

## COUNCIL

Monday 14 July 2014

**COUNCILLORS PRESENT:** Councillors Abbasi (Lord Mayor), Simmons (Deputy Lord Mayor), Humberstone (Sheriff), Altaf-Khan, Anwar, Baxter, Benjamin, Brandt, Clarkson, Cook, Coulter, Curran, Darke, Fooks, Fry, Gant, Goddard, Gotch, Haines, Hayes, Hollick, Kennedy, Lloyd-Shogbesan, Lygo, Malik, Paule, Pressel, Price, Rowley, Royce, Sanders, Seamons, Simm, Sinclair, Smith, Tanner, Tarver, Thomas, Turner, Upton, Van Nooijen, Wade, Wilkinson and Wolff.

### 18. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Susan Brown, Anne-Marie Canning and Beverley Clack.

### 19. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

No declarations of interest were made.

### 20. MINUTES

Council agreed to approve the minutes of the ordinary meeting held on 14<sup>th</sup> April 2014, Annual Council held on 9<sup>th</sup> June 2014 and the extraordinary meeting held on 2<sup>nd</sup> July 2014.

### 21. APPOINTMENT TO COMMITTEES

No appointments to Committee were made.

### 22. ANNOUNCEMENTS

The Lord Mayor, Councillor Mohammed, Niaz Abbasi made the following announcements:

- (1) A special meeting of Council was held on 2<sup>nd</sup> July 2014 which conferred the Freedom of the City on Professor Christopher Brown.
- (2) The annual Cowley Road Carnival took place and he congratulated the organisers for their efforts in making it such a success
- (3) Mathew Metcalfe, Committee and Members Services Officer was moving to a new role within the Council as an Electoral Services Officer and Council thanked him for his many years in Committee Services and clerking Council and wished him well in his new role.

- (4) Thanked David Williams, former Councillor for the Iffley Fields Ward of Oxford City Council for his many years representing his constituents and the City Council.

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

- (1) Thanked the staff, unions etc. for their help and support in the City Council winning the MJ Award for best improving Council in the country.
- (2) The Council achieved the Investors in People Gold Award which would be a Launchpad for further improvements.
- (3) Thanked Cowley Road Works for their work and support of the Cowley Road Carnival.
- (4) LGA Peer Review took place. A report would be presented to the Council at the end of July. Assessors said that the passion and commitment of staff for the services they provided was evident and that the central message was that the Council should now become a Leader of Place.
- (5) Successful bids from the Growth Fund which would go towards schemes which included the western conveyance flood scheme, eastern traffic arch and an improved College of Further Education campus in Blackbird Leys.

## **23. PUBLIC ADDRESSES AND QUESTIONS THAT RELATE TO MATTERS FOR DECISIONS AT THIS MEETING**

Sietske Boeles asked a question of the Leader of the Council, Councillor Bob Price and Councillor Bob Price responded as follows:

### Northern Gateway

The Northern Gateway policy in the Core Strategy allows for a mixed use site of 55,000 sq metres of employment use, with up to 200 houses and 3,000 employees. This took into account the potential for high economic growth and was identified by the Inspector to be at a level that would not jeopardise growth in Bicester and would provide a realistic housing versus jobs balance. However, the Inspector remained doubtful about the transport and environmental constraints and the final decision was therefore referred to the Northern Gateway Area Action Plan.

How can the City Council reconcile this with now bringing forward a plan that:

- Is significantly larger than that identified in the Core Strategy?
- Is ahead of the publication of vital evidence on commuter information from the last census, despite the fact that the development could put an estimated 10,000 more cars on the road in a particularly congested and polluted area?
- Is prioritising employment (which generates additional housing need) above meeting existing housing need?

- Is still not clear on funding for any necessary mitigation (given that the Growth Fund money announced last week will only cover around one third of the £88 million Access to Oxford Funding envisaged several years ago)
- And, given the above, is the decision to continue with the Northern Gateway Area Action Plan lawful or should the entire Core Strategy not now be revisited to take account of the implications of the Strategic Housing Market Assessment on employment sites?’

**Response:** The question asks a number of specific questions about the Northern Gateway Area Action Plan, that is before Council. The following is a response to each question in turn:

*The plan is significantly larger than that identified in the Core Strategy?*

The AAP is not significantly larger. It provides for 90,000m<sup>2</sup> employment floorspace by 2026; this reflects the 80,000m<sup>2</sup> identified at Core Strategy and the 10,000m<sup>2</sup> released as there no longer being a requirement for the emergency services centre. In terms of the complementary uses, the AAP provides for the same level of retail development and the same size hotel as the Core Strategy. As part of the detailed AAP work, it has been shown that the site has capacity for a greater amount of housing than was originally identified in the Core Strategy, while still maintaining the employment focus for the site. Whilst CS6 makes provision for 200 dwellings to 2026, the AAP makes provision for 500 dwellings. It is considered prudent to increase the housing numbers at the Northern Gateway.

*It is ahead of the publication of vital evidence on commuter information from the last census, despite the fact that the development could put an estimated 10,000 more cars on the road in a particularly congested and polluted area?*

The County Council has carried out detailed transport analysis. The North Oxford Transport Strategy (NOTS) will provide an overall strategic approach to the transport needs of the area and specifically address the potential transport impacts related to the Northern Gateway.

The key findings from the NOTS work include:

- Traffic modelling completed to date concludes that transport solutions can be developed to mitigate the impact of Northern Gateway.
- The proposed transport improvements (identified in the AAP) will need to meet other traffic growth demands, not just those arising from Northern Gateway development
- The traffic generated by the Northern Gateway will be minimised through a series of policies in the AAP (including parking standards) and associated conditions with future planning applications.

