme for the delivery of the bridge is being reviewed. If it is necessary to remove trees before the end of the bird nesting season it will only be done with an ecological clerk of works in attendance to confirm there is no nesting birds.
Supplementary Question Councillor Muddiman asked whether the ecological works will be undertaken by the Council as the developer, or an independent body.	Verbal Response Councillor Railton committed to writing with a response.
AR5: From Cllr Muddiman to Cllr Railton	
Question Will the portfolio holder ask the Westgate Centre to consider introducing a compulsory pre-booking scheme for parking in the Westgate carpark at weekends?	Written Response The Westgate Car Park is a privately managed car park, the Council has previously approached them around this but ultimately it is for the Westgate to determine how the car parking is managed.
Supplementary Question Councillor Muddiman noted that the Westgate Hub is in process of recruiting a new manager and asked whether they will share this idea with the new appointee.	Verbal Response Councillor Railton confirmed that the idea could be communicated, but the Council has no means to ensure it is taken onboard.

AR6: From Cllr Muddiman to Cllr Railton

Question

Will the Council sign the Bristol Declaration on Healthy Transport', calling for the transformation of the UK to a place where healthy transport options are the easiest, natural choice for most everyday journeys, without relying on a car?

Written Response

Yes, though I note the city council has already made a number of active interventions for the 10 actions we have control over. The city council is not the decision maker for the majority of the actions in this declaration.

Supplementary Question

None.

Verbal Response

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AR7: From Cllr Muddiman to Cllr Railton

Question

Oxford can be proud of its progress on addressing air quality. February saw the publication of the Air Quality Action plan 2026-2030. Within the plan, the introduction of Low Traffic Neighbourhoods is listed as a key achievement which has been responsible for 'creating quieter and safer streets, leading also to air quality improvement. Similarly, traffic filters, the workplace parking levy and the expansion of the ZEZ are listed as major transport initiatives 'which aim to reduce private car usage'. Given that priority A of the Air Quality Action Plan is 'Promoting Active Travel and reducing the need to drive', can the portfolio holder confirm the administration's position on these measures, which their own Air Quality Action Plan, as approved the cabinet, clearly identify as essential to

Written Response

There is a publicly available statement issued by the Leader of Oxford City Council, Councillor Susan Brown, in her right of reply submitted on 2 March 2026. This statement sets out the administration's position regarding the transport measures referenced in the Air Quality Action Plan:

[Statement from Councillor Susan Brown, Leader of Oxford City Council \(2 March 2026\):](#)

"Responsibilities for air quality and transport are currently split across two councils. Oxford City Council is responsible for monitoring and reporting on air quality, while Oxfordshire County Council, as the Highways Authority, is responsible for transport policy and measures such as LTNs, traffic filters, the Workplace Parking Levy and the Zero Emission Zone.

As we made clear when approving the Air Quality Action Plan, the City Council must report on measures proposed by the transport authority, but we do not control them. We have set out our view that we disagree with the

<p>securing the necessary improvements to air quality in Oxford City?</p>	<p>County Council's approach and do not believe that several of the policies proposed are the right ones or likely to be successful.</p> <p>For the record, Oxford Labour has never supported a Congestion Charge, does not support a Workplace Parking Levy, and believes that if bus filters are introduced, all city residents should be exempt. We have also asked the County Council to review some LTNs where residents have raised concerns.</p> <p>Our view is that the preferences of residents and businesses in Oxford have not been sufficiently taken into account by the County Council. The proposed '3Councils' reorganisation provides an opportunity to bring transport decision-making back to the city."</p> <p>This publicly available statement outlines the administration's current position in relation to the transport schemes referenced in the city's Air Quality Action Plan.</p>
<p>Supplementary Question Councillor Muddiman asked whether the Council's administration supports the bus service.</p>	<p>Verbal Response Councillor Railton noted that they do not in its current form.</p>

<p>AR8: From Cllr Powell to Cllr Railton</p>	
<p>Question Can the portfolio holder please outline what the likely implications of not proceeding with traffic filters, the workplace parking levy and the expansion of the ZEZ would be for Oxford's ability to meet its new Local NO₂ target of 20 µg/m³</p>	<p>Written Response Oxford City Council has a statutory duty to review and assess air quality in the city and to produce an Air Quality Action Plan that sets out how the city intends to achieve its air quality objectives. Many of the dominant sources of nitrogen dioxide emissions in Oxford are transport-related. However, Oxfordshire County Council is the Highways Authority and therefore holds responsibility for transport policy and for schemes such as traffic filters, the Workplace Parking Levy, and any expansion of the Zero Emission Zone.</p> <p>The City Council's Air Quality Action Plan references transport schemes being developed by the County Council and other partners because they</p>

	<p>are important contributors to the improvements in emissions that underpin the plan's projections.</p> <p>The commitment to meeting Oxford's local annual mean nitrogen dioxide target of 20 µg/m³ by 2030 is based on the combined delivery of the full suite of measures set out in the Action Plan, including those led by partner authorities. If a number of these transport-related measures were not to proceed, the overall scale of emission reduction assumed in the Action Plan would be reduced. This would make achieving the 2030 local NO₂ target more challenging and could compromise the city's ability to meet it.</p> <p>In short, the city doesn't decide on any of the schemes you mention here but will be monitoring the air quality impacts across Oxford. Our air quality monitoring work does also not usually extend to predicting the impact of schemes like this.</p>
<p>Supplementary Question Councillor Powell requested confirmation that the Council appreciates that by not pursuing these measures, they will be acting less ambitiously in tackling emissions.</p>	<p>Verbal Response Councillor Railton rejected this comment, noting that much of the matter does not fall within the Council's control.</p>

<p>AR9: From Cllr Gant to Cllr Railton</p>	
<p>Question Trees in Davenant Road have grown to the extent that significant parts of the pavement are hazardous for pedestrians and impassable for wheelchair users, people with buggies and the less mobile. Has this issue been identified in routine inspection and monitoring, and does Davenant Road feature in long-term maintenance plans?</p>	<p>Written Response The maintenance of trees within the highway is the responsibility of the County Council. To address the problems arising from the trees it has been identified that it requires works that go beyond the maintenance responsibility of the City Council under S42 and therefore the County Council have been in discussion with residents and ODS around a potential solution to the problem.</p>
<p>Supplementary Question</p>	<p>Verbal Response</p>

None.	
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Cabinet Member for a Safer Oxford

LA1: From Cllr Powell to Cllr Arshad	
<p>Question In recent weeks, there has been an increased level of immigration enforcement activity in Oxford. As a council of sanctuary, Oxford has undertaken to actively support migrant communities in the city. During the increased immigration enforcement activity, immigration enforcement officers have been actively collaborating with Thames Valley Police. Will the portfolio holder please outline whether she has had any correspondence with the Police and Crime Commissioner regarding this increased activity?</p>	<p>Written Response The portfolio holder is not aware of an increase in immigration enforcement activity in Oxford and has not had any correspondence with the Police and Crime Commissioner on this matter.</p>
<p>Supplementary Question None.</p>	<p>Verbal Response</p>

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LA2: From Cllr Powell to Cllr Arshad	
<p>Question Will the portfolio holder undertake to write to the Police and Crime Commissioner raising concerns about the negative impact that increased collaboration between Thames Valley Police and immigration enforcement has on our communities?</p>	<p>Written Response The portfolio holder has not been made aware of increased collaboration between the police and immigration enforcement in the city.</p>

	The portfolio holder will raise the matter with the police to seek assurances that such activities are sensitive to community concerns and align to stated national government policies.
Supplementary Question Councillor Powell asked whether the Cabinet Member appreciates that given the orientation of the current government, the alignment of local policies offers little comfort to residents.	Verbal Response Councillor Arshad rejected the comment.

