

COUNCIL

Monday 25 November 2013

COUNCILLORS PRESENT: Councillors Sinclair (Lord Mayor), Abbasi (Sheriff), Brett (Deputy Lord Mayor), Altaf-Khan, Baxter, Benjamin, Brown, Campbell, Canning, Clarkson, Cook, Coulter, Curran, Darke, Fooks, Goddard, Gotch, Haines, Hollick, Humberstone, Kennedy, Khan, Lloyd-Shogbesan, Lygo, Malik, McCready, Mills, O'Hara, Paule, Pressel, Price, Rowley, Royce, Rundle, Sanders, Seamons, Smith, Tanner, Turner, Upton, Van Nooijen, Williams and Wolff.

54. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Beverley Clack, James Fry, Graham Jones, Stuart McCready, Craig Simmons, and Ruth Wilkinson.

55. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

None declared.

56. MINUTES

Council agreed to approve the minutes of the ordinary meeting of Council held on 30th September 2013.

57. APPOINTMENTS TO COMMITTEES

Council noted that following the previous meeting of Council (minute 33 of that meeting), the Head of Law and Governance had been informed of the following appointments/changes to the membership of Committees:

Councillor John Goddard had been appointed to the Planning Review Committee

Councillor Mike Gotch had been appointed to the Licensing and Gambling Acts Committee

Councillors Jean Fooks and Ruth Wilkinson would no longer serve on the Disciplinary Committee for Directors and Heads of Service.

58. ANNOUNCEMENTS

The Lord Mayor, Councillor Dee Sinclair made the following announcement:

- (1) Council Officers had been proactive following the Philippines typhoon disaster by contacting the Philippine community representatives in the City. The Council had offered to provide storage facilities for items collected. She added that there had been a collection and there was also a link on the Council's website, should people wish to donate.

Councillor Mary Clarkson added that the Overseas Director for CAFOD said that the best way to donate was in cash rather than in goods.

The Sheriff, Councillor Mohammed Niaz Abbasi made the following announcements:

- (1) The Sheriffs' Association had held their recent conference in Nottingham which he had been pleased to attend representing Oxford. The next conference would be held in Canterbury.
- (2) The Port Meadow Drive had taken place on the morning of 14th October 2013. The Lord Mayor, Councillors and members of the Commoners Association attended. 120 cows had been rounded up and had been on the Meadow legally.
- (3) A Freeman of Oxford ceremony had taken place on 20th November 2013 with three people being made Freeman of the City.

The Leader of the Council, Councillor Bob Price made the following announcement:

- (1) The Christmas Lights Festival had taken place over the previous weekend and had proved a great success. Over 100,000 people had attended during the three days of the Festival. He thanked the sponsors for their support and Council staff who ensured that the event was such a success. Plans were now underway for Christmas Lights 2014.

Councillor Jim Campbell on behalf of the Liberal Democrat Group endorsed the comments made by Councillor Price.

59. PUBLIC ADDRESSES AND QUESTIONS THAT RELATE TO MATTERS FOR DECISION AT THIS MEETING

No addresses or questions had been submitted by members of the public which related to matters for decision at this meeting.

60. WESTGATE - PROVISION OF TEMPORARY CAR AND COACH PARKING DURING CONSTRUCTION

Council had before it the following (previously circulated, now appended):

- (1) Report of the Head of Housing and Property which had also been submitted to the City Executive Board on 9th October 2013. The report detailed a request for approval in the Council's capital programme of a scheme to provide temporary car and coach parking during the redevelopment of the Westgate.
- (2) Extract from the minutes of the City Executive Board held on 9th October 2013.

Councillor Ed Turner moved and spoke to the report.

Council agreed to approve the inclusion of £3.3 million funded from an earmarked reserve in the Council's capital programme for the scheme as detailed in the report, relating to the provision of temporary car and coach parking during redevelopment of the Westgate, together with approval to transfer funding from the Council's Park and Ride works budget, if required.

61. COMPULSORY PURCHASE ORDER - LANHAM WAY, LITTLEMORE, OXFORD

Council had before it the following (previously circulated, now appended):

- (1) Report of the Head of Housing and Property which had also been submitted to the City Executive Board on 9th October 2013. The report concerned compulsory purchase proceedings in relation to a long term empty property in Lanham Way, Littlemore, Oxford.
- (2) Extract from the minutes of the City Executive Board held on 9th October 2013.

Councillor Scott Seamons moved and spoke to the report.

Council agreed to approve that provision be made in the 2013/2014 budget for the compulsory purchase of the property as detailed in the confidential appendices to the report.

62. OXFORD SUPER CONNECTED CITIES PROJECT

Council had before it the following (previously circulated, now appended):

- (1) Report of the Executive Director, Housing and Regeneration which had also been submitted to the City Executive Board on 9th October 2013. The report provided an update on the successful bid to Government for funding of £4.83 million from the Urban Broadband Fund (Phase 2) Super Connected Cities Programme, and requested that Council officers now be authorised to deliver the project with the support of a specialist organisation using the funding secured plus the previously agreed £300,000 capital commitment and £25,000 start-up costs.
- (2) Extract from the minutes of the City Executive Board held on 9th October 2013.

Councillor Bob Price moved and spoke to the report.

Council agreed to approve an additional £4.83 million within the Council's General Fund Capital Programme in 2014/15 to be funded by Government Grant.

63. SETTING OF THE COUNCIL TAX BASE 2014-15

The Head of Finance submitted a report (previously circulated, now appended) which sought delegated authority for the Executive Director of Organisational Development and Corporate Services to approve the setting of the Council Tax Base for 2014/15 as required by Section 33 of The Local Government Finance Act 1992 and the Local Authorities (Calculation of Council Tax Base) (England) Regulations 2012.

Councillor Ed Turner moved and spoke to the report.

Council agreed:

- (a) To delegate the setting of the 2014/15 Council Tax Base for the City Council's area as a whole and for the individual parishes to the Executive Director of Organisational Development and Corporate Services and to the Audit and Governance Committee for subsequent financial years;
- (b) For 2015/16 onwards that details of the Council Tax Base should also be circulated to all Members of Council prior to the Audit and Governance Committee setting the Council Tax Base for the City Council's area as a whole and for the individual parishes.

64. COUNCIL AND COMMITTEE PROGRAMME 2014/15

The Head of Law and Governance submitted a report (previously circulated, now appended) which set out a revised programme of Council and Committee meetings for May – July 2014 in consequence of the change in the date of the European and Local Government elections to 22nd May 2014.

Councillor Bob Price moved and spoke to the report and asked that Council consider the rescheduling of the Scrutiny Committee dates from a Tuesday to a Monday.

Council agreed to approve the revised programme of Council and Committee meetings for the Council Year 2014/15 subject to further discussion between Officers and Group Leaders on the scheduling of the Scrutiny Committee.