*It is prioritising employment (which generates additional housing need) above meeting existing housing need?*

The AAP proposes an increase in the number of houses on the site. Through its Core Strategy and other planning policies the City Council seeks to deliver as

much housing as possible but without compromising the economic and environmental sustainability needs and constraints in Oxford. The National Planning Policy Framework expects Local Planning Authorities to deliver both housing and build a strong, responsive and competitive economy by ensuring that sufficient land of the right type is available in the right places and at the right time to support growth and innovation.

*It is still not clear on funding for any necessary mitigation (given that the Growth Fund money announced last week will only cover around one third of the £88 million Access to Oxford Funding envisaged several years ago)*

The Northern Gateway requires significant investment in infrastructure and in turn the development provides an opportunity to address current issues through attracting both public and private sector investment. The Northern Gateway infrastructure requirements will be funded through a combination of the following:

- Developer funding secured through the Community Infrastructure Levy
- Developer funding secured through a Section 106 agreement for site-specific requirements and Affordable Housing
- City Deal funding already secured £11 million towards highways and transport infrastructure which will fund the improvements to Wolvercote and Cutteslowe roundabouts and contribute towards the construction of the strategic link road
- Local Growth Fund monies bid for via the Oxfordshire Local Economic Partnership
- City and County Council funding (for example via capital programmes and funds secured from other sources)

*And, given the above, is the decision to continue with the Northern Gateway Area Action Plan lawful or should the entire Core Strategy not now be revisited to take account of the implications of the Strategic Housing Market Assessment on employment sites?’*

The Core Strategy was adopted against the background evidence of a Strategic Housing Market Assessment (SHMA) dated 2007 which demonstrated a large housing need for Oxford. The SHMA that was published more recently in April 2014 also demonstrated a comparable housing need. Therefore the context for housing need in Oxford has not changed with the publication of the latest SHMA. Evidence of housing need is only one piece of evidence that is considered in the Plan making process. Plans must balance all sustainability matters as specified in the National Planning Policy Framework such as the need to promote economic growth and the need to protect environmental designations such as flood plain and nature conservation areas. The Core Strategy Inspector confirmed that the City Council had produced a ‘sound’ plan.

In accordance with Procedure Rule 11.10(g) the question was considered with agenda item 11 – Northern Gateway AAP: Proposed submission document.

## **24. CAPITAL CONTRIBUTION TOWARDS FRIDESWIDE SQUARE**

The Head of City Development submitted a report along with an extract from the minutes of the City Executive Board held on 3<sup>rd</sup> July 2014 (previously circulated,

now appended) The report detailed a request to make a financial contribution to Oxfordshire County Council towards the work to transform Frideswide Square.

Councillor Bob Price moved the report.

Council agreed:

- (a) To approve a capital grant to the Oxfordshire County Council of £670,000 in two phases of £335,000 each (50% in quarter 3 2014/15 and 50% in quarter 2 2015/16);
- (b) To delegate to the Executive Director of Regeneration and Housing responsibility to complete the legal agreement requested by the Oxfordshire County Council.

## **25. OXPENS DELIVERY STRATEGY - STAGE 1**

The Executive Director of City Regeneration and Housing submitted a report and an extract from the minutes of the City Executive Board held on 3<sup>rd</sup> July 2014 (previously circulated, now appended). The report detailed an update and next steps to deliver the redevelopment of the Oxpens site area, including the establishment of a budget.

Councillor Price moved the report and clarified that under the City Deal a minimum of 300 residential units would be included as stated in paragraph 7 of the report and not to deliver up to 300 residential units as stated in paragraph 6 of the report.

Council agreed to approve the establishment of a budget of £320,000 in the Council's revenue budget funded from the New Growths Point Grant to complete due diligence and to progress the project through the next stages.

## **26. TOWER BLOCK REFURBISHMENT PROJECT**

The Head of Housing and Property submitted a report and an extract from the minutes of the City Executive Board held on 3<sup>rd</sup> July 2014 (previously circulated, now appended). The report detailed a request for approval to commence a tender process and for the Executive Director of Regeneration and Housing to be able to appoint and award the contract for the refurbishment of the city tower blocks and to recommend a revised budget to cover the agreed scope of works.

Councillor Seamons moved the report.

Council agreed to approve the inclusion of an additional budget within the HRA Capital Programme of £1.743m funded by a combination of leaseholder contributions (for their element of the scheme), or as a last resort prudential borrowing together with appropriate revenue funding of a maximum of approximately £104k per annum in capital financing costs.

## **27. INTEGRATED PERFORMANCE REPORT FOR QUARTER 4 - 2013/2014**

The Head of Finance and the Head of Business Improvement and Technology submitted a report and an extract from the minutes of the City Executive Board held on 3<sup>rd</sup> July 2014 (previously circulated, now appended). The report provided an update on finance, risk and performance as at the end of quarter 4, 31<sup>st</sup> March 2014.

Councillor Turner moved the report.

Council agreed to approve the inclusion of a budget of £162,000 in the capital programme in respect of highways vehicles as outlined in paragraph 22 of the report.

## **28. NORTHERN GATEWAY AAP: PROPOSED SUBMISSION DOCUMENT**

The Head of City Development submitted a report (previously circulated, now appended) which sought the approval of Council for the Northern Gateway Area Action Plan Proposed Submission Document for public consultation and subject to the outcome of the consultation to submit the draft AAP to the Secretary of State for formal examination.

Councillor Bob Price moved the report and following a debate Council agreed to:

- (a) Approve the Northern Gateway Area Action Plan Proposed Submission Document for consultation;
- (b) Approve all the supporting documentation that included the Sustainability Appraisal, Habitats Regulation Assessment, Equalities Impact Assessment and Options Consultation Report;
- (c) Authorise the Head of City Development in consultation with the Executive Board Member, to make any necessary editorial corrections to the document, Sustainability Appraisal and Habitat Regulations Assessment, and to agree the designed version before publication;
- (d) Approve the Northern Gateway AAP Proposed Submission Document as a material consideration in determining planning applications;
- (e) Authorise, following publication, the Head of city Development, in consultation with the Executive Board Member, to make any minor changes to the document deemed necessary as a result of the consultation, and then to formally submit the Northern Gateway AAP to the Secretary of State for examination;
- (f) Approve the proposed amendment to the Local Development Scheme.