LA3: From Cllr Powell to Cllr Arshad	
Question During the recent budget process, council approved the creation of new anti-social behaviour wardens. As a non-statutory role, council has the opportunity to set the remit of these wardens. Will the portfolio holder please confirm that the warden's role will not involve any engagement with immigration enforcement outside of the strict legal obligations incumbent on the council?	Written Response The Community Safety Service teams work in partnership with a wide range of organisations. This may involve working on issues relating to modern slavery and the exploitation of adults and children. Where immigration teams have a role to play in the disruption of these activities, Council officers and other partners will work with the Home Office on these matters, and we will engage where there is a legal requirement upon us to do so.
Supplementary Question Councillor Powell requested confirmation that any engagement with immigration enforcement would only be limited that which the law requires.	Verbal Response Councillor Arshad confirmed this.

LA4: From Cllr Powell to Cllr Arshad	
Question Can the portfolio holder please confirm the extent to which the council collaborates with the voluntary	Written Response The Council does not assist in the voluntary returns process in licensing.

returns process in collaboration with immigration enforcement?	
Supplementary Question None.	Verbal Response

Cabinet Member for Citizen Focused Services and Council Companies

NC1: From Cllr Smowton to Cllr Chapman	
<p>Question</p> <p>The Bury Knowle toilets have been in a poor state for a considerable time, with some cubicles barricaded and all in need of paint and external cleaning in order to present a welcoming appearance to passers-by. Will you ensure these are renovated?</p>	<p>Written Response</p> <p>I share councillors' frustration at the state of our public toilets. In this case and in others, we are dealing with a shocking level of vandalism which means the repairs are complex, costly and take time.</p> <p>There are nine toilets at Bury Knowle with three currently closed as they have been badly vandalised with smashed tiles and ripped up flooring. The repairs will be undertaken, which, after lead times for materials, will take circa four weeks.</p> <p>It should be noted that these toilets were decorated in 2024/25.</p> <p>The above repairs will be done ahead of a survey of the condition of all our public toilets. The budget for the survey was approved in the latest budget. Following commissioning, this is likely to be completed in the summer.</p> <p>Once the results are known, a prioritised programme of capital works will be presented to Council officers for approval. I have urged Council officers and ODS get these repairs done as soon as is feasible.</p>
Supplementary Question None.	Verbal Response

NC2: From Cllr Miles to Cllr Chapman	
<p>Question There is a leaking roof in the diamond place public toilets. What is the timeline for the roof to be mended?</p>	<p>Written Response There are six toilets in this block. There are presently three unaffected cubicles, with a fourth awaiting repair. The remaining cubicles are closed awaiting the major roof repair to be completed. As I replied in my earlier answer, the above repairs will be done ahead of a survey of the condition of all our public toilets, the budget for the survey was approved in the latest budget. Following commissioning, this is likely to be completed in the summer. Once the results are known, a prioritised programme of capital works will be presented to Council officers for approval. I think we all regret we are facing this expense and the temporary closure of facilities in our parks and other spaces.</p>
<p>Supplementary Question Councillor Miles described the damaging methods being used by ODS to tape signs to toilet doors and asked whether an alternative method could be found.</p>	<p>Verbal Response Councillor Chapman noted the issue and committed to raising it and exploring it at his next regular meeting with ODS.</p>

NC3: From Cllr Kerr to Cllr Chapman	
<p>Question ODS is about to buy some new bin lorries and other HGVs. Can the portfolio holder set out whether he agrees that standards for "Direct Vision" or other vision safety standards which prevent cyclists and pedestrian deaths should form part of the decision making on this?</p>	<p>Written Response All ODS bin lorries are fitted with MOIS systems which detect cyclists and pedestrians in the vehicles blind spots. If an object is detected, the driver is alerted via an audible system within the cab of the vehicle. Along with this, the vehicles are also fitted with rear mounted LED warning lights.</p>
<p>Supplementary Question</p>	<p>Verbal Response</p>

Councillor Kerr explained that her original question had related to new lorries, on the existing stock and requested information on how the Council will adhere to the relevant legislation.

Councillor Chapman emphasised that the Council always seeks to comply with high standards and endeavour to keep up with new standards and regulations.

NC4: From Cllr Powell to Cllr Chapman

Question

During the previous full council meeting of January 26 i.e. the meeting prior to budget council, the cabinet member confirmed that repairs to the Manzil Way public toilets were due to be completed no later than January 30. However, at time of writing two of these public toilets remain out of order. Can the portfolio holder please explain the delay and outline when repairs will actually be actioned?

Written Response

There have been numerous repairs undertaken over the last couple of months. Unfortunately, serious and costly damage has re-occurred since these repairs were completed.

There are five toilets in this block, with two out of action due to vandalism. The doors used for the toilets are fabricated metal doors and have been damaged beyond repair. One has a bent steel door and frame, and the other has damage to the door handle, which will need metal strengthening. Before commissioning any further repairs, in the short term, advice will be sought from the Community Safety Problem Solving Officer.

As I replied to a similar question about other toilet closures, the above repairs will be done ahead of a survey of the condition of all our public toilets, the budget for the survey was approved in the latest budget. Following commissioning this is likely to be completed in the summer. Once the results are known a prioritised programme of capital works will be presented for approval. Community Safety advice will also inform the programme of works.

Supplementary Question

Councillor Powell asked if the Cabinet Member would undertake to prioritise looking at accessible facilities.

Verbal Response

Councillor Chapman confirmed this.

NC5: From Cllr Powell to Cllr Chapman

<p>Question</p> <p>During the budget setting process, several of the political groups put forward amendments focused on noticeboards in the city. The Scrutiny Committee also recommended that action to standardise the provision of notice boards was taken. While it is accepted that council did not opt for this course of action and there is not now funding for an officer to operationalise the running of noticeboards, can the portfolio holder please confirm whether there might be scope for replenishment of noticeboards to be included within existing funds for street scene repairs?</p>	<p>Written Response</p> <p>As detailed in the report to Scrutiny Committee, there are circa 80 noticeboards across the City Council's communities. These are maintained by volunteers. The system is not overseen by a designated officer and there is also no dedicated budget to maintain their physical state. There is potential to utilise CIL and / or ward member budgets. Further details are available about this on the website and via the Members' area on the intranet. Members page Support Your Community with Ward Member Budget and Community Infrastructure Levy funding</p> <p>Most community noticeboards in the city were put in through member ward budgets in the first place.</p>
<p>Supplementary Question</p> <p>None.</p>	<p>Verbal Response</p>

<p>NC6: From Cllr Rawle to Cllr Chapman</p>	
<p>Question</p> <p>It is understood that sometimes, ODS may have to leave batteries left out by residents to be recycled if the cages are full and collect them instead on the following collection day. Can the portfolio holder explain how this is being communicated to residents, so they know that this is the reason that they have not been picked up, and not that the pick-up was forgotten or rejected?</p>	<p>Written Response</p> <p>ODS has had issues with a number of the cages on the RCV fleet. ODS have undertaken the necessary repairs at their workshop and alterations have been made so there should be no further failure in collecting batteries.</p> <p>The councillor is right – the norm if we miss a collection is to undertake it on the next appropriate collection day (so within a fortnight). It is not practical for us to contact each householder for obvious reasons. If we were to miss many collections – and this should not happen now – we will use social media to alert residents.</p>
<p>Supplementary Question</p> <p>None.</p>	<p>Verbal Response</p>

Cabinet Member for Planning and Culture

AH1: From Cllr Mundy to Cllr Hollingsworth

Question

The Museum of Oxford Income Generation Review November 2024 includes several alternative ideas for revenue generation for the Museum. Could you clarify why other ways of increasing revenue were not trialled before charging for entry was introduced?