65. CITY EXECUTIVE BOARD MINUTES

Council had before it minutes of the City Executive Board as follows:

- (a) 9th October 2013
- (b) 13th November 2013

City Executive Board – 13th November 2013

- (a) Minute 94 – Oxpens Masterplan Supplementary Planning Document – Councillor Jean Fooks said that the Masterplan was a missed opportunity. The Action Plan for the area had been drawn up before the recent announcement of the redevelopment of the station. She said that what was needed was good quality community housing in the city centre and that the Liberal Democrat Group felt strongly on this issue.

In response Councillor Colin Cook said that Council was aware of what was being proposed. There needed to be an appropriate balance and the Supplementary Planning Document provided this. Councillor Ed Turner further added that the Administration had an unwavering commitment to retaining the Ice Rink in Oxpens.

- (b) Minute 95 – Waste and Recycling Strategy – Councillor Mark Mills said that he would like to see the costing for the diversion of recyclables from household waste, which the City Executive Board had not accepted as part of the Scrutiny Committee recommendations. In response Councillor John Tanner said that he had found the Working Party and Scrutiny very helpful. However the smaller the amount of waste the less economical it was to use a mechanical system and so it was not justified.

66. QUESTIONS ON NOTICE FROM MEMBERS OF COUNCIL

(1) Question to the Board Member, Benefits and Customer Services (Councillor Susan Brown) from Councillor Jean Fooks

Accessing Council services

The latest edition of Tenants in Touch says that “the recent Council survey showed us that less than half of our readers have access to the internet”. What is the Council doing to make sure that tenants can access all council services on paper or by phone and are not disadvantaged by not having internet access?

Response: It is important to understand that the articles in Tenants in Touch which related to Computers, Communication and Learning were designed to encourage digital inclusion where tenants do not have access to the internet at home. Details of basic training opportunities were highlighted as were locations where the internet can be accessed in the community for free. Use of the internet to access Council services is complementary to the use of face to face, phone or written contact.

Through the work of the Customer First Programme, the Council has made great improvements to ensure the customer service we provide is enabling as many customers as possible to access our services. We have also actively sought customer feedback to inform service delivery:

The Council has had a one number single point of telephone contact since 2011. This telephone number is widely publicised and over 270,000 calls are received by telephone each year to the Contact Centre Team. Staff, are trained in a wide range of services and over 90% of the calls received are dealt with by the team at that first point of contact without passing to the back office. There is also a 24 hour seven days a week automated payment telephone line, and an out of hours duty officer service, which handles urgent customer enquiries.

There are two modern walk in customer service centres providing access to officers via appointment or “drop in” alongside self-service facilities. Between them these centres resolve queries for over 16,000 customers

each year. The customer service centre is also available for partner surgeries and is being effectively used by Carers Oxfordshire and Shelter to introduce a one-stop-shop of local services.

We recently took part in a mystery shopping exercise which tested both our face to face and telephone service. The feedback was really positive and is now being used to help shape services further.

In addition, the Tenant Mystery Shopping Group has helped test our new telephone system options to ensure they are user friendly and comprehensive. The feedback on this exercise was really positive and they were satisfied with the changes we have made.

Over the next couple of months, we will be carrying out consultation with our customers to inform the next iteration of the Customer Contact Strategy. As part of the consultation we are engaging with customers to understand how they wish to access services and what we can do to improve access to services. This will cover all methods of contact including face to face, telephone and the website.

In addition, there is a specific questionnaire for tenants which as well as asking the same questions on accessibility, also asks them about their thoughts on the online reporting of repairs. This will enable us to develop this service in line with customer need and preferences.

We will also be identifying opportunities to further increase partnership working with those organisations who our customers may go to for advice, so giving additional “one-stop shop” style support as part of our service.

The objective is to enable and encourage customers to access our services using the most cost effective channels for them, giving us more time to spend serving customers who are not able to use electronic means.

Councillor Fooks in a supplementary question asked if the Board Member was aware of a recent survey where people had answered that online consultation was ineffective. In response Councillor Brown said that ways to improve the Council's website were being looked at with the aim to make it more effective and to allow for greater online contact with residents etc. She further added that officers were consulting with people to find out how they wanted to access the services provided by the Council.

(2) Question to the Board Member, City Development (Councillor Colin Cook) from Councillor Craig Simmons

St. Clement's Car Park

As predicted, traders are suffering due to inadequate alternative parking provision during the St Clements Car Park redevelopment. The Council made a significant sum from the sale of the land - a price which local traders are now paying for with their livelihoods. What is the City Council doing to compensate traders for loss of revenue during the construction period and what more will the Council now do?

Response: The Council has provided an additional car park, a 10 minute walk away, and, has worked with traders and local Councillors on a campaign to promote St Clements during the work. If traders feel they are suffering in the interim they can apply for business rates reductions if trading turnover is lower.

(3) Question to the Board Member, City Development (Councillor Colin Cook) from Councillor Jim Campbell

Planning: Consultation of Neighbours

Following a complaint about inadequate consultation in relation to a planning application in my ward, a Case Review was set up. The subsequent, excellent, report written by Clare Golden stated that a “number of important lessons had been identified”. In particular that:

We must ensure that we provide more than one notice for applications which affect properties to the rear or on sides which happen to be located in different roads;

We must ensure that all reports cover all relevant issues....The impact of developments on the garden area of dwellings must not be overlooked in terms of our assessment.

Recommended actions for the Planning Department included “the writing and adoption of a (new) site notice protocol” and the “provision of further training for all officers responsible for reviewing/clearing planning applications.”

Can the Portfolio Holder tell us whether these lessons *have* been learnt and whether the recommended actions *have been* carried out?

Response: The answer is yes. Protocol, training and practice all in place as per the report.

Councillor Campbell in a supplementary question asked if the Board Member would agree that had such a protocol been in place two years ago, a particular development might have been different. In response Councillor Cook said that the independent person who had been brought in to review a recent planning application was better placed to reply.

(4) Question to the Board Member, Youth and Communities (Councillor Steven Curran) from Councillor David Williams

Possible closure of Children’s Centres

Could the Portfolio holder outline the steps he has taken to persuade the County Council not to close the 15 Children’s Centres that they are proposing to close as a part of their cuts package.

Response: Local government has been forced to make some very difficult decisions, but we must not lose sight of the value of the services that are delivered. We do not believe that closing children’s centres where they are

really needed is an acceptable course of action. These concerns have been made clear to county colleagues in an appropriate manner.

I would like to thank the Green Party for their concern over a Labour Party flagship policy. I personally have made my concerns clear to the Portfolio Holder on the County and clearly this administration is opposed to cutting Children's Centres as we are in cutting other services to young people such as early intervention hubs. We recognise that difficult decisions need to be made by The County Council but cutting these services are not the right decision. I understand that hard and fast decisions have not yet been made and that the position of the Independents and the Green Party will be crucial to this issue.

(5) Question to the Board Member, Education, Crime and Community Safety (Councillor Pat Kennedy) from Councillor Dick Wolff

Alcohol Free Zones

Can you please explain how Oxford's Alcohol Free Zones are being policed?