## **29. COUNCILLORS' ALLOWANCES - APPOINTMENT OF INDEPENDENT REMUNERATION PANEL**

The Head of Law and Governance submitted a report (previously circulated, now appended) which explained the background to the Members' Allowance Scheme and sought authorisation for the appointment of an Independent Remuneration

Panel to draft a new Allowances Scheme. The Panel would recommend the proposed Scheme to Council in the autumn.

Councillor Price moved the report.

Council agreed:

- (a) To authorise the Head of Law and Governance to appoint an Independent Remuneration Panel to consider and formulate a new Members' Allowance Scheme; and
- (b) To pause the indexation of the members' basic allowance available for the year 2013/14 onwards, pending the report of the Independent Remuneration Panel. The 2013/14 increase and the 2014/15 increase would not be implemented in the meantime.

### **30. CITY EXECUTIVE BOARD MINUTES**

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

- (a) 23rd April 2014
- (b) 11<sup>th</sup> June 2014
- (c) 3<sup>rd</sup> July 2014

Questions were asked as follows:

#### City Executive Board – 11<sup>th</sup> June 2014

- (a) Minute 6 – Low Carbon Hub Loan facility – councillor Sam Hollick said that he would have welcomed more input into the decision to provide a £2.3m loan.

In response Councillor Ed Turner said that the issue was time critical due to the school holidays and being able to undertake the necessary works.

#### City Executive Board – 3<sup>rd</sup> July 2014

- (b) Minute 20 – Grant Monitoring Information for 2013/14 – Councillor Jean Fooks raised concerns on core funding of staff posts from grant funding.
- (c) Minute 32 – Appointment to Outside Bodies 2014/15 – Councillor Jean Fooks asked why ward Councillors had been excluded from being the Council representative on outside bodies in their wards.

In response Councillor Bob Price said that the Councillors that had been appointed to outside bodies had a definite interest in the organisation that they had been appointed to and were willing to represent the Council on them.

### **31. QUESTIONS ON NOTICE FROM MEMBERS OF COUNCIL**

**(1) Question to the Board Member, Housing and Estate Regeneration  
(Councillor Scott Seamons) from Councillor Sam Hollick**

Discharging of homelessness duty

What is the number of households that have been relocated outside of Oxford as a result of the Council discharging a homelessness duty?

**Response:** To the end of May 2014, the Council used the Localism Powers to discharge our statutory homeless duty to 5 clients, who accepted private rented sector accommodation outside of Oxford City.

The Council tries to find suitable and affordable private rented sector accommodation as close to Oxford as possible, and recognises challenges around this in relation to employment, schooling, and specialist health and support needs. However, the buoyancy of the local property market at present, means that most landlords are only renting to persons that are in work, with good tenancy histories, and are charging at least £100pcm over the LHA rate. As such, it is extremely hard to secure access to such accommodation in Oxfordshire anymore. We have had success at finding suitable property at LHA rates in the next nearest rental markets of the West Midlands, Swindon, South Wales and Gloucestershire/ Worcestershire.

The substantive issue here however, is the chronic lack of decent, affordable homes in Oxford, which can really only be addressed through the supply of more housing, which the Council are trying to deliver on through the development of Barton Park; the Council's own building programme of 113 units; working with registered providers to bring forward sites; and looking to future developments at the Northern Gateway and the West End.

Councillor Sam Hollick in a supplementary question asked if the Board Member regretted that the Council was under providing social housing. In response Councillor Scott Seamons said that he was pleased with the 40% social rented accommodation that was being provided.

**(2) Question to the Board Member, Housing and Estate Regeneration  
(Councillor Scott Seamons) from Councillor David Thomas**

Lord Mayor's Deposit Scheme

Would the Board Member agree with me that the Lord Mayor's Deposit Scheme provided an important lifeline to those struggling to access rented accommodation in Oxford?

**Response:** Yes – It has provided, and continues to provide, additional assistance to single persons and couples that are not in priority need, and who would not be assisted under statutory homeless provision.

Councillor David Thomas in a supplementary question asked the Board Member if he could give an assurance that the way the current scheme was administered did not create unnecessary barriers for those trying to

access the scheme and in particular individuals were not being asked to sign binding tenancy agreements before being considered for the scheme. In response Councillor Scott Seamons said that the low take up was unfortunate but this was due to the expensive housing market in Oxford.

**(3) Question to the Board Member, Housing and Estate Regeneration (Councillor Scott Seamons) from Councillor Jean Fooks**

Rough sleepers – hostel beds

I have been told that the City Council is failing to give rough sleepers who have been in hospital priority for hostel beds when they are discharged. The situation came to light when a homeless person was discharged from a local mental health unit. Do you agree that this is a heartless and uncaring policy which will only increase the likelihood of people in these circumstances returning to the streets with the consequent deterioration in their health?

**Response:** The City Council, in conjunction with the County Council, which has the lead commissioning role for the adult homeless pathway, and with other stakeholders, launched the No Second Night Out (NSNO) initiative in July 2012. This expressly moved to a position whereby only clients verified as rough sleeping could access the homeless pathway. This followed best practice coming out from London and other major cities, as well as advice from Government and leading charities working in this sector. The purpose was to prioritise any new rough sleepers for a bed in the NSNO assessment centre, allowing them to leave the streets at the earliest available opportunity. This has resulted in persons who are not rough sleeping not being prioritised for access. The reality being that there are not sufficient beds, or move-on opportunities, for all the persons that could benefit from these services. In this environment I believe we have got our priorities right.

As you are aware, this is an area on which the County are currently consulting with regard to a 38% budget cut in this area.