Written Response

Other ways of increasing revenue for the museum have been trialled, for the last four years. This includes room hire, donations, a pay-what-you-can donations entry scheme, an adopt an object scheme, and paid-for activities. These have not proved to be sufficient on their own to close the budget gap to the net spending level on the Museum of Oxford set by this Council.

Supplementary Question

Councillor Mundy queried that if no resource is given to revenue creating ideas, how can the Council say that ways of increasing revenue were given a fair trial.

Verbal Response

Councillor Brown responded in Councillor Hollingsworth's absence and committed to providing a written response.

AH2: From Cllr Mundy to Cllr Hollingsworth

Question

Templars Square and the surrounding infrastructure has long needed redeveloping. The crumbling buildings and long vacant units are not good enough for Cowley Centre and its residents. Is the cabinet member keeping in contact with the site owner

Written Response

The City Council is in constant dialogue with the site owner Redevco around redevelopment of Templars Square. The developer is exploring funding options to bring the redevelopment of the site forward, given financial challenges in the development market.

Redevco and pushing for progress on plans to redevelop Templars Square?	The City Council is supporting this process, including introductions to Homes England. The City Council's ambition is for complete redevelopment of Templars Square as a thriving modern district centre for Cowley, along with a significant increase in homes provided on the site.
Supplementary Question Councillor Mundy asked if Redevco is the only site owner for the area, or whether there are also others. It was asked whether discussions relating to redevelopment could be opened with other landowners.	Verbal Response Councillor Brown responded in Councillor Hollingsworth's absence and clarified that the City Council is the freeholder, but Redevco is the main contact for the site.

AH3: From Cllr Mundy to Cllr Hollingsworth	
Question Templars Square, granted it's 60 years old, aged quickly. The layout does not suit the modern shopping and community needs of a bustling community centre like Cowley. Does the cabinet member agree that any future redevelopment at Templars Square needs to be fit for the future, moving away from car-centric design and closed alleyways to open spaces and pedestrian friendly place making?	Written Response Yes. The City Council's ambition is for complete redevelopment of Templars Square as a fully regenerated and modern district centre for Cowley that is fit for the future and meets the needs of current and future residents. The current and emerging Local Plans highlight the importance of Templars Square as a district centre focused around people and not vehicles. The City Council is working with the developer to ensure this is the underlying principle of any future development.
Supplementary Question None.	Verbal Response

AH4: From Cllr Mundy to Cllr Hollingsworth	
Question	Written Response

<p>What is the portfolio holder doing to advance progress on plans to redevelop Templars Square Shopping Centre?</p>	<p>The City Council is in constant dialogue with the site owner Redevco around redevelopment of Templars Square See answers to previous questions on this issue.</p>
<p>Supplementary Question None.</p>	<p>Verbal Response</p>

<p>AH5: From Cllr Yeatman to Cllr Hollingsworth</p>	
<p>Question How complete and accurate is the footfall data held by City Council in relation to visits to the Museum of Oxford</p>	<p>Written Response Data held since 26th January 2026 is complete and accurate. Footfall is directly related to tickets sold for general entry, and attendance numbers at events. Before that the footfall counting methods were ad hoc and variant, and totals involved adding together separate figures without taking into account possible duplication. The numbers given as visitor numbers were therefore maximum estimates rather than actual numbers of visitors. It is not possible to measure the degree of duplication at different points. Prior to redevelopment of the Museum there were laser counters on two separate areas in the Town Hall containing items and exhibitions which are now brought together within the Museum. Daily movements through these two separate doors were each halved – to account for entrance and exit – and then added together with a manual count of visitors at the Museum for a total which was then published as the total number of visitors to the Museum. This did not account for one person visiting the separate places that were being treated as parts of the Museum and attending an event as part of the same visit, thus providing a footfall implying three visitors when it was in fact a single visitor. The laser counters also did not account for multiple</p>

	<p>movements backwards and forwards through a door by one person, thus treating a single person as potentially several people.</p> <p>After the reopening of the Museum in October 2021 following Covid there was a system of making a manual count of visitors entering the Museum, and this number was added to the number of people attending any events held during that day. This means that for any event during normal opening hours a single visitor could be counted more than once.</p> <p>In summary the figures from January of this year are accurate and complete and can be relied on. Figures prior to that are not as reliable, but the degree to which single visits were duplicated or triplicated – or more – is not possible to estimate. Figures from prior to 2026 should be treated with caution and will be to some extent an inflated figure of the actual number of visitors.</p>
<p>Supplementary Question None.</p>	<p>Verbal Response</p>

<p>AH6: From Cllr Yeatman to Cllr Hollingsworth</p>	
<p>Question What benchmarks will be used to determine whether the Covered Market redevelopment delivers measurable economic benefits for local traders rather than primarily attracting new operators?</p>	<p>Written Response</p> <p>The Covered Market has over its 250 years of history always attracted new traders. Customers' needs and wants evolve, and new traders with new ideas and new products to sell come forward to test the waters. Change is what makes any market successful.</p> <p>The existing Covered Market Leasing Strategy is clear that the City Council will “encourage occupation by sole traders, independents and local retailers”, and will select new tenants based on factors including their local connections. Assignment of leases to high street chains will not be permitted. That will not change at all, leaving the Covered Market as a place where local entrepreneurs can establish and build their businesses.</p>

	The main benchmark to be used to measure the success of the Covered Market redevelopment will be the demand from local traders to lease the units. At present this demand for units exceeds supply, and the aim is for that to continue.
Supplementary Question Councillor Yeatman asked whether any of the existing Covered Market traders would face higher rents as a result of the redevelopment, and if so, how many.	Verbal Response Councillor Brown responded in Councillor Hollingsworth's absence and explained that the rent policy is revisited regularly; it is not expected that the redevelopment is an influencing factor on the rent policy. It was noted that the Council has invested a separate budget in the refurbishments.

AH7: From Cllr Henwood to Cllr Hollingsworth	
Question Within the 2025/26 budget, Oxford City Council identifies a £250,000 projected loss in revenue from council-run car parks. Since the introduction of the congestion-related traffic measures, will the portfolio holder publish the monthly revenue figures for each council-run car park, including the figures from the 12 months prior to the scheme, so councillors and residents can clearly assess the financial impact?	Written Response The £250k has been included in 2026-27 as a corporate contingency for City Council run car parks as a whole – it is not a loss in revenue, but a more cautious assumption of an increase in the revenue base budget. The overall base budget for car park income was increased by £650k, as opposed to the £900k increase proposed in the Consultation Budget. It is difficult to forecast the impact the congestion charge may have on car parking income from the limited data so far available and the number of variables. The advice of officers to members when Full Council set its budget that this was an appropriate degree of caution given the lack of certainty based on such a short period of data collection. The Council does not normally publish income from individual car parks because the Agresso system is not designed to do so; any variance in portfolio income is shown through the quarterly budget monitoring reports to Cabinet.
Supplementary Question None.	Verbal Response

AH8: From Cllr Henwood to Cllr Hollingsworth**Question**

Does the fall in car-park revenue also reflect reduced city-centre footfall?

Written Response

The usage figures on the city centre car parks based on tickets sold in January 2026 are showing there is a 16% decrease when compared with the same period last year.

This doesn't necessarily equate to a 16% reduction in income because there are different tariff bands and these might be impacted in different ways – for example a reduced number of tickets sold but longer stays might not result in a decline in overall revenue.