Response: The whole of the city within the local authority boundary is covered by the Designated Places Order. That covers all public areas where there is an implied right of access to the public, even if they have to pay. But it is not an alcohol free zone. Police officers have discretionary powers which they are able to use if they think that alcohol may cause anti-social behaviour.

Police officers can confiscate the alcohol, opened or unopened, and failure to comply can lead to arrest.

Licensed areas are covered by the Licensing Act 2003.

Councillor Wolff in a supplementary question said that while he understood the policy it was still unclear how it was to be interpreted as there had been confusion and problems were being experienced on the ground through inconsistencies. In response Councillor Kennedy re-iterated her previous response. Councillor Price further added that there was discretion on the part of the Police Officer or Police Community Support Officer depending on the circumstances.

(6) Question to the Board Member, Leisure Services (Councillor Mike Rowley) from Councillor Sam Hollick

Policy on restricting use of City leisure facilities

What is the Council policy on banning members of the public from those City leisure facilities managed by Fusion?

Can the portfolio holder tell me how many people are currently banned?

Are any banned people prominent members of the Save Temple Cowley Pool campaign?

Response: Fusion Lifestyle, as the managers of our leisure facilities, are responsible for any decision not to allow particular individuals to enter leisure premises. They have the right to do this if the activities of an individual are spoiling the leisure experience for other users. We would expect such decisions to be taken only as a last resort and in a reasonable manner. At present there are six people restricted from using the leisure centres, all of these are on a temporary basis.

I would not comment on any particular case because the Board Member does not influence, and should not give the appearance of influencing, individual decisions. However, from the point of view of policy oversight, I have no reason to believe that Fusion have acted unreasonably at any time.

Councillor Hollick in a supplementary question asked the Board Member if he was confident that the procedures were robust. In response Councillor Rowley said yes and that this action was only taken as a last resort.

(7) Question to the Board Member, Cleaner, Greener Oxford (Councillor John Tanner) from Councillor Elise Benjamin

Recycling Rates in 2012/13

Can the portfolio holder tell us the latest 2012/13 recycling rates in the City and how they compare to past years?

Response: The recycling rate for 2012/13 was 44.92%. The recycling rate for 2011/12 was 44.88%.

This shows an increase year on year of 0.04%. It should be borne in mind, that due to recent changes in national legislation we are no longer able to include street sweepings in our recycling calculation and from March 2013 these are no longer included in our recycling figures. As a result Council agreed to a reduction in our original recycling target of 50% to 44%. Our current year's performance is 44.82%, which of course does not include sweeping arisings. At the same period last year our recycling rate was 45.64%, so in "like for like" terms, the recycling rate is still increasing. The main reason for this is that dry recycle continues to increase. The figure currently stands at 29.38% compared to 29.29% at the same point last year. This is thanks in part to the educational campaigns that have taken place across the city. Our garden waste service continues to grow and as a consequence composting tonnages have risen also adding to the recycling rate, although these obviously fluctuate seasonally and are weather dependent.

(8) Question to the Board Member, Cleaner, Green Oxford (Councillor John Tanner) from Councillor Elise Benjamin

Carbon emissions

Can the portfolio holder tell us why the Council's carbon emissions have increased this year and what is he doing to tackle the issue?

Response: This issue was discussed in the Greenhouse Gas emissions report that the council prepares for Department of Energy and Climate Change each summer, and is available on the Council's web site.

The Council exceeded its 5% year on year reduction in *calculated* carbon emissions by implementing a range of carbon reduction measures in the year. The carbon savings from these measures are calculated according to industry good practice for an average weather year, and exceeded the 5% target for the year.

In fact last year was not an average weather year. The harsher and longer winter in 2012/13 was far more severe than in 2011/12. When comparing, "heating degree days" for 2012/13 were 37% higher than 2011/12. The effect of this is that more energy was used for heating than the previous year resulting in more carbon emissions.

A higher increase in emissions would have been observed under the conditions experienced during 2012/13 without an established and successful energy/carbon management plan in place.

The council's carbon management programme has avoided wasted energy and reduced energy bills compared to what they would have been in the long harsh winter of 2012/13.

(9) Question to the Board Member, Finance, Efficiency and Strategic Asset Management (Councillor Ed Turner) from Councillor Craig Simmons

Treasury Management

Can the portfolio holder say why he does not agree with raising the non-specified investment limit set out in the Treasury Management Report which will enable the Council to benefit from much higher rates of return from its savings (6% rather than less than 1%).

Response: Specified investments are investments in sterling with counterparties which would be not more than one-year maturity, with rated institutions that meet the Council's minimum credit rating. These are considered low risk assets where the possibility of loss of principal or investment income is small.

Non specified investments are any other type of investment, i.e. longer than 364 days, variable rates, unrated building societies and property funds. These types of investment are more risky in nature and although are likely to attract higher returns, can carry a potential for loss of principal.

The current Treasury Management Strategy, which is agreed by Council and so can be amended by councillors, allows for the Council to invest up to 25% of its current investment portfolio in non-specified investments, with limits on different types of investment ranging between 10% and 20%. It is a matter of judgement on the level of risk which an authority should carry dependant on a number of factors including the level of reserves and balances and the risk appetite of the Council. In a number of authorities

against which the Council has benchmarked, the level of non-specified investments ranges from 0% to 25%.

In Oxford City the current limit of 25% has been set taking the above factors into account and following consultation with the Council's advisors, Sector, and is considered to be prudent.

When considering non-specified investments the Council is also required to consider the level of 'its core cash', or the amount of cash that will not be required in the short to medium term for cash flow purposes, since non-specified investments are generally long term in nature.

The Council does currently have £3 million in Property Funds together with £9 million in unrated building societies. Officers are currently looking to increase the amounts in Property Funds in favour of building societies but will continue to work within the confines of core cash and the 25% limit. Obviously these levels can be reviewed as part of the Treasury Management Strategy.

(10) Question to the Board Member, Finance, Efficiency and Strategic Asset Management (Councillor Ed Turner) from Councillor Craig Simmons

Blacklisting of workers

Will the board member join me in expressing their support for the GMB Union's campaign that is calling on Councils to blacklist companies that have been guilty of blacklisting workers? Will they ensure that the Council follows the lead of Tower Hamlets in adopting a procurement policy to empower the Council to reject such companies?

Response: I absolutely support the GMB's campaign, and am happy to state that the Council's Procurement Section has checked the Council's payment records against the organisations identified as having blacklisted, and can confirm that none of the listed organisations are Council suppliers.

Tower Hamlets includes a specific question in their Pre-Qualification Questionnaire requiring any supplier who proposes to tender for a contract to agree to prohibit the use of systematic compilation of information on trade unionists and their use to discriminate against those individuals because of their trade union membership or because of their involvement in trade union activity in compliance with The Employment Relations Act 1999 (Blacklists) Regulations 2010. I propose that we do the same thing here in Oxford.