One year after implementation of the NSNO initiative, a review was undertaken with some 20 stakeholders. This did indeed identify some areas where improvements around access were suggested, including hospital and prison leavers. As such, revisions were made to the pathway to allow for exemptions to be made in certain situations for 'non-verified' rough sleepers who are "at real and immediate risk of sleeping rough". It should be noted though, that this is a supported pathway, which means that individuals need to have support needs. If their only need is accommodation it is inappropriate for them to come into this pathway. There is another funded supported pathway for people with mental health issues.

The Council is improving its joint work with health, having hosted a recent round table meeting of various parties, and produced an Action Plan. There is a current Hospital discharge protocol in place that requires health authorities, as a minimum, to consider housing and notify the relevant council 48 hours prior to any discharge, and the Council is working to try

and ensure this is adhered to, and works as well as possible for vulnerable clients.

Councillor Jean Fooks in a supplementary question asked if the Board Member could ensure that this did not happen again, that a homeless person was not put back on the streets when leaving hospital, particularly a mental hospital. In response Councillor Scott Seamons said that he was happy to meet with Councillors Fooks to discuss the issues further, but added that the Pathway was provided by the CCG as well as the Council.

**(4) Question to the Board Member, Culture and Communities  
(Councillor Christine Simm) from Councillor Craig Simmons.**

East Oxford Community Association

What grounds is the Council using to evict the East Oxford Community Association from the East Oxford Community Centre?

**Response:** Oxford City Council decided to withdraw the East Oxford Community Association's licence to occupy the East Oxford Community Centre premises on the Cowley Road as the Council had serious concerns about the management of the community centre for some time.

Despite many attempts to regularise the management practices and an agreed action plan, the association committee failed to rectify matters and improve the overall management of the Centre.

I am pleased to be able to report that the association is working proactively with the Council to bring about a smooth and managed transfer which is in the best interests of the association and the communities of East Oxford.

Councillor Craig Simmons in a supplementary question asked the Board Member if she would agree that it was harsh to evict the Association with four weeks notice, when they had an extant lease of three months. In response Councillor Christine Simm said that the Association had a licence not a lease. Meetings had taken place with the Association and it was advised that if the Association put together a plan then the eviction could be reviewed. Everyone is working together for a smooth transition and to get the Association back on a firm footing.

**(5) Question to the Board Member, Cleaner, Greener Oxford, Climate Change and Transport (Councillor John Tanner) from Councillor Jean Fooks.**

Mobility support for elderly people

Has the administration simply forgotten that it promised to help elderly and disabled people to get round the city, with more transport provision such as Dial-a-Ride, to improve their quality of life with the £50,000 still sitting in 'Contingency'?

**Response:** Transport for elderly and disabled people is a responsibility for the County Council. I understand the County Council is reviewing transport provision in the city and seeking better co-ordination of its different transport services.

Oxford City Council will continue to urge the County Council to provide proper transport services for the elderly and disabled including an improved Dial-a-Ride service. If the County Council requests financial assistance from the City to deliver that service we will consider that request on its merits.

Councillor Jean Fooks in a supplementary question asked why it was not a priority. In response Councillor John Tanner said that he had checked the position with the County Council which was making no progress on integrated transport in the City. He added that as a small district Council there was a limit to how much the City could take on and the City was already subsidising County Council services. He further added that the City Council already supported a second dial-a-ride, but the County Council would not provide it.

**(6) Question to the Board Member, Cleaner, Green Oxford, Climate Change and Transport (Councillor John Tanner) from Councillor David Thomas**

Flooding alleviation in Oxfordshire

When can Councillors expect to see there the tender documents for the feasibility study into flooding alleviation in Oxfordshire?

**Response:** Oxfordshire County Council is the Lead Local Flood Authority (LLFA) and as such, it has a legal duty under the [Flood and Water Management Act 2010](#) to “develop, maintain, apply and monitor” a flood risk management strategy. The authority has produced a draft Local Flood Risk Management Strategy for Oxfordshire and this is now out to consultation until 19<sup>th</sup> September 2014. This can be found at:

<https://consultations.oxfordshire.gov.uk/consult/ti/floodriskmgmt/consultationHome>

The draft strategy envisages a range of measure to help control flooding and a key proposal is the construction of the Western Conveyance. This flood relief channel was proposed initially by the Environment Agency following an earlier option assessment. The Environment Agency has earmarked funding towards the cost of the scheme as has the Thames Regional Flood and Coastal Committee. Further funding has also been very recently announced by central government as part of the Oxfordshire Growth Deal; this will be made available to the Local Enterprise Partnership (LEP), which is working to facilitate further fundraising – to ensure the flood relief costs can be met in full. There is sufficient funding now however, for work to start in earnest. Our biggest success so far is helping to get funding the western conveyance.

The City Council regards flood protection as a matter of priority and leads the Oxford Area Flood Partnership (OAFP), which works closely with the

LLFA and the Environment Agency in particular. The Council is also a partner within the LEP, therefore it will be involved in the key processes that will lead to the finalised flood relief scheme.

In this context it is understood that the Council as a partner, will see any tender documents that will be made available for comment prior to sign-off by the commissioning body. Whilst at this time the project plan has yet to be firmed up, it is anticipated that early documentation will be available by late autumn / early winter.

Councillor David Thomas in a supplementary question said that the critical value for money case had not yet been made. In response Councillor John Tanner said that the Labour Administration fully supported the western conveyance scheme. The scheme had been worked on for many years and should have been in place before now.

**(7) Question to the Board Member, Cleaner, Greener Oxford, Climate Change and Transport (Councillor John Tanner) from Councillor Craig Simmons.**

Climate Change Adaptation Strategy

Is the Council planning to develop a Climate Change Adaptation Strategy?