As noted in the following question, the City Council does not currently have access to footfall data that can be considered reliable.

Supplementary Question

None.

Verbal Response**AH9: From Cllr Henwood to Cllr Hollingsworth****Question**

Footfall data for the city was previously published but no longer appears to be publicly available. Could the portfolio holder explain why those figures are no longer published, and whether the Council will resume publishing them?

Written Response

Huq, the company who are currently the City Council's providers of footfall data, have confirmed that there have been accuracy issues with the platform that they are using, particularly for year-on-year change. When these concerns about data accuracy came to light in mid-2025 the City Council paused publication of data which could not be relied on to be wholly accurate.

The City Council have been attempting for some time to get Huq to resolve these issues so that the data can be relied on, but this has not been successful.

	The City Council is therefore now seeking another provider for footfall data and will resume publishing it as soon as that provider is contracted and in place.
Supplementary Question None.	Verbal Response

AH10: From Cllr Kerr to Cllr Hollingsworth	
Question Can the portfolio holder set out whether the City Council is doing all it can to work with the County Council to get a more equitable dropped kerb policy in place when residents apply to the City for Planning Permission to convert? We know that current specs cause serious problems for residents wheeling or who have challenges walking, and there is a known solution with Dutch-style entry kerbs.	Written Response This is not a planning matter. In planning terms a Local Planning Authority, such as the City Council, may only require planning permission where the dropped kerb is going onto a classified road. The type of kerb is not something that can be specified in a granting of planning permission, as the specifications for kerbs are set by the Highways Authority, in this case Oxfordshire County Council.
Supplementary Question None.	Verbal Response

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AH11: From Cllr Muddiman to Cllr Hollingsworth	
Question Can the portfolio holder confirm whether the council has signed a contract for the construction of the proposed Oxpens Bridge?	Written Response The contract has been signed by the contractor.
Supplementary Question	Verbal Response

Councillor Muddiman requested confirmation that the contract had been signed on the day of this meeting.

Councillor Brown confirmed it had been signed by the Council earlier that day.

AH12: From Cllr Muddiman to Cllr Hollingsworth

Question

Can the portfolio holder set out what evidence the council has regarding the demand for life science space in Oxford?

Written Response

The Oxford Employment Land Needs Assessment (ELNA) provides the evidence on the market, demand and supply of employment land for the emerging Local Plan.

The ELNA found Oxford is an attractive location in terms of the Laboratory and Research and Development market, and therefore considerable demand for new space for these industries. Important factors include having two world class universities, a number of research hospitals, the investments of Oxford Science Enterprises, and the market response to Oxford's leading role in the response to the Covid-19 pandemic and corresponding enhanced international reputation.

Supplementary Question

Councillor Muddiman requested evidence and statistics.

Verbal Response

Councillor Brown responded in Councillor Hollingsworth's absence and referred Councillor Muddiman to the needs assessment referenced in the written response.

AH13: From Cllr Muddiman to Cllr Hollingsworth

Question

The employment space on the proposed Oxpens development is big enough to accommodate approximately 6,000 jobs. Given the current housing crisis in Oxford, does the portfolio agree that the council should be working to ensure that there is a

Written Response

For many years the so called 'County Towns' approach to strategic planning in Oxfordshire was based on a fundamentally flawed assumption that somehow the city as an attractive place for jobs could be wished away. Pretending that economic growth would not happen, even as the evidence

<p>more joined-up approach to ensuring that the number of new jobs created through employment space mirrors the number of new houses?</p>	<p>it was happening and could not be prevented was obvious, meant that housing in sufficient numbers was not provided in and immediately around the city of Oxford.</p> <p>The result of this strategic planning error was a housing affordability crisis that is impacting on a huge proportion of ordinary families in Oxford, and a congestion and environmental crisis caused by forcing many of those families to live miles outside the place where their jobs were and have to commute back in to what had been and should still be their home city. So rather than repeating the same error by pretending that jobs can be wished away, this City Council and whichever body succeeds it in two years' time should be following a joined-up approach that supports building the number of houses to meet the number of jobs that already exist and will be created by economic growth that is already happening.</p>
<p>Supplementary Question None.</p>	<p>Verbal Response</p>

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<p>AH14: From Cllr Muddiman to Cllr Hollingsworth</p>	
<p>Question Can the portfolio holder explain how an employment to housing ratio of approximately 6:1 on a central Oxford site would affect the numbers of commuters coming into Oxford?</p>	<p>Written Response Employment cannot be wished away, and will either happen here on this site which is ideally centrally located with the best public transport capacity in Oxfordshire, or somewhere else close by but not as well connected. What is required is the tens of thousands of homes that have been prevented in and around Oxford through imagining that reality can be ignored.</p>
<p>Supplementary Question None.</p>	<p>Verbal Response</p>

AH15: From Cllr Muddiman to Cllr Hollingsworth

Question

Given the cost of living crisis and the rise in energy bills, will the portfolio holder reconsider some of the restrictions on installing new doors, windows and solar PV in conservation areas?

Written Response

New doors, windows and solar panels can be installed within most conservation areas without the need for planning permission as long as they meet the nationally set criteria for size and scale as set out in the *Town and Country Planning (General Permitted Development) (England) Order 2015*.

The exceptions are in the Osney Island and Jericho Conservation Areas where Article 4 Directions removes some Permitted Development Rights and requires planning permission for changes to windows and doors. The Article 4 Direction also ensures that these are appropriate to meet the key elements of the character and appearance of the conservation area. Solar panels can be installed under permitted development provided they meet relevant conditions which include being sited as far as is practicable to reduce their visual impact. In some cases, the only practical option will be on the front roof slope.

Where planning permission is required, the Council are supportive of householders needs to improve the energy of their homes. When a property lies within a conservation area, the objective is to help achieve this aim whilst responding sensitively to the character and appearance of the property and area. There are many ways to enhance the energy efficiency of buildings and many options to upgrade the thermal properties of windows and doors in a sensitive manner, as well as incorporating renewable energy technology. Subject to good design, many of these suggestions can be incorporated within buildings in conservation areas. In addition to Technical Advice Note 15 (Heritage Retrofit Guidance: Energy Efficiency and Carbon Reduction) the Council has drafted a suite of design guidance that seeks to set out what can be done under permitted

	development and how some of these options can be undertaken sensitively.
Supplementary Question None.	Verbal Response

AH16: From Cllr Powell to Cllr Hollingsworth

Question

I note the powers of access conferred on immigration enforcement under the section 179 of the Licensing Act 2003, as amended by the Immigration Act 2016. Can the portfolio holder please confirm that the council is only using this power to enter properties as per its legal obligations, and not additionally involved in disclosures to immigration enforcement in regard to its licensing functions?

Written Response

Licensing officers only use powers in the Licensing Act 2003 to carry out the council's legal functions as set out in the Act, as amended. Immigration crime is a relevant matter for the purposes of the Act. Where there is a suspicion that immigration offences are occurring within a licensed premises, officers will inform the Home Office, police and other relevant partners.

Supplementary Question

Councillor Powell requested confirmation that all disclosures are required by law, and that there are not voluntary ones.

Verbal Response

Councillor Brown responded in Councillor Hollingsworth's absence and committed to writing with a response.

AH17: From Cllr Powell to Cllr Hollingsworth

Question

Can the portfolio holder please confirm whether immigration enforcement have been invited to attend licensing enforcement visits outside of contexts where there is a legal obligation upon the council to extend such an invite?