(11) Question to the Leader of the Council (Councillor Bob Price) from Councillor Jim Campbell

Remembrance Day Ceremony

I appreciate that this is more a County than a City issue but the presence of buses stuck at the entrance to Little Clarendon Street slightly detracted from what was otherwise a moving and important ceremony. Could you find out what notices were posted in Woodstock Road on the morning of

Sunday November 10th to warn traffic coming towards the City Centre that they would need to take a diversion, as St Giles, would be closed?

Response: The Remembrance Day ceremony and service was, on the whole, well organised and certainly provided a fitting focus for the citizens of Oxford to pay their respects to all those who have lost their lives in armed conflict. A sign at the junction of Woodstock Road and St Margaret's Road would, however, have been useful in notifying vehicles of the road closure and diversion and will be provided in future.

Councillor Campbell welcomed the response from Councillor Price.

(12) Question to the Leader of the Council (Councillor Bob Price) from Councillor Jim Campbell

Remembrance Day and International Links

This year there was a representative from Oxford's twin city of Perm attending the ceremony. Why was the wreath which had been requested not available, and what steps have been taken to apologise to him, and to the City of Perm, for this omission?

Response: A wreath had been ordered but was not delivered. Unfortunately, this was not noticed until shortly before the ceremony was due to start. The relevant officer has already written to the Perm representative apologising for the absence of the wreath on the day.

Councillor Campbell in a supplementary question asked if the Leader was as concerned as he was that an overstretching of the Twinning/Events Team had led to incidents such as this. In response Councillor Price said that he shared the concerns of Councillor Campbell. The combining of the Twinning and Events Teams, while bold, had not worked and this was now being reviewed.

(13) Question to the Leader of the Council (Councillor Bob Price) from Councillor Ruth Wilkinson

Workforce Travel Plan

How is the new Workforce Travel Plan being monitored?

Response: The new workforce travel plan is owned by the Head of Human Resources and Facilities and it was recently endorsed by the Carbon & Natural Resources Members Board. Most of the actions in the Workforce travel Plan have already been achieved. The remaining items are reviewed on a monthly basis by the Head of Human Resources and Facilities (such as use of pool cars, reduction in grey mileage, etc.). An update report will go back to the Carbon and Natural Resources Members Board at the end of the financial year.

67. PUBLIC ADDRESSES AND QUESTIONS THAT DO NOT RELATE TO MATTERS FOR DECISION AT THE COUNCIL MEETING

The following public addresses and questions that did not relate to matters for decision at the meeting were made and asked at Council. The texts of the addresses are appended to these minutes. Responses 'where applicable' to the addresses from Board Members and responses to questions are set out below.

Addresses

(1) Elaine Bennett – Declining standards of sewerage and drainage provision

Following the address, Councillor Colin Cook, Board Member, City Development gave the following response:

The City Council was very far from complacent. Thames Water and The Environment Agency remain statutory consultees on all relevant planning applications. I believe it is reasonable to expect developers to pay for the infrastructure necessary to address the sewerage and drainage requirements of their development. This is exactly what we have done with the new Barton Park development. I don't think it's reasonable to expect developers to pay the full costs for the remediation of existing problems. That responsibility sadly sits with the privatised water companies such as Thames Water where the profit margin for shareholders appears to be more important than the reinvestment of capital in the infrastructure. That having been said we will certainly work with Thames Water to try and address the problems in Marston and Northway and to which end I understand that DEFRA, working through the Environment Agency have committed just over £900k to a £1.8M scheme to address the contaminated surface water problems in Northway. The City Council is keen to work with the County Council to close that funding gap and although initial approaches to the County Council have been luke warm we will continue to press them for further funding for this scheme. I understand that the Scrutiny Committee has set up a panel to look at this very issue and I look forward to their report.

Wards Councillors for Headington Hill and Northway

Councillor Roy Darke agreed with the response from Councillor Cook and said that the Council needed fundamental responses from Thames Water on its investment plans.

Councillor Altaf-Khan said that he had previously invited the Chief Executive and the Executive Directors to see the issues on the ground in the area. He added that residents in the past raised issues at the Area Committees and heard updates, but these no longer existed. He further added that many people did not have access to the internet and so again did not receive/know about updates.

Ward Councillors for Marston

Councillor Mick Haines raised concerns on flooding and sewerage problems being faced by residents in Marston.

Councillor Mary Clarkson said that residents had said to her that the flooding issues had not been so much a problem this year as in the past.

She added regarding planning notifications, that she always wrote a letter to the residents who were the immediate neighbours to a proposed development.

(2) Chaka Artwell – I Free Campaign

(3) Jane Alexander – The Reality of Temple Cowley Pools

Councillor Mike Rowley, Board Member, Leisure Services provided the following response prior to the meeting:

All of the points made in this address have been responded to before. The main areas of confusion in the address are that it compares maintenance costs alone at Temple Cowley with the total running cost for the new pool. It also understates the carbon emissions at Temple Cowley by approximately 600 tonnes (in 2012-13 the carbon omissions at Temple Cowley were 780 tonnes of CO₂).

The truth of the matter is clearly set out in the information gathered from various experts in their field on the Council's website. The Council has been open from the beginning about the costs and benefits of the various alternatives and the choices it has made.

Questions

(1) Question to the Board Member, Leisure Services (Councillor Mike Rowley) from Jane Alexander

Restricting use of City leisure facilities

Why has the Council agreed to allow Fusion Lifestyle to ban a disabled woman from access to her essential exercise at Temple Cowley Pools and other fitness centres for over 7 weeks and why has the council not answered written requests for information about this and other complaints about Fusion Lifestyle?

Response: Fusion Lifestyle, as the managers of our leisure facilities, are responsible for any decision not to allow particular individuals to enter leisure premises. They have the right to do this if the activities of an individual are spoiling the leisure experience for other users. We would expect such decisions to be taken only as a last resort and in a reasonable manor. At present there are six people restricted from using the leisure centres, all of these are on a temporary basis. I would not comment on any particular case because the Board Member does not influence, and should not give the appearance of influencing, individual decisions. However, from the point of view of policy oversight, I have no reason to believe that Fusion have acted unreasonably at any time.

68. PETITIONS

No petitions had been previously submitted for consideration at this meeting.

69. OUTSIDE ORGANISATION REPORTS AND QUESTIONS

(a) Health and Well Being Board (including Health Improvement Board, Adult and Social Care Board and Children and Young People Board)

The Head of Policy, Culture and Communications submitted a report (previously circulated, now appended) which informed Council of the work of the Health and Well Being Board.

Councillor Ed Turner introduced the report.

Councillor Jean Fooks felt that it was a useful report and highlighted the need to look at the pockets of deprivation in the City. However she was concerned at the small mention of mental health which had been squeezed with end of life care.

Councillor Turner endorsed the comments by Councillor Fooks and said that mental health should have a higher profile.