**Response:** There are no plans within current resource to develop a specific climate change adaptation strategy. However the City Council is currently developing an Emergency Plan which will cover incidents linked to climate change such as heat waves, excess cold and flooding. The Council already has in place a series of Business Continuity plans, which address how the Council's own key services will be maintained or rapidly reinstated in a severe event, including that which could be caused by climate change.

We recognise that such events may well become more frequent in future due to climate change and are working with partners to reduce the impact of such events. The current main impacts of climate change in Oxford that require adaptation, are the more frequent and severe flooding events that the city is experiencing.

The City Council leads the Oxford Area Flood Partnership (OAFP) and works closely with both the Lead Local Flood Authority, the Environment Agency and other partners to address flooding problems. Some of the actions within the flood plans involve adaptation, especially in relation to improving resilience and recovery, for example. These adaptation plans remain under review and will be developed as necessary; they will of course be informed by best practice elsewhere.

Councillor Craig Simmons in a supplementary question asked if the Board Member would agree that an emergency plan was different to a strategy/adaptation plan. In response Councillor John Tanner said that he would like to see an adaptation plan but could not promise the resources required for this. The priority was to support schemes such as the Low Carbon Hub.

**(8) Question to the Deputy Leader, Finance, Asset Management and Public Health (Councillor Ed Turner) from Councillor Jean Fooks.**

Town Hall Flat

The flat in the Town hall was marketed a long time ago and a tenant accepted. It has still not been released for occupation so no rental income is coming to the Council. Why were all works such as fire safety measures not completed before it was even put on the market?

**Response:** The flat has now been let and the tenant taken occupation. A full survey of what was required had been taken prior to the marketing of the flat and the requirements considered, further works were subsequently identified following inspection by our insurers and an independent fire officer. It was also decided that no works should be carried out, and therefore incur cost, until such time as a tenant, and the associated rental income, had been identified to ensure that the letting would work, given the complexity of the accommodation and its surroundings.

Councillor Jean Fooks in a supplementary question asked the Board Member if he would agree that it would have been better to have done all of the works now. In response Councillor Ed Turner said there were issues concerning access which had prevented this. He added that the Council was working hard to get the most from its assets which had resulted in rental income in the 2013/14 year of £7.4m.

**(9) Question to the Deputy Leader, Finance, Asset Management and Public Health (Councillor Ed Turner) from Councillor Jean Fooks.**

Mortgage help for teachers

The City Council set up a scheme to assist senior teachers with mortgages to purchase property in the city. How many teachers at what levels have taken advantage of the help available since the scheme began?

**Response:** None yet. The contract with Catalyst has been negotiated and we can complete once the Financial Conduct Authority (FCA) has agreed the content of the consumer credit agreement which Catalyst are proposing to use. Approval was needed because the requirement that teachers must repay equity loans if they leave school employment in Oxford, which is a key feature for the Council, was not covered in Catalyst's existing agreement.

This application was made in February but was caught by the transfer of responsibility from the Office of Fair Trading to the FCA at the beginning of April. It has now been approved so after this unfortunate period of hiatus caused by the antics of the Coalition Government agencies, we can now get on with supporting senior teachers as we intended.

**(10) Question to the Deputy Leader, Finance, Asset Management and Public Health (Councillor Ed Turner) from Councillor Ruthi Brandt**

### Cost of Treasury Management Strategy

Can the Board Member tell us how much the Council is paying for Treasury Management Strategy advice from Capita Asset Services, and does this advice include long term views such as bail-in risks and climate related investment risks?

**Response:** The Council is paying an amount of £10,000 per annum for its Treasury Management Strategy advice from Capita (formerly Sector) following the award of a contract through open tender in July of last year. The advice includes information on the credit ratings of financial institutions meeting the Councils minimum credit rating for investing, together with regular updates on changes to these credit ratings and recommendations on periods for which investments may be made with individual institutions. Bail-in risks and climate related investment risks are part of the information taken into consideration when advising the Council.

Capita also assisted in the evaluation of potential property funds to invest in recently. Cllr Fry and I were involved in the evaluation of tenders for this work, of which two were received at the time of appointment.

Councillor Ruthi Brandt in a supplementary question asked the Board Member if he was aware of the criticism levels of Capita. In response Councillor Ed Turner said that he was, but that the Council required good Treasury Management advice. He said that the Council had received two tender documents and this had been considered and that Capita was the best company to provide this external support.

### **(11) Question to the Deputy Leader, Finance, Asset Management and Public Health (Councillor Ed Turner) from Councillor David Thomas**

#### Calls to Oxford's Domestic Violence Helpline

Does the Board Member share with me a sense of horror that monthly call numbers to Oxford's Domestic Violence Helpline increased by over 40% between 2009 and 2012, rising from 172 to 357, and that last month alone on one occasion it received six calls in less than an hour?

**Response:** The increase in calls to the Helpline, run by Oxfordshire Domestic Abuse Service (A2Dominion) is viewed positively, although clearly the extent of domestic abuse which it evidences is deeply concerning. Interpersonal violence is by its very nature a hidden crime. Over the last 8 years, nationally and locally there has been a drive to raise awareness and encourage victims to speak out and get appropriate support. We would like people to disclose before it escalates into physical and sexual violence and have focused on early intervention including providing a helpline. By coming forward earlier it reduces the harm, not only to the victim but any children, and improves their life chances. In Oxford there has been an increase in reporting such incidents to the police since 2005. In 2006 there were 2385 reports to the police in Oxford; 1250 (52%) were non-crime and 1135 (48%) were crime. In 2012 there were 3237 reports to the police; 2416 (75%) were non-crime and 821 (25%) were crime. The helpline has seen a similar increase in reporting and coming forward to seek help earlier. The prevalence has not changed

but the confidence to come forward and how we tackle and manage domestic abuse has. Not everyone wants to go to the police and therefore it is important that there are other avenues for disclosure and support. The helpline is vital for victims, female and male, as they have a safe place to talk, get safety planning advice, are risk assessed and given appropriate support such as an outreach worker, support group or a community perpetrator programme. In addition professionals use it for advice and information to assist them in supporting their clients and to manage the risk.