Written Response

The General Licensing Team's duty under the Licensing Act 2003 to uphold the licensing objectives includes addressing immigration offences perpetrated within licensed premises.
The General Licensing Team do not invite immigration enforcement teams to attend scheduled compliance operations. Immigration enforcement invites the General Licensing Team to attend their operations when they

	are attending licenced premises within our local authority area for the purposes set out in the Licensing Act 2003.
Supplementary Question None.	Verbal Response

AH18: From Cllr Powell to Cllr Hollingsworth	
Question Can the portfolio holder please provide an update on discussions regarding the possibility of an Oxford Accommodation Business Improvement District? I note the council's limited role, but any further details on developments since July 2025 would be appreciated.	Written Response In the last 8 months the City Council have established Tourism Task Groups with both the hoteliers and separately those colleges who would be covered by an ABID. A detailed list of visitor improvement projects that an ABID might support is now being finalised. The aim is to reach a point over the next few months where the preparation work will be completed and the different bodies involved can decide whether or not to create an ABID – please note that the City Council does NOT have any say in the matter, only the bodies that would be paying the charges. We are simply playing a convening role. The Government has announced consultation on an Overnight Visitor Levy. At present this could only be introduced by a Strategic Authority – such as the possible Thames Valley Strategic Authority that is being considered. It may also require an elected Mayor before any such levy could begin, and again the City Council would not be the decision maker.
Supplementary Question None.	Verbal Response

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AH19: From Cllr Rawle to Cllr Hollingsworth	
Question	Written Response

Can the portfolio officer outline how often planning applications feature inaccuracies on plans? How often are these missed by the planning authority when first approved?	The City Council Planning Department do not specifically collate that sort of data. It would only be on rare occasions whereby a specific inaccuracy in an application was missed by the officers involved in the Development Management process.
Supplementary Question None.	Verbal Response

AH20: From Cllr Rawle to Cllr Hollingsworth	
Question Can the portfolio holder set out what action the council takes to ensure inaccuracies on planning applications are not missed?	Written Response The application form requires the applicant to make a declaration that the plans accompanying the application are accurate. Planning officers undertake site visits to assess planning applications and that includes reviewing the plans on site. The identification of an inaccuracy prior to approval can depend on the scale of the inaccuracy and also whether it is brought to the officers' attention.
Supplementary Question None.	Verbal Response

AH21: From Cllr Rawle to Cllr Hollingsworth	
Question Can the portfolio holder explain how the council holds applicants to account for submitting inaccurate plans, especially where the results mean the development	Written Response The council investigates any alleged breach of planning control. If an inaccuracy is identified, then we will review that against the approved permission, and the matter will be reviewed by our enforcement team.

<p>does not meet the considerations and conditions set out in the planning application?</p>	<p>Where a breach has occurred then consideration is given to what course of action is needed to remedy the breach of control. The council will take enforcement action to address such breaches. This was the case with the successful enforcement of the unauthorised development at 1 Quarry High Street. This enforcement notice that was upheld on appeal and also in the high court.</p>
<p>Supplementary Question None.</p>	<p>Verbal Response</p>

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<p>AH22: From Cllr Rawle to Cllr Hollingsworth</p>	
<p>Question Can the portfolio holder explain how the council support residents who are affected by inaccurate plans being approved and ensure they receive proportional compensation for harm caused?</p>	<p>Written Response The Council investigates breaches of planning control as mentioned in the previous answer. Should a resident feel that they have grounds for pursuing either the City Council or a developer for compensation following a breach of planning control then they would need to take appropriate independent legal advice.</p>
<p>Supplementary Question None.</p>	<p>Verbal Response</p>

<p>AH23: From Cllr Rawle to Cllr Hollingsworth</p>	
<p>Question Can the portfolio holder set out how many reports of potential breaches in planning control have been reported to us in each of the last 3 years, and what proportion of planning enforcement investigations have</p>	<p>Written Response The table below sets out the number of alleged breaches the of planning control that the planning enforcement Team have investigated for the last 3 years. The regulations of planning enforcement are clear that the preferred outcomes are resolution through voluntary action or retrospective planning</p>

<p>resulted in: negotiation on remedial works or alterations to the development; an invitation for a retrospective planning application for the works; a decision that the breach is minor in nature or would be granted planning permission and take no further action take formal enforcement action?</p>	<p>application, and that enforcement action is only justified if the harm of the planning breach outweighs any harm that would arise from the enforcement action.</p> <p>The data shows the number of those cases within the last three years where the breach was resolved through negotiation resulting in a voluntary action by the property/landowner to make changes to address the breach of planning control, the number of breaches resolved through the submission of a retrospective planning application, and the number of cases closed where it was decided that it was not expedient to pursue formal enforcement action and where no voluntary resolution or a retrospective application could be secured.</p> <table border="1" data-bbox="990 611 1850 842"> <thead> <tr> <th></th> <th>2025</th> <th>2024</th> <th>2023</th> </tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr> <td>Total number of cases received</td> <td>353</td> <td>336</td> <td>320</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Voluntary action</td> <td>62</td> <td>71</td> <td>41</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Retrospective planning application</td> <td>59</td> <td>68</td> <td>34</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Not expedient</td> <td>45</td> <td>67</td> <td>48</td> </tr> </tbody> </table>		2025	2024	2023	Total number of cases received	353	336	320	Voluntary action	62	71	41	Retrospective planning application	59	68	34	Not expedient	45	67	48
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<p>Supplementary Question None.</p>	<p>Verbal Response</p>																				

<p>AH24: From Cllr Rawle to Cllr Hollingsworth</p>	
<p>Question Can the portfolio holder set out how many reports of breaches in planning control are currently being investigated, how many are outstanding and what is the average length of time for the council to resolve reported breaches?</p>	<p>Written Response Currently, there are 319 open planning enforcement investigations. Due to the wide-ranging nature of planning enforcement breaches, the City Council does not specifically collate the average length of time planning enforcement investigations take across a given period. If there are/is a specific case(s) that the Member wishes to know about then details can be</p>

	provided for the length of time that case was open and the number of hours spent by officers investigating and resolving any breach.
Supplementary Question None.	Verbal Response

AH25: From Cllr Robinson to Cllr Hollingsworth	
<p>Question Could the portfolio holder confirm the exact shortfall in the museum income and total running costs for the last two financial years? There seems some confusion in previous figures shared and opacity in the budget, which sometimes appears to conflate Town Hall running costs and Museum running costs.</p>	<p>Written Response</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The museum income shortfall against the income budget in 2024-25 of £151,750 was £46,121 • The museum expenditure overspend against the directly controllable expenditure budget of £293,617 in 2024-25 was £30,940 • The variance to controllable budget in 2024-25 was therefore the income shortfall plus the overspend, so a total of £77,061 • After the allocation of an appropriate share of overhead support costs for central City Council internal functions such as HR, Finance and the like, which are not directly controllable but are real costs, the total (controllable & uncontrollable) expenditure budget in 2024-25 was £326,231 and the total overspend was £120,586 • In monitoring reports & Cabinet reporting controllable costs are reported, and the uncontrollable costs are excluded. • The museum income surplus against the income budget in 2023-24 of £138,750 was £1,706

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The museum expenditure underspend against the directly controllable expenditure budget of £392,717 in 2023-24 was £89,417 • The expenditure underspend against the total controllable & uncontrollable expenditure budget of £425,331 in 2023-24 was £91,228 • In summary therefore across the two years the income of the Museum fell from £140,456 in 2023-4 to £105,629 in 2024-5 - which is a decline in income of £34,827 compared to a planned budget increase in income of £13,000 • Across the two years the controllable expenditure for the Museum rose from £303,300 to £324,557, which is an increase in controllable expenditure of £21,257 compared to a planned budget reduction in controllable expenditure of £99,100. This budget reduction in controllable expenditure was a reversal of the additional short-term costs budget agreed on the opening the museum. • Across the two years the net deficit, taking into account both income and controllable expenditure, of the Museum increased from a net deficit of £162,844 in 2023/24 to a net deficit of £218,928 in 2024/25
Supplementary Question None.	Verbal Response

CM1: From Cllr Fouweather to Cllr Munkonge**Question**

Further to my question at the November 24th Council, many basketball courts in Council run parks in Oxford still have damaged or missing nets on the basketball hoops. Can the Cabinet Member ensure that all sports nets in the Parks are checked immediately and repaired or replaced where needed?