Councillor Altaf-Khan also welcomed the report and said that he had spoken at the County Council on narrowing the gap. He said that on the Board there was no one representing ethnic minorities. He called on Councillor Turner to take this issue back to the Board and press its importance. He further added that initiatives needed to support diversity and not just be there to tick a box.

Councillor Turner acknowledged there was an issue with the make-up of the Board and valued all of the comments from Councillors which he would take back to the Board.

70. SCRUTINY COMMITTEE BRIEFING

The Chair of the Scrutiny Committee submitted a report (previously circulated, now appended) which updated Council on the activities of Scrutiny and other non-Executive Councillors since the previous meeting of Council.

Councillor Mark Mills moved the report.

Councillor Bob Price with regard to paragraph 8 of the report (on-going flooding issues) said that it was not clear what aspects were being reviewed by Scrutiny. In response Councillor Mills said that this work was being conducted via a meeting between interested Councillors and Officers, and he would be happy to provide Councillor Price with more information. Councillor Price said that it was important to have a proper dialogue with Thames Water. Councillor Darke added that a Panel had been established and had held its first meeting. He agreed that there needed to be an intense discussion with Thames Water on their investment plans for the City. Councillor Rundle added that where issues of Thames Water and sewerage were concerned, having the Environment Agency involved was beneficial.

Council agreed to note the report.

71. MOTIONS ON NOTICE

Council had before it nine Motions on notice and reached decisions as follows.

(1) **The Covered Market** – (Proposed by Councillor Jim Campbell seconded by Councillor Elise Benjamin)

Liberal Democrat Group Member - Motion on Notice

Council: noting that the latest edition of *Your Oxford* has a full page advertising “Oxford's Amazing Christmas Markets”, which highlights new arrangements at Gloucester Green but makes no mention whatsoever of the Covered Market;

noting further no provision has been made during the Three Day Winter Light Festival to include the Covered Market in its programme;

regretting the lack of trust that has developed between the Council, as Landlord, and the Traders, as tenants;

welcoming the excellent report of the Retail Group, its analysis of the reasons behind the current underperformance of the Covered Market, and its proposals for how it can once again be a key part of Oxford's Retail Offer;

hoping that the residents of Oxford will respond, in numbers and in depth, to the four week public consultation on the report;

supporting the Council's already stated intention to appoint an interim Market Manager.

Council therefore calls on the City Executive Board:

- to recognise that, in recent years, there has been a lack of effective management by the Council and that this has been a significant contributory factor to the poor performance of the market;
- to consider thoroughly the findings of the public consultation on the future of the market;
- to ensure that the Covered Market has a key role in future City Centre events;
- to respond positively to the short term proposals put forward by the Retail Group;
- to examine in detail the long term proposals made by the Retail Group, and to draw up, by November 2014, a full report of how it will respond to these proposals.

Councillor Bob Price seconded by Councillor Colin Cook moved the following amendment:

To delete the first three paragraphs after 'Council' and the first bullet point.

The mover of the substantive Motion (Councillor Jim Campbell) did not accept the amendment by Councillor Bob Price and following a debate Council voted and the amendment was adopted.

Following a further vote the Motion as amended by Councillor Bob Price was adopted as follows:

Council: welcoming the excellent report of the Retail Group, its analysis of the reasons behind the current underperformance of the Covered Market, and its proposals for how it can once again be a key part of Oxford's Retail Offer;

hoping that the residents of Oxford will respond, in numbers and in depth, to the four week public consultation on the report;

supporting the Council's already stated intention to appoint an interim Market Manager.

Council therefore calls on The City Executive Board:

- to consider thoroughly the findings of the Public Consultation on the future of the market;
- to ensure that the Covered Market has a key role in future City Centre events;
- to respond positively to the short term proposals put forward by the Retail Group;
- to examine in detail the long term proposals made by the Retail Group, and to draw up, by November 2014, a full report of how it will respond to these proposals.

(2) Supermarket Levy – (Proposed by Councillor Dick Wolff, seconded by Councillor Sam Hollick)

Green Group Member – Motion on Notice

The City Council notes the national Local Works campaign to introduce a Supermarket Levy as a proposal under the Sustainable Communities Act.

The proposals from Local Works is that the Secretary of State:

- (a) Gives Local Authorities the power to introduce a local levy of 8.5% of the rate on large retail outlets in their area with a rateable annual value not less than £500,000; and
- (b) Requires that the revenue from this levy goes directly to the Local Authority in order to be used to improve local communities in their area by promoting local economic activity, local services and facilities, social and community wellbeing and environmental protection.

This Council backs the Local Works proposal and asked officers to prepare a report to the City Executive Board setting out ways that the Council can move forward with the idea of a Supermarket Levy.

Following a debate, Council voted and the Motion was adopted.

(3) Fairtrade Mark – (Proposed by Councillor Van Coulter, seconded by Councillor John Tanner)

Labour Group Member - Motion on Notice

Oxford City Council, as an important consumer and opinion leader, should continue to support and facilitate the promotion and purchase of foods with the FAIRTRADE Mark as part of its commitment to the pursuit of sustainable development and to give marginalised producers a fair deal.

Oxford City Council resolves to continue to contribute to the campaign to increase sales of products with the FAIRTRADE Mark by supporting the campaign to achieve the recertification of Fairtrade status for Oxford.

To this end, Oxford City Council resolves to:

1. Continue to offer FAIRTRADE Marked food and drink options internally and make them available for internal meetings.
2. Promote the FAIRTRADE Mark using Fairtrade Foundation materials in refreshment areas and promoting the Fairtrade Towns initiative in internal communications and external newsletters.
3. Use its influence to urge local retailers to provide Fairtrade options for residents.
4. Engage in a media campaign to publicise the recertification of Oxford as a Fairtrade Towns initiative.
5. Nominate a Council representative to sit on the Fairtrade Steering Group.
6. Support on-going work to promote Fairtrade.
7. Continue to organise events and publicity during national Fairtrade Fortnight – the annual national campaign to promote sales of products with the FAIRTRADE Mark.

Following a debate, Council voted and the Motion was adopted.

(4) A Message of Support and Solidarity to our Lesbian, Gay, Bi-Sexual and Transgender (LGBT) friends in Perm, Russia – (Proposed by Councillor Tony Brett, seconded by Councillor Mary Clarkson)

Liberal Democrat Group Member - Motion on Notice

Oxford City Council notes with horror the appalling human rights abuses happening in Russia that are denying LGBT people their basic rights to be themselves, to express themselves freely and to live in relationships with whoever they choose, free from government and police persecution.

This Council notes that Oxford enjoys a twinning arrangement with the City of Perm and, while a strong supporter of all human rights the world over, is concerned particularly about the plight of LGBT people in that city. This Council, further notes that some cities have chosen to sever twinning relationships with Russian cities because of Russian's LGBT human rights actions but considers this may be a disproportionate response in the case of Oxford and Perm as the abuses come from Russian central government, not from Perm local government.