The County Council have proposed a 40% cut to Oxfordshire Domestic Abuse Service funding, as part of its wider cut to "Supporting People" budgets. It will have a direct impact on the helpline. If the cuts go ahead then A2Dominion will have no choice but to either significantly reduce the time when the helpline is open or close it all together. The victims and children will suffer without the appropriate support and this will impact on all agencies both in the short and long term. We intend to respond critically to the County Council's proposed budget reductions in this area of work.

Councillor David Thomas in a supplementary question asked when the Board Member would meet with him and the Management to help them understand first-hand the devastating impact the cuts would have on the safety of the most vulnerable women and mothers in our community.

In response Councillor Ed Turner said that he represented the Council on the Health Improvement Board and there were also other Executive Members that had an interest in this area and would meet with the organisation and those affected by the cuts. He said that the Council intended to respond critically to the consultation and had offered comments at the Health Improvement Board. The County could remove funding and the City could step up to fill the gap, but then the County could remove more funding. If the County could put on the table a commitment to leave it alone and not make any further cuts then a conversation could be had, but no such commitment had been given at the moment. The other Members with an interest in this area were Councillors Scott Seamons and Dee Sinclair. The Council also added value to this area through the work of the Domestic Abuse Co-ordinator.

**(12) Question to the Deputy Leader, Finance, Asset Management and Public Health (Councillor Ed Turner) from Councillor David Thomas**

Oxford Investigation Service

Would the Board Member join me in recognising the sterling work done by the eight-strong Oxford Investigation Service in combating fraud across the City?

**Response:** Yes I join with the Councillor in congratulating the Fraud Investigation Team for the tremendous work that they have done in combatting fraud across the city. Fraud is ever present in the public sector, from sub-letting our council dwellings, payment of welfare benefits and council tax discounts. The team has been able to detect and put plans in place for recovery of monies overpaid and has played a key role

in protecting the public purse. The Councillor will be aware that the government is going to take on part of these functions in due course, and I am certain that this administration will wish to ensure appropriate capacity to investigate potential fraud affecting our General Fund is maintained.

Councillor David Thomas in a supplementary question asked if he could press upon the Board Member to review staffing levels and allay fears that the team will be understaffed and under funded.

Councillor Ed Turner in response said that to get rid of our general fund fraud capacity would be a nonsense, and the Council would not be releasing staff to the DWP that the Council needed.

- (13) Question to the Leader of the Council, Corporate Strategy, Economic Development and Planning (Councillor Bob Price) from Councillor Ruth Wilkinson.**

Diary date changes to meetings

Why was the date to the Members' briefing changed from 15<sup>th</sup> July, as in the published diary to 16<sup>th</sup> July when it clashes with the East Area Planning Committee?

**Response:** The communication of the dates for Members' Briefings to the officer who organises them contained a clerical error for the July meeting date. When this was identified the speakers had already been organised and invitations sent out and replies had been received. In the event, the East Area Planning Committee scheduled for that evening has been cancelled so there is, now, no clash.

- (14) Question to the Leader of the Council, Corporate Strategy, Economic Development and Planning (Councillor Bob Price) from Councillor Ruth Wilkinson.**

Community Infrastructure Levy Update

The Community Infrastructure Levy 123 list is supposed to be updated every six months. An updated list was due in April I think. When will this be circulated and what is the process of discussion for projects to be included in the list?

**Response:** The CIL list has been updated and will be circulated to members in September.

Councillor Ruth Wilkinson in a supplementary question, asked what was the procedure for backbenchers for putting forward ideas for the 123 list. In response Councillor Price said that date came automatically from the schemes that the Council was involved in and Members should continue to provide ideas to Adrian Roach in City Development.

- (15) Question to the Leader of the Council, Corporate Strategy, Economic Development and Planning (Councillor Bob Price) from Councillor Jean Fooks.**

### West Area Planning Committee – site location of application

West Area Planning Committee had to defer a planning application for the corner of Walton Street and Little Clarendon Street because they were unable to decide which street it was in. This has meant that the deadline for determination was passed and the developer has gone to appeal – with the consequence that the application will be determined by an Inspector not by the Council. Can the Board member explain why this very important aspect of the application was not determined before the application went to Committee?

**Response:** This application for the change of use of the shop units at the corner of Little Clarendon and Walton Street to a restaurant was reported to West Area Planning Committee (WAPC) in May, within the 8-week statutory decision period, and with an officers' recommendation for approval.

The relevant retail frontages policy and Local Plan Map include the properties at the two ends of Little Clarendon Street, namely on Walton St and Banbury Road, within the Little Clarendon Street shopping area. On this basis officers recommended approval, as the 65% A1 minimum policy threshold would not be breached.

At the May WAPC, members expressed the view that the premises might instead be included in the Walton Street shopping area (which is further north), in which case the threshold would be breached. The application was deferred for further consideration by officers, who duly reported back to the June WAPC. The Committee resolved to interpret the policy as including the premises in the Walton Street area, and therefore decided that it would refuse planning permission. Since the application had in the meantime gone out of time, the applicant had submitted an appeal against non-determination, leading to the position that Cllr Fooks describes.

Councillor Jean Fooks in a supplementary question asked the Board Member if he agreed that it did not reflect well on the Council. In response Councillor Bob Price agreed with Councillor Jean Fooks.

- (16) **Question to the Leader of the Council, Corporate Strategy, Economic Development and Planning (Councillor Bob Price) from Councillor Sam Hollick.**

### LGA Challenge results

Will the results from the LGA challenge be made available to opposition Councillors?