Written Response

Colleagues within Oxford Direct Services are in the process of replacing the nets where needed across the City. Most recently the nets at Alexandra Courts have been replaced and Cutteslowe and Sunnymede and Bury Knowle park nets are programmed to be replaced within the next two weeks.

Supplementary Question

None.

Verbal Response

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CM2: From Cllr Gant to Cllr Munkonge**Question**

What progress can the Cabinet member report in respect of the lease of the cricket nets in Cutteslowe Park?

Written Response

We have been working closely with Wolvercote Cricket club, who have since requested whether additional facilities could be added into the work on this. A draft demise plan has been agreed in principle, with revised Heads of Terms incorporating these potential changes currently being amended for distribution shortly to the club for their review and agreement.

Supplementary Question

None.

Verbal Response**CM3: From Cllr Miles to Cllr Munkonge****Question**

When will Hinksey pool open for the 2026 season?

Written Response

	Unfortunately, during the preparations for the new Hinksey Pool season, the plant room at the facility flooded causing damage to electrical systems and also to mechanical equipment which included the pool pumps. The Council's leisure contractor is working hard behind the scenes to identify the necessary timelines to rectify the damaged equipment and be clear about the timelines necessary for opening. We will ensure that members are updated as soon as we have firm assurances on the opening date.
Supplementary Question Councillor Miles asked whether since publication of this response, there has been any further update on the opening date.	Verbal Response Councillor Munkonge noted that there was no update, and the expected opening date remained as mid-May.

Cabinet Member for Housing and Communities

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LS1: From Cllr Smowton to Cllr Smith	
Question How many Right-to-Buy requests did the City Council receive in November and December 2024, immediately after the announcement of the reduction in the RTB discount? For comparison, how many did it receive in the same period of 2023 and 2025? How long have RTB applications made in these respective periods taken to complete?	Written Response Between the date of the announcement of the changes, 30th October 2024 and 21st November 2024, there were 168 applications. For the same three-week periods in 2023 there was one application and in the same three-week period 2025 there was only one application. Applications 2023-24 - 66 Applications 2024-25 - 239 Applications 2025-26 – 26 RTB applications should be processed with a decision being made to Admit or Deny the RTB within 28 days of receipt of the application. In common with other Local Authorities, we did operate a backlog for a period with

	additional resources being brought in to deal with the unprecedented numbers. The backlog within the Applications Team was cleared in January 2025.
Supplementary Question Councillor Smowton asked whether the Council is familiar with any delays being brought about following the Chancellor's recent changes.	Verbal Response Councillor Smith noted they were not.

LS2: From Cllr Mundy to Cllr Smith	
Question I have been told that there are delays in the OCC Tenancy Team confirming records of tenancy transfers/ inherited tenancies/ succeeded tenancies. It's impacting peoples' benefits, as up to date information fails to be provided for the purposes of establishing entitlement for housing costs on benefits. This in turn leads to rent not being paid on time and arrears owed to OCC. Why are there these delays and what is being done to resolve this?	Written Response Officers are not aware of any particular delays with dealing with succession cases. Relevant checks have to be made to evidence that succession eligibility criteria are met. If the member could pass on details of any specific cases, I will ask officers to investigate
Supplementary Question None.	Verbal Response

LS3: From Cllr Henwood to Cllr Smith	
Question	Written Response

When will the roof at Littlemore Community Centre be repaired? There has been a long-standing leak and fungal growth is now visible near the affected area, which raises concerns for users of the building.	There are asbestos containing materials in the roof void, these are in the process of being safely removed by a competent contractor and are planned for the end of March. Once that has taken place the roof repairs will be booked in carried out in the following week. We are working with the committee to ensure the works cause as little disruption as possible.
Supplementary Question None.	Verbal Response

LS4: From Cllr Mundy to Cllr Smith	
Question Can the portfolio holder explain why there are delays in reporting of tenancy transfers/ inherited tenancies/ succeeded tenancies? This is impacting on people's benefits.	Written Response Officers are not aware of any particular delays with dealing with succession cases. Relevant checks have to be made to evidence that succession eligibility criteria are met. If the member could pass on details of any specific cases, I will ask officers to investigate.
Supplementary Question None.	Verbal Response

LS5: From Cllr Powell to Cllr Smith	
Question Can the portfolio holder please outline under what circumstances the details of homeless people within Oxford City are shared with immigration enforcement?	Written Response The Council does not share information collected from people accessing homelessness services with the Home Office for purposes of immigration enforcement. The Council and its commissioned service providers would only speak to the Home Office with a client's explicit consent.
Supplementary Question None.	Verbal Response

LS5: From Cllr Powell to Cllr Smith**Question**

Can the portfolio holder please confirm whether any details of homeless people are shared with immigration enforcement outside of legal obligations upon the council to provide such details?

Written Response

The Council does not share information collected from people accessing homelessness services with the Home Office for purposes of immigration enforcement.

The Council and its commissioned service providers would only speak to the Home Office with a client's explicit consent.

Supplementary Question

None.

Verbal Response

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LS6: From Cllr Powell to Cllr Smith**Question**

Can the responsible member please confirm whether and in what circumstances details of residents who have accessed housing advice are shared with immigration enforcement?

Written Response

The Council does not share information collected from people accessing homelessness services with the Home Office for purposes of immigration enforcement.

The Council and its commissioned service providers would only speak to the Home Office with a client's explicit consent.

Supplementary Question

None.

Verbal Response**LS7: From Cllr Powell to Cllr Smith**

<p>Question Recent reports have detailed sharp rises in vacancy rates in purpose-built student accommodation in the UK. Can the portfolio holder confirm whether she is aware of any similar uptick in vacancy rates within Oxford City over the past 12 months?</p>	<p>Written Response The Council does not collect information on occupancy rates in student accommodation.</p>
<p>Supplementary Question Councillor Powell asked, given the state of the housing crisis in Oxford, whether the Cabinet Member would undertake to write to providers of student housing to obtain information non their occupancy rates.</p>	<p>Verbal Response Councillor Smith referred Councillor Powell to the Cabinet Member for Planning.</p>

To: Council

Date: 23 March 2026

Report of: Director of Law, Governance and Strategy

Title of Report: Public addresses 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 put to the Cabinet members or Leader, registered by the deadline in the Constitution, are 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 to be taken in Part 2 of the agenda

1. Emily Scaysbrook
2. Dr Vira Ameli

Addresses to be taken in Part 2 of the agenda

1. Emily Scaysbrook

A scooter rider was recently seriously injured after hitting a pothole on Oxford Road in Old Marston. Local residents stated that the same pothole had already been filled twice this year prior to the incident, and having visited the site myself since, I can see that the repair carried out after the accident is already beginning to fail.

This raises concerns that when potholes do materialise, they are not always being repaired in a durable way, but are instead being repeatedly patched, allowing the same defect to reappear within a short space of time and requiring further repair, wasting public money.

My understanding is that this road's maintenance is delivered through the council's contract with ODS.