As a more appropriate action for this situation, this Council therefore resolves to ask the Leader of the Council and other Group Leaders to write a letter to Perm expressing Oxford's concern for Perm's LGBT people and their human rights situation, offering our solidarity and friendship to them in any way they feel able to request.

Following a debate, Council voted and the Motion was adopted.

(5) Abolishing the Right to Buy in Oxford - (Proposed by Councillor Sam Hollick)

Green Group Member - Motion on Notice

This council notes:

- That good quality, affordable housing is in short supply in Oxford.
- That the 'Right to Buy' poses a risk to the council's ability to provide such housing for those in need, as a significant value from right to buy sales is kept by national government [1] and there is a shortage of sites to replace those council houses that are lost in this way.
- That the Sustainable Communities Act gives councils the power to make proposals to the government for assistance that would promote the sustainability of local communities.

This Council believes:

- That an end to the Right to Buy in Oxford would promote the sustainability of communities in Oxford by protecting the supply of council housing, allowing more people to access quality affordable housing.

This council requests the City Executive Board:

- To consult and try to reach agreement with a representative citizens' panel on the following proposal: "The government should stop the right to buy or remove discounts for any eligible properties in Oxford"

- Following from any agreement, to submit a proposal under the Sustainable Communities Act.

[1] Only 25% of sale price is kept by the Council from the first 9 sales each year, 100% of the value is kept from any further sales.

Councillor Scott Seamons seconded by Councillor Sajjid Malik moved the following amendment:

To delete all words after the first bullet point and replace with:

Good quality, affordable housing is in short supply in Oxford and there is a shortage of available sites for new build. The Government's extension of the 'right to buy' policy has exasperated this problem, with the introduction of discounts of up to £75,000 the Council's housing stock has moved from seeing 3 sales in the year 2012-13 to 23 thus far in 2013-14 with an expectation of 40 set in the business plan. The council believes that this extension of the 'right to buy' will and demonstrably is reducing the availability of affordable housing in the city and this threatens our ability to build/maintain sustainable diverse communities.

The Council therefore resolves to ask the Chief Executive to write to the Minister for Housing stating the Council's position that the extended 'right to buy' is leading to a considerable loss in council stock. Additionally noting that a lack of sites for new build, makes it difficult to achieve one for one replacement within the authority, and that this is a desirable goal. The Council also asks that the letter notes that the Council would support a move to locally set 'right to buy' discounts so that the set discount does not damage the provision of affordable housing in the city.

The mover of the substantive Motion (Councillor Sam Hollick) did not accept the amendment by Councillor Scott Seamons and following a debate, Council voted and the amendment was adopted.

Following a further vote the Motion as amended by Councillor Scott Seamons was adopted as follows:

This Council notes that good quality, affordable housing is in short supply in Oxford, and there is a shortage of available sites for new build. The Government's extension of the 'right to buy' policy has exacerbated this problem, with the introduction of discounts of up to £75,000 the Council's housing stock has moved from seeing 3 sales in the year 2012-13 to 23 thus far in 2013-14 with an expectation of 40 set in the business plan. The council believes that this extension of the 'right to buy' will and demonstrably is reducing the availability of affordable housing in the city and this threatens our ability to build/maintain sustainable diverse communities.

The Council therefore resolves to ask the Chief Executive to write to the Minister for Housing stating the Council's position that the extended 'right to buy' is leading to a considerable loss in council stock. Additionally noting, that a lack of sites for new build makes it difficult to achieve one for one replacement within the authority and that this is a desirable goal. The

Council also asks that the letter notes that the Council would support a move to locally set 'right to buy' discounts so that the set discount does not damage the provision of affordable housing in the city.

(6) City Council Champion of Mental Health Issues – (Proposed by Councillor Ed Turner)

Labour Group Member - Motion on Notice

This Council supports the work of MIND and the Mental Health Foundation and asks the City Executive Board to consider appointing a member of council to be a champion of mental health issues in much the same way as we have an older people's champion.

Council acknowledges it is not directly responsible for healthcare provision but believes it nonetheless has an important role to play. Council requests the City Executive Board to play a full role in the Health and Well Being Board and other partnership forums to maximise support for mental health work, and also to ensure its work providing and funding advice services is accessible to people with mental health problems.

Council believes councillors can support the wellbeing of people in their areas through both casework and their strategic role within the council. Council welcomes the practical steps set out by Mind and the Mental Health Foundation, whose new report, *Building Resilient Communities*, can be taken to promote wellbeing, build resilience and help to prevent mental health problems – including steps that can be taken by councillors.

Councillor Ed Turner's Motion on Notice was not considered as the time allowed for Motions on Notice by the Constitution had lapsed.

(7) Saving Community Pubs – (Proposed by Councillor Tony Brett)

Liberal Democrat Group Member - Motion on Notice

Oxford City Council notes the possibility of submitting the following proposal to the government under the Sustainable Communities Act:

'That the Secretary of State help protect community pubs in England by ensuring that planning permission and community consultation are required before community pubs are allowed to be converted to betting shops, supermarkets and pay-day loan stores or other uses, or are allowed to be demolished.'

This Council notes that if this power was acquired it would allow the council to determine if pubs should be demolished or converted into other uses and could save many valued community pubs.

This Council resolves to ask City Executive Board to consider and submit the proposal to the government under the Sustainable Communities Act and to work together with Local Works and the Campaign for Real Ale to gain support for the proposal from other councils in the region and across the country.

Councillor Tony Brett's Motion on Notice was not considered as the time allowed for Motions on Notice by the Constitution had lapsed.

(8) Impartiality of Planning Process - (Proposed by Councillor David Williams)

Green Group Member - Motion on Notice

This Council believes that both Councillors and officers must act, and be seen to act, in an impartial and objective way if public faith in the planning process is to be enhanced.

There is already a requirement under the Employee Code of Conduct for each Service Area to maintain a Register of Gifts and Hospitality, but members of the public are unable to easily access this information.

Council therefore resolves that, in the interest of openness and transparency:

- (1) All Service Area Registers of Gifts and Hospitality should be made readily available to Councillors and members of the public via a link on the Council website; and
- (2) Planning applications should include reference to any related disclosures.

Councillor David Williams' Motion on Notice was not considered as the time allowed by the Constitution had lapsed.

(9) Proposed closure of Children's Centre (Proposed by Councillor David Williams)

Green Group Member - Motion on Notice

This Council is disturbed by the recent suggestion proposed by the Oxfordshire County Council as a part of its budget reductions for 2014-2015 that it will close 15 of its 22 Children's Centres throughout the County.

Children's Centres are direct front line services, the closure of which will have a severe impact on many families in the City not only meaning restricting employment opportunities for parents but also denying many children the benefits of organised play and education in a safe and caring environment.

The City Council calls on the County Council to reconsider this aspect of their programme and maintain all of the present Children's Centres and consequently the services they provide.

Councillor Elise Benjamin's Motion on Notice was not considered as the time allowed for Motions on Notice by the Constitution had lapsed.