**Response:** The informal feedback session at the end of the team's visit provided a generally positive assessment, and a number of helpful proposals for the development of the Council's future policies. A written report is expected within four weeks and will be sent to all members. A Members Briefing will be arranged in September to consider the group's analysis and suggestions and it would be included in the scrutiny process.

- (17) **Question to the Leader of the Council, Corporate Strategy, Economic Development and Planning (Councillor Bob Price) from Councillor Craig Simmons.**

Kassam Stadium

Can the Board Member update the Council on the status of the Kassam Stadium?

**Response:** The Council is not privy to the commercial aspirations of the new Oxford United board. As far as the Council's Local Plan is concerned, the stadium site is allocated for leisure purposes and would not be available for a housing development as seems to have been suggested in the context of a putative move to a new stadium in the Green Belt north of the city.

- (18) **Question to the Leader of the Council, Corporate Strategy, Economic Development and Planning (Councillor Bob Price) from Councillor Craig Simmons.**

Downgraded Council jobs

In the last year, how many Council jobs have been downgraded? And how many downgraded jobs have been filled by the same person who held the original job, meaning an effective salary cut?

**Response:** None.

Councillor Craig Simmons in a supplementary question said that he knew of at least two members of staff that had come to him with the accusation and that he was happy to share this information with Councillor Bob Price outside of the meeting. In response Councillor Bob Price said that a down grading involves a grade being reviewed and a job down grade. This had not happened here. Different jobs were graded differently and they were not the same jobs that had been downgraded.

**32. PUBLIC ADDRESSES AND QUESTIONS THAT DO NOT RELATE TO MATTERS FOR DECISION AT THIS COUNCIL MEETING**

**Addresses**

- (1) Park Pitt – Wildflower wipeout – The text of the address is appended to these minutes.

Councillor Mark Lygo, responded to the address and said that the City Council was currently writing a pollinator management plan to ensure that we embed where possible sensitive habitat management for our pollinator's. this will involve the creation of new wild flower meadows, pollinator friendly bedding plants in our formal gardens, planting tree which have early pollen and the creation of pollinator homes near suitable food sources. The City Council has joined up with Oxford's Friends of the Earth, Local Bee Keepers Association, leading ecologists to create a work group to help advise the City Council on what can be done. Both Parks

and Streetscene Operation Managers are heavily involved to ensure that we can deliver what we say we are going to do. Currently we are looking at our existing assets across the Council to see what our teams are already doing. We have wild flowers in our church yards and we are looking to put a green roof on our Parks Office. There will be a joint event held at the end of September where we will create at least four new flower meadows across the City.

- (2) Nigel Gibson – Oxford City council must engage with the East Oxford Community – Text of the address appended to these minutes.

Councillor Mike Rowley responded to the address and said that Nigel Gibson asks the Council to ensure that Officers provide him with a long list of detailed operational information on the Temple Cowley Pool as quickly as possible. This information, which largely comes from Fusion, has been sought and collated by Officer as a matter of urgency and is already being supplied to Mr Gibson.

- (3) Sarah Lasenby – Temple Cowley Pools Campaign – Text of the address appended to these minutes.

Sarah Lasenby did not attend to give her address and Councillor Mike Rowley said that he would provide a written response, now detailed below:

*I would fundamentally disagree with the speaker's contention that the new pool in Blackbird Leys will not represent an entirely adequate, indeed superior, replacement facility for Temple Cowley. The Council has undertaken this project on the clear basis that by building the new pool, residents are obtaining an improved facility, that will last much longer, at less cost to the public purse.*

*Our aim is to put a top quality, affordable, accessible, publicly provided leisure service for all the people of Oxford that is financially and environmentally sustainable into the long-term future. The replacement of the old pool is a vital part of this Council's highly successful leisure strategy.*

- (4) Jane Alexander - £108 million for Oxford – Text of the address appended to these minutes.

Councillor Mike Rowley responded to the address and said Jane Alexander asks why various funds received from central government cannot be spent on supporting her community group's bid to purchase the Temple Cowley site. Quite apart from the fact that government funding is usually allocated to very specific uses, and that state funding given to an external company could well constitute unlawful state aid, this address makes a number of statements that are not accurate. The Save Temple Cowley Pool Campaign does not have community asset status, the pool does. The council awarded this status in order to give any locally based organisation an extra six months to put together a bid. All bids will be judged impartially and based on best value for the people of Oxford who pay for the pool through their taxes. I have no role in the assessment of the bids as the valuation process is non-political. This Council does not

“give” away public assets. The Council is under an obligation under s123 of the LGA 1972 to secure best value and best consideration for any asset that we dispose of. The Council has no preferred bidder. The speaker quite rightly objects to the idea of a preferred bidder being identified before the evaluation process has been completed. I don’t blame anyone from seeking funding wherever they can but I’m sure members would appreciate why the Council advancing funds to an external company to purchase a private property would be viewed by our auditors with distain and could constitute unlawful state aid with Central Government money. The Council is indeed “talking” to the Save Temple Cowley Pool Company and communications with this group have recently taken up large amounts of officer time. The Council has not contacted it regarding the outcome of any bid and will not do so until the impartial officer evaluation is complete.

- (5) Alasdair De Voil – Oxford Visitor Information Centre – Text of the address appended to these minutes.

Councillor Bob Price responded to the address and said Experience Oxfordshire is a membership organisation and a company limited by guarantee. It receives grant aid from the City and County Councils on a gradually reducing basis as agreed when the company was established and took over the operation of the Tourist Information Centre.

EOL will act as a booking agent for all walking tour guides who are members of EOL and who agree to comply with EOL's Tour Operators Quality Charter. EOL provide Blue and Green Badge guides an enhanced booking agency service for walking tours, for which a 40per cent commission on ticket sales is charged. These tours are branded as the 'official' walking tours because the guides are independently quality assessed for tour guiding. All participating operators are listed on the website and at the TIC.