With that in mind, could the apt Council Member please explain what contractual mechanisms the council has in place with ODS to ensure that pothole repairs are carried out to a good and long-lasting standard, and how the council is able to hold the contractor accountable - including through financial penalties - when the same defects require repeated repair within short periods of time?

Response from Councillor Nigel Chapman, Cabinet Member for Citizen Focussed Services and Council Companies

The Council is aware of the unfortunate accident involving the scooter rider George Balkwill in Old Marston last month and we all wish him a speedy recovery. Like many others, I watched the video of the accident and I feel every sympathy for what happened to George. In my view, citizens have every right to expect their roads are safe and that there are not potholes of the kind which featured in this accident present on our roads.

This winter's prolonged and heavy rainfall has significantly worsened the condition of our roads, contributing to an increase in potholes. Wet and cold conditions also make timely and durable repairs more challenging. I share everyone's frustration about this ongoing issue.

The County Council provides an annual budget and agrees a work plan directly with Oxford Direct Services for repairing minor roads and paths within Oxford. It sets down the standards of work it expects and the time frame in which that work will be carried out.

In the case of the pot hole which caused the accident in Marston, this was inspected and booked for repair but continued to deteriorate. It was repaired well within the timeframe the County Council expects for potholes as originally classified. ODS always aim to carry out repairs to the required standard and as quickly as possible. However, I fully recognise that this will be of little reassurance to the scooter rider affected, particularly given the timing.

ODS's approach is to deliver a durable, right-first-time repair of all potholes. Each defect is assessed to determine the appropriate treatment, considering factors such as size, depth, location, traffic loading, and underlying condition. Where a permanent repair is required, it ensures that the defect is properly prepared, cut out to sound material, cleaned, and reinstated using suitable materials and compaction techniques designed to achieve long-term performance, not a temporary fix.

Over recent weeks, ODS has increased the number of crews out repairing potholes to four. During February, the crews dealt with 719 defects on Oxford's minor roads. They also received 588 reports via Fix My Street – the most ever in a single month.

Oxfordshire County Council provides ODS with an annual budget to repair all Oxford's minor roads. This core budget has not increased in recent years whilst costs have gone up. This year, ODS has proactively sought and secured an additional one-off sum to help with the challenging situation.

We are in continued conversations with the County Council for additional funding to address wider needs, not just pothole repairs.

Given the scale of the problems we face including the underlying state of our roads and pavements, it is clear this budget is only scratching the surface. I know of minor roads in my own ward where they need root and branch renewal, not just pothole repairs. So I urge the County Council to see what it can do to increase this budget substantially.

Outside Oxford and on the city's trunk and classified roads (such as Botley Road, Cowley Road, Marston Ferry Road and the Ring Road), the county council has a contract with a private company to repair public roads and paths, including repairing potholes. ODS is not involved in this work.

Although ODS does have crews out spotting defects in Oxford's minor roads, you can help us by reporting issues to fixmystreet.com. This information makes everyone aware of where the potholes are and helps plan the repairs. And ODS will always do its best to respond as quickly as it can within the financial constraints it faces.

2. Dr Vira Ameli

My name is Vira Ameli. I am a researcher and lecturer at the University of Oxford, where I also completed my DPhil. I have been a resident of Oxford for almost a decade now. As a Social Scientist, I study how health systems can perform equitably and efficiently, and how societies build and sustain the structures that maintain life.

So I want to speak from experience, as an Iranian woman born and raised in Iran, as a resident of Oxford, and as a Social Scientist studying health systems.

The US-Israeli illegal aggression against Iran and Iranians, for a second time during negotiations and just before an agreement was within reach, as announced by the Omani Foreign Minister and mediator, cannot be understood only as a conflict between states or even people. It is an illegal act of aggression that targets Iran and Iranians in three layers:

Through the destruction of life.

Through the destruction of memory.

And through the narrowing of our futures.

First, it is the destruction of life.

We see that medical centres have been targeted and damaged, that schools have been struck directly, that hundreds of innocent schoolgirls and boys were among the very first victims of this war. Civilians, women, and children are being killed by the US and Israeli missiles and bombs every day across the region and now in Iran.

We then report numbers. But any one number is already too large.

By last week, according to the Iranian Red Crescent, 67,414 civilian buildings were destroyed, 236 medical centres and 498 schools were targeted and damaged. More than 1400 people, including over 400 women and children were killed. Sixteen medical personnel and one paramedics were killed.

But numbers can obscure as much as they reveal.

Because what is being lost is not only what is visible in the moment of impact, it is the system that maintains life and makes survival possible.

When health workers are killed, when hospitals are struck, the violence does not end there. It continues, quietly, in the patient who cannot be treated, in the delayed surgery, in the chronic condition that becomes fatal only because existing treatment is no longer accessible.

A health system is not only infrastructure. It is the thin line that stands between illness and death.

And when that line is broken, it is not broken equally. It is the most vulnerable who fall first.

Second, it is the destruction of memory.

We now know that museums and historical sites across Iran have been targeted and damaged, including sites marked by UNESCO as World Heritage sites, places where history has not been preserved in isolation but layered across centuries, belonging not just to Iranians, but to humanity.

By last week, the Ministry of Cultural Heritage reported serious damage to more than 56 museums and historical buildings across the country. In Tehran alone, 19 sites were damaged, including the beautiful Golestan palace and the Hall of Mirrors. In historic cities, such as Isfahan, Shiraz, and Semnan cultural heritage was severely damaged.

These are the heritage from the Achaemenid and Sassanian worlds, through the Seljuk and Safavid periods, these are not simply magnificent structures. They are the record of continuity, of a civilisation that has endured for more than two and a half thousand years.

And that endurance has not been built on expansion. It has been built on preservation, on the ability of a people to remain alive in their language, in their memory, in their resistance, and in their understanding of themselves.

So when these sites are targeted, what is struck is not only stone. It is that continuity. It is the link between past and present. It is our national heritage, but also World Heritage.

And here, in Oxford, this cannot be unfamiliar.

This is a city that has made a life out of preservation. It understands that history is not decoration. It is what allows a society to recognise itself across time.

So when heritage is damaged elsewhere, Oxford is not untouched by it. It is implicated in the question of what we choose to value, and what we are willing to let disappear.

Third, it is the destruction of the future.

Because what is being dismantled now is not only what exists, but what could exist.

Hospitals, schools, bridges, roads, systems built over decades by a nation under constraint, under pressure, under sanctions and economic strangulation.

To destroy them is not only to wound the present. It is to reach forward and make the future smaller.

It is to leave fewer possibilities, weaker systems, and a longer shadow of harm. And so the question returns, inevitably, to us.

Oxford calls itself a City of Sanctuary.

But sanctuary is not a word that can survive contradiction.

It cannot mean welcome in principle and restriction in practice. It cannot mean openness when it is easy, and withdrawal when it is difficult.

Because it is precisely at moments like this, when the conditions of life are being dismantled elsewhere, that the meaning of sanctuary is decided.

And there is something else that must be said, without evasion.

The country that is now under attack, Iran, is also one that has, for decades, hosted one of the largest refugee populations in the world. More than 3.5 million people have sought refuge and live in Iran.

So we are faced with a reversal that should give us pause. A place that has offered refuge is itself made unsafe.

This is not a complicated question.

It is a question of whether we are willing to recognise what is being destroyed. Not pretending for a second that any of this can bring any good for anyone – not for Iranians, not for Americans, and not for Jewish people.

And whether we are willing to speak in a way that is equal to that reality.

Because if a city like Oxford, a city that claims to stand for knowledge, for history, and for human dignity, cannot speak clearly at a moment like this, then it becomes difficult to know what those claims mean.