72. MATTERS EXEMPT FROM PUBLICATION

Not required.

**73. WESTGATE TEMPORARY CAR AND COACH PARKING -
CONFIDENTIAL APPENDIX**

Council received and noted the contents of a not for publication appendix (previously circulated, now appended) to the report at agenda item 7 (Westgate temporary car and coach parking) (minute 60 refers).

**74. COMPULSORY PURCHASE ORDER - LANHAM WAY, LITTLEMORE,
OXFORD - CONFIDENTIAL APPENDIX**

Council received and noted the contents of a not for publication appendix (previously circulated, now appended) to the report at agenda item 8 (Compulsory purchase order – Lanham Way, Littlemore, Oxford) (minute 61 refers).

The meeting started at 5.00 pm and ended at 8.30 pm

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Address to Council by Elaine Bennett

The declining standards of Sewerage and Drainage Provision since the Government introduced Localism and Decentralisation and passed their Control over to Oxford City Councillors to hold the Statutory responsibility for considering proposals for Development.

Good evening Oxford City Councillors. My name is Elaine Bennett. I was born and still reside in Marston.

Oxford benefits from being vibrant and multicultural. It is popular because of its worldwide reputation as a seat of Learning and new discoveries. It is a beautiful City and close to London. Therefore everyone wants to invest and develop here.

Oxford is prone to flooding and requires open spaces near its waterways to accommodate excess water. This means that there are only a few areas available for development. Proposed plans must be carefully considered so that each build and alteration is positive and will balance and enhance its local community. It is only fair that the people who wish to change our neighbourhoods, whether the change is a small extension or large development, must bear the full cost of providing and installing underground drainage and paying towards the upgrades necessary for their connection into the sewerage network.

This will not cause hardship or stop builds because all development reaps huge profits through the sale or rental of every property in Oxford.

The Government introduced Localism and Decentralisation so that Oxford City Councillors have a statutory responsibility for considering proposals for development. Councillors have a duty to their Constituents.

In the Oxford Mail on 1st November 2013 Cllr Roy Darke (Chairman of East Oxford Area Planning Committee) admitted that Thames Waters network system is antiquated and past its sell by date, causing flooding in the streets and in peoples gardens.

Huge development has exceeded the demand for service provision. Oxford City Council has known about this for a long time. Their complacency is not acceptable

Councillors were provided with the power to impose additional planning conditions on every planning application, so that service provision kept pace with the increases in demand.

If Councillors had worries and concerns regarding a lack of control they held regarding service provision. Then they had plenty of opportunity to liaise with other planning authorities, and also involve the public. So that Government Ministers could be approached and encouraged to strengthen the legislation conditions to ensure the continuing health and wellbeing of their Constituents.

Why did EOAPC Councillors allow Thames Water to install inferior provision at Marston and Northway to cope with the expansion they had agreed?

This includes student accommodation, School expansions, JR Hospital extensions,

Many excessive builds on small pieces of land, this includes selling Council owned facilities and garages for private development, home extensions or rebuilds to create flats.

Thames Waters underground sewerage storage tanks that were installed are not fit for purpose. They are designed to pump sewerage to Sandford to be treated, when the sewers are quiet. However the tanks are not maintained. They regularly break down and need to be emptied so are effectively cess pits. They cannot be suitable for long term use, as a replacement for new sewers and more treatment facilities. Solutions need to be found now to fix Thames Water and the Environment Agencies underdeveloped services.

Common sense should dictate that both underground drainage and ponds and swales are necessary for flash flooding and prolonged periods of rainfall in our densely populated areas.

Since decentralisation, Democracy has been lost. Each Planning Application is treated in isolation and so the impact of many developments in a community, are not taken into account. Local knowledge is not valued. Community Hub Meetings were stopped when Locals raised concerns over flooding, sewerage, development, traffic and the Friar.

Constituents have no information regarding local planning applications. Yellow A4 sheets are mainly ignored. They are difficult to understand. The original sheets are often replaced with new details after a build has started! So something which may originally have been refused has now been passed and happens anyway!

Planning information online is often unavailable and people don't have endless free time or access to search and keep up with the details of new proposals. Most builds are not monitored or inspected by Council Officers. Constituents become disillusioned.

I believe the shortcomings I have raised need to be investigated and resolved. Shortages should not be occurring especially in a popular affluent influential City like Oxford.

An increasing population also means more money for services. I am concerned about the Future for our Children

Address to Council by Chaka Artwell

The "I Free Campaign"

I Free to the Treasury is a simple demand. I Free simple means Interest Free. The I Free campaign is seeking the support of the Councillors of Oxford City. I Free is asking the Bank of England and all other Banks who lend money to the National Treasury continue to borrow money, but Interest Free to the National Treasury. It is a simple demand, but the financial benefit to the people of Britain, and for the Councillors of Oxford City Council would be enormous and economically liberating for the heavily taxed people of this economically hard pressed land.

The Bank were in great distress of their own making in 2007, but we the British people were forced to "bail them out" and now the National and Local Governments of Britain are in great financial distress because of the need to reduce Public Expenditure in order to have sufficient funds to pay the daily £120.000.000 Interest. In 2007, to "bailout" the four High Street Banks, the people of this nation borrowed £500 Billion pounds and gifted this sum Interest Free to the Banks. In like manner, I Free is demanding that all money Loaned or Borrowed to the British Treasury must be given Interest Free from the Bank of England and other Banks because the nation is now in great distress as a result of "bailing out" the bankers at Interest.

I Free is needed because the people of England were forced to accept the debts of the four High Street Banks, who were facing Bankruptcy in 2007. There was real fear among politicians of the damaged that would occur, if these four popular high street banks were allowed to financially fail. The British Treasury needed to borrow £500 Billion in order to "bailout" the four High Street Banks in October 2007. £500 Billion was borrowed at Interest in 2007 by the Chancellor Mr Darling. It has been calculated that the amount borrowed is the equivalent of £17.000 each for the Tax payer of British for a decade to follow.

The Interest Charges are really damaging for the nation. Mr Osborne the Chancellor of the Exchequer said in 2011 that the daily Interest was £120 million pounds a day. That is a colossal sum of money that is leaving the economy on a daily basis. Mr Osborne liken the sum the Treasury pays in Interest to be the equivalent of the Arms Forces budget.

This is an enormous Peace Time debt that will affect the entire nation for the next decade to follow. Given that we, the ordinary people of the land have been forced by our elected Parliamentarians, to accept and take responsibility for the debts of the Bankers, the British Treasury should not be charged Interest on money annually given to the National Treasury on the first of April. I Free is demanding that all monies given to the Treasury of this Nation must be given Interest Free from all Banks.

I would like to re-state this fact again. The British Tax Payer according to the current Chancellor of the Exchequer, Mr George Osborne, in his Public Spending Review of October 2010 said we the Tax Payer of the land, are giving £120.000.000 in Interest alone, to the Bank of England. In order to meet this daily sum, public funded services like Libraries, Social Services, Meal on wheels, Youth Services and so on are being reduced, or privatised.

George Osborne compared the amount of money being spent in Interest Charges as being the equivalent of the Armed Forces budget. That is enormous. In percentage terms it is about a third of the annual budget of the nation disappearing in Interest Charges. When one considers that V.A.T goes to fund our unelected masters and law makers in the European Union, it is understandable that Britain's growth rate rarely reaches 3 percent annually. The real wealth of the British nation is taken largely by Interest charges which disappears into the hands of the Rothschild controlled, Bank of England: a fact that largely goes unmentioned in the media and educational courses and by V.A.T monies which goes to the EU.

I Free demands that all Banks who loan money to the Treasury of the nation State of Britain must be given Interest Free for many reasons: Primarily, because the Tax Payer came to the aid of the Banks in their time of great economic distress in 2007 and this money was loaned to the Treasury at Interest, even though the money was needed to save the Banks!!! The Bank of England and other Banks are profiteering from the help the Tax Payers are giving the Banks in the form of the "Bailout." This is wrong. It is immoral. It is profiteering of the British Empire era! I Free is calling for the end to Interest charges on money Borrowed or Loaned to British Treasury. The Banks are disabling the health and well-being of Britain by the application of Interest. The Banks need and benefits from a well ordered and ethical Nation with functioning Services like: Roads, Education, Healthcare and so on. All these Publicly Funded Services are put at enormous risk due to the immoral Interest Charges. The reason Oxford City Council lack the funds is because an ever greater amount of money now goes to the Banks in the form of Interest Charges. I Free to the Treasury is simply calling for an end to the application of Interest Charges to all monies loaned to the Treasury.

Oxford City Council is funded by Council Taxes to provide Services. However, Oxford City Council provides fewer Services, because the funds are diverted to pay the Interest Charges and there is nothing left for Libraries, Youth Services and Senior Citizens Day Care needs and using Parking Charges and Control Zones as a means of financial gain so on. Oxford City Council has privatised many of the Services which were formally provided and funded by the local authority. All this is a symptom of the Treasury having to pay such huge amounts of money in Interest Charges primarily to the Bank of England. If the Interest Charges to the Treasury could be ended, the nation as a whole would benefit greatly. I am calling on Oxford City Councillors to support this petition calling for the installation of I Free to the Treasury. Please support Interest Free to the National Treasury.

Address to Council by Nigel Gibson & Jane Alexander

The Reality of Temple Cowley Pools – Nigel Gibson and Jane Alexander

It is now four years since the Campaign to Save Temple Cowley Pools was started, in response to the Council's stated aim of closing it. Well, two years after you wanted it shut, it's still there, providing facilities that people want and need, in a place where they want and need them. And with the seventh petition close to its target number of signatures, it is clear that the people of Oxford still want you to do what you know is right – keep Temple Cowley Pools open.

And throughout the Campaign, we have been faced with a wall of propaganda, misinformation that comes from the Council purporting to be the truth about the state of Temple Cowley Pools. And despite real information being exposed time and again by the Campaign, it's disappointing that even now, when the Campaign is supposed to be over, that Labour councillors continue to repeat things that they must know are untrue.

For example, at the One World Fair a couple of Saturdays ago, a Labour councillor refused to sign the petition, repeating yet again that Temple Cowley Pools is "shabby, expensive and has high carbon emissions". And this is what's at the heart of things; you choose, either through ignorance or knowingly, to repeat information that you know, because we've told you often enough, is a combination of misleading, inaccurate, incomplete and untrue.

Let's examine what that councillor said. Shabby? Well, yes, undoubtedly Temple Cowley Pools needs cleaning and maintaining. Whose responsibility is that? Well, yours – the Council. You have a duty to maintain public facilities in good order, whether or not they are going to close. You have failed to do that at Temple Cowley Pools, deliberately running the facilities down in an attempt to reduce public support for keeping it open. You've succeeded in running it down; it needs proper cleaning and maintenance. You should have repaired the diving pool, the only public one in the whole of Oxfordshire, but you've chosen not to. You should have repaired the air conditioning system when it failed two years ago – it would cost £5,000. What have you done? Instead, last summer, you installed two apparently 'temporary' air cooling units at a rental cost of £300 a week. They are still there, not providing real air conditioning, and at a total cost now approaching the £5,000 that would fix it properly! A complete waste of our, the public's, money.

Expensive? The maintenance cost for the whole centre is under £100,000 a year. This is to provide for the 25m competition swimming pool, the learner pool, the diving pool, the sauna and steam room, the exercise studio and the gym. I call that value for money – particularly when compared to the new, apparently more efficient and cost-effective swimming pool in Blackbird Leys, that will cost us £150,000 a year. There are other costs – water and utilities that we pay wherever these facilities are, and then the burden of the contract with Fusion, which was deliberately constructed to show a higher cost at Temple Cowley than any other leisure centre. Again, in a vain attempt to justify a closure that the public simply don't want. So based on the

facts, and comparing like with like, the evidence demonstrates yet again that Temple Cowley Pools continues to deliver value for money services for the people of Oxford.

And Carbon Emissions? The total carbon emissions, measured in tonnes of CO2 equivalent, is certainly high, but that reflects the energy usage and the variety of services being delivered. You have refused to install rigid pool covers that would save warm water evaporation (and save heating costs, and reduce the chlorine corrosion in the air handling units). You have an electric powered sauna and a steam room sited against two external walls, sucking out heat. But despite this profligate energy usage, when we compared Temple Cowley with Barton and Ferry leisure centres using your figures it still had the lowest emissions per square metre, the most efficient in Oxford. So it could be even more efficient if you decided to put cost-effective energy saving measures in place – and you still have time to do that and save money and carbon emissions, even if you were to be successful in closing Temple Cowley Pools in January 2015 as you've said you want to. More revealing still is the like for like comparison. You have trumpeted how green your new, only 25m and not bigger than Temple Cowley, non-Olympic pool in Blackbird Leys will be. You have admitted that the forecast emissions will be 300 tonnes CO2 a year. The equivalent at Temple Cowley Pools is in comparison 180 tonnes CO2.

So the councillor was wrong. Wrong to accuse Temple Cowley Pools of being shabby without taking responsibility for proper cleaning, wrong to say it is expensive without taking responsibility for the Fusion contract, and wrong to accuse the most energy efficient leisure centre of high carbon emissions when it's supposedly green replacement has even higher emissions.

But fundamentally it is time that Oxford City Council recognised that the new pool it is building in Blackbird Leys is only a replacement for the existing pool there, not Temple Cowley Pools, and is only built because that's what the Swimming Club wants. And time you recognised that the majority of users, past and present, the public in East Oxford and across the city, and the many users from outside the city still want it kept open. I ask you again to rethink your decision, recognise what is possible, and start working with the Campaign to keep Temple Cowley Pools open.