I urge you to support this motion, and speak against the destruction of:

Life.

Memory.

Future.

Thank you.

Response from Councillor Susan Brown, Leader and Cabinet Member for Partnership Working

Firstly, I would like to sincerely thank you for giving up your time to come and speak to us today. Our hearts go out to you, your family and all other Iranians facing the current aggression, as well as to the many people across the region who are finding themselves drawn into this escalating war.

I am very relieved that our Government are not engaged in this aggression and are resisting calls to do so, only participating in defensive actions.

I would like to express on behalf of the city council our absolute sympathies with the plight of the people of Iran, who are victims both of the repressive Iranian regime and now also of the unjustified war led by President Trump and the Israeli government.

I should however warn Dr Ameli, that unfortunately it is unlikely that we will get to this motion tonight.

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To: Council
Date: 23 March 2026
Report of: Director of Law, Governance and Strategy
Title of Report: Petition

Addresses in relation to Petition

Avril Alexander

We represent nearly 2000 Oxford residents who were horrified to discover that the Council had decided to introduce entrance fees to the Museum of Oxford.

I started this petition and have been amazed to see how it has grown organically as word has spread. On the final day before charging started, people flocked to the museum to leave messages against charging. You can read them on the Save Our Museum website.

Today we want to set out three main areas of concern:

1. Introducing charges is the wrong decision for the museum and threatens its long-term viability
 - The museum will not be able to compete with the much larger and higher-profile university museums, which are all free
 - We will likely see a serious drop in footfall which means the funding gap will not be filled - this is the conclusion the council's own commissioned research came to, but it seems to have been ignored.
 - Meanwhile this has created barriers to entry for the local people of Oxford. All of us should have the right to access our own history. Furthermore, requiring people on benefits and seeking asylum to prove their status in such a public place to gain free entry is undignified, embarrassing and potentially dangerous in the current climate.
2. The decision was taken in an undemocratic and untransparent way
 - The introduction of charging was decided by Cabinet, not the full Council
 - There was no consultation amongst museum users or museum staff

- But funding was applied for from the Arts Council, on the basis that charging was going to be introduced, even before Cabinet discussed and agreed it. This means the decision was actually made behind closed doors by senior councillors and officers with no transparency and accountability at all.
3. Councillors have been undermining the museum to make their case in the press, using inaccurate and inconsistent figures
- Councillor Hollingsworth said to the BBC the museum's visitor numbers have significantly dropped. Actually, they have been rising steadily since the museum reopened and no doubt would have continued to rise. He is comparing them to pre-redevelopment visitor figures that, according to the Council itself, were counted in a different way and are not comparable
 - Councillor Hollingsworth also claimed *'the museum received around £5,000 in voluntary donations from visitors last year'* but actually it was nearly £12,500
 - Councillor Hollingsworth claims the funding gap is £77,000 and Councillor Brown claims it's nearly £100,000. Our FOI request showed a gap of closer to £50,000 that didn't take into account nearly half the museum's income. Why are different councillors using different numbers? Which is correct?
 - The council argued in the Oxford Mail a month ago that if the funding gap cannot be filled the museum may have to close, as it's taking funds away from other community groups. This is cynical and divisive when the museum itself is an amazing community resource, partnering with groups across the city on educational and outreach activities. Trying to pit community-focused organisations against each other like this is outrageous. We want a Council that will champion and support local history and community groups, not try to turn them against each other.

In conclusion, we would like to see the entry fees dropped immediately.

Ultimately, Councillors need to recognise that the Museum of Oxford is a wonderful community resource that they should be proud of. Instead of this negativity and divisiveness, we want to see a Council prepared to work in partnership with the talented and hard-working museum staff, and the Museum Development Trust, to find alternative ways to secure its future.

If you don't know the museum well, please take 10 minutes out of your day to go and wander round. Read stories you will not find anywhere else in Oxford about events that have shaped our city:

- like the Cutteslowe Walls and the Florence Park Rent Strike
- ancient artefacts such as our Patron Saint Frideswide's gravestone
- a celebration of our industrial past such as the Cowley plant
- a tin of Cooper's Oxford Marmalade that went all the way to the Antarctic with Scott

The Museum of Oxford was never designed to have an entrance fee. It was designed to be a free resource for the people of Oxford. Please keep it that way.

Response from Councillor Susan Brown, Leader and Cabinet Member for Partnership Working

Thank you for addressing Council today and for the significant commitment shown by the nearly 2,000 residents who signed the petition. I want to begin by recognising the depth of feeling expressed. The Museum of Oxford is a cherished institution, and your passion for protecting its accessibility speaks to the strong sense of community engagement that has always defined it.

I also want to acknowledge the concerns raised about fairness, transparency, and the museum's long-term sustainability. These concerns are sincerely felt, and I appreciate the opportunity to respond clearly and respectfully.

The decision to introduce a small entry charge was not taken lightly. The petition report presented to Council outlines the financial reality facing the museum. In 2024–25, even after the Council's planned contribution of £141,867, the museum recorded an unbudgeted revenue pressure of £77,060.54, reflecting the gap between controllable income and expenditure (Table 3 in the report). Rising costs and the continued shortfall in footfall compared to the optimistic projections made during the redevelopment have placed the museum in a challenging financial position.

It is precisely because we value the museum that we had to consider how to protect its future. The charging model approved by Cabinet in October 2025 was designed with accessibility at its core. The model provides free annual passes for residents in receipt of benefits, people with no recourse to public funds, disabled visitors, foster carers, and under-5s. It also provides free entry to all Oxfordshire school groups, carers, attendees of pre-booked activities, volunteers, and object donors. At least 12 free entry days per year for everyone ensure that no-one is excluded from engaging with their city's history.

I understand concerns about dignity and the process of verifying eligibility. That is why the model mirrors the approach already used for our leisure services, ensuring a consistent and respectful process, and why museum staff have been trained to support visitors sensitively and appropriately. Anyone wishing to visit for free without verifying eligibility can do so once a month.

Questions have also been raised today about transparency. The report makes clear that the decision followed a formal Cabinet process, supported by detailed financial analysis and in accordance with the Council's constitutional requirements. I recognise, however, that some residents feel they should have been more directly involved earlier in the discussion. Unfortunately, the timescale for applying for the funding required to make the change didn't allow for that but we will continue to monitor feedback and the impact of the change over the next 18 months.

On the issue of visitor numbers and financial figures, I recognise there has been frustration about data being presented in different ways. Some of this reflects the difference between the budgets managed day-to-day by staff teams and the end-of-year figures which apportion central overheads to those cost centres. Some of this also reflects historic counting methods, where visitors could be counted more than once before the introduction of charging. The new ticketing system now provides accurate, unduplicated data so that future reporting is consistent, transparent, and verifiable.

Finally, I want to be clear: the museum's future matters deeply to this Council. The decision to introduce charging was taken to protect the museum, not undermine it. The Museum Renewal Fund grant has enabled additional marketing, new philanthropy plans, and combined tickets

with other partners which are all part of a wider strategy to ensure the museum reaches residents across the city, improves its financial resilience, and enables the stories of Oxford's communities to continue to be shared for generations to come.

I want to thank everyone who has taken the time to raise their concerns. Even where we may differ on the best solution, we share the same goal: a thriving, welcoming Museum of Oxford that is sustainable, accessible, and rooted in the communities it serves. I give my commitment that we will continue to monitor the impact of charging as we collect financial data and customer feedback over the next 18+ months. In the meantime, I hope that all those who care about the museum will help to spread the word about it and encourage people to visit and continue to support it.

Thank you.