Councillor Colin Cook who had been mentioned in the address by Alasdair De Voil said that Mr De Voil claimed that he had said that the Council was not legally responsible for the Visitor Centre. Councillor Colin Cook asked that it be recorded that he has said no such thing and his response to Mr De Voil’s question on 3<sup>rd</sup> February was in the minutes.

- (6) Helen Marshall – Housing in Oxfordshire – Text of the address appended to these minutes.

Councillor Bob Price responded to the address. He said that the SHMA was part of the NPPF’s required approach to the identification of housing needs which is then considered in the local plan process. The assessment does not in itself say anything about the requirements in relation to a particular local plan. As was seen at the Cherwell inquiry the numbers of dwellings identified in the SHMA are considered as part of the land supply and sustainability assessment in developing the local plan. We are now in a position where there is a background County-wide assessment which will be taken into account in each of the individual local plan inquiries. Personally, I think this is an unsatisfactory system. Unlike the previous systems of either regional plans, sub-regional plans or County structure plans there was at least some capacity to look at the whole of an area at

the same time, we now have disjointed public inquiries undertaking similar analyses. The same data are considered at each inquiry and in each public consultation, and the SHMA figures provide a common background information base for this process.

The identification of employment sites for the implementation of the County's economic plan is again subject to the local plan inquiry process. The development of a science-based employment site cannot be done without it being consistent with the local plan of the particular district where it is located. Although the SEP is a framework document for economic growth, it has to be delivered through the local planning process. None of the background policy documents undermine the local authority planning functions.

So far as the City is concerned, we take the view that green belts are important and a vital part of the County's ability to retain its pleasant rural outlook, but they are not inviolate. The current Oxford green belt is very extensive and unnecessarily constraining for Oxfordshire in the 21<sup>st</sup> century. The assessment document that we have put forward as background discussion on the possible sites for the accommodation of an urban extension to the city would require a less than 2% reduction in the current green belt and could be replaced by additional green belt designations. The urban extensions proposed would provide a proportion of the housing that the city needs as shown by the SHMA. If more housing is not built, the cost of housing will simply become more and more unaffordable, and rents will continue to soar. It is the first step in balancing housing and employment needs. Allegations of a lack of democracy and consultation simply don't have weight; the SHMA and the SEP are background and framework documents informing the consideration of housing land and employment land allocations at local plan public inquiries.

### **Questions**

#### **(1) Question to the Leader of the Council, Corporate Strategy, Economic Development and Planning (Councillor Bob Price) from Sarah Wild**

Sarah Wild did not attend to ask her question.

#### **Planning Consultation**

At the Full Council Feb 3 2014 I asked the following question:

One of the recommendations following the investigation into what happened over Roger Dudman Way is that consultation methods between the council and members of the public should be improved. This would mean that the public had optimal access to planning documents.

So why have the public been denied access to hard copy planning application documents, except for major developments, when the on-line version is unclear?

Following a discussion a decision was taken, and unanimously agreed in Full Council, that this issue would be referred to West Area Planning Committee for investigation.

This decision, agreed by the Full Council, was excluded from the main body of the minutes - and so far no investigation has taken place.

My request is that the Council act on the decision made in February 2014.

**Response:** This question was submitted and answered at the Council meeting on February 3<sup>rd</sup> 2014.

*Approximately 80% of all planning applications to the City Council are now submitted electronically. The City Council no longer holds a paper copy of all planning applications in the reception area at St Aldate's Chambers ready to be viewed by the public. It is Council policy to encourage customers to access Council information via its website as far as possible.*

*However, the City Council does not deny access to hard copies of planning application documents. It has been, and remains, willing to make a hard copy of a planning application available on request in reception if a customer makes an appointment to come and view a particular application because the on-line copy is unavailable or unclear.*

*Furthermore, the City Council will be reviewing its post-application guidance on planning processes in response to one of the recommendations in the Independent Report on Roger Dudman Way.*

The matter was referred to the West Area Planning Committee on March 18<sup>th</sup> 2014, where the committee agreed to add the question of how consultation processes are managed as an action on the planning services improvement plan, and that progress on the action plan should be reported to the two Area Planning Committees quarterly.

This matter of consultation will be included as part of the review of the Council's planning Statement of Community Involvement, work upon which has just commenced with a view to reporting to committees (both area Planning Committees and City Executive Board) later this year.

**(2) Question to the Board Member, Leisure Contract and Community Partnership Grants (Councillor Mike Rowley) from Jane Alexander**

Jane Alexander attended and asked her question.

Fusion Lifestyle Contract Performance

Paragraph 37 of the Report to Scrutiny Committee entitled "Fusion Lifestyle – Contract Performance 2013/2014" dated 23<sup>rd</sup> June 2014 shows the customer satisfaction ratings for a number of categories. Can you please tell me whether any payments (bonus, commission, penalty or similar) to Fusion or any member of council staff or a third party organisation depend on the value of these ratings? If so, can you please explain how this works?

**Response:** Leisure centre usage has grown by 40% over the past five years to nearly 1.3 million visits and we are confident that with the new pool opening that usage will continue to grow.

With this level of usage it is inevitable that on occasions the service standards will fall below our high expectations. In the nature of the partnership, when this happens the council often work with Fusion Lifestyle to ensure that problems are rectified. Service failings do though also results in points which when they accumulate lead to financial penalties.

No bonus or commission has been paid.

**(3) Question to the Leader of the Council, Corporate Strategy, Economic Development and Planning (Councillor Bob Price) from Chaka Artwell**

Chaka Artwell did not ask his question.

A future for Oxford people by 2020

It was really heartening to hear Bob Price, as Chair of the Finance Committee meeting recently, talking positively about creating a future for Oxford people by 2020, in which the Council would help provide a vision and Services for this wonderful City of Oxford.

With this aim of providing a vision and services for Oxford people it has been reported in the Oxford Mail of July 7<sup>th</sup>, that the Council is in discussions to buy the Gladiator Club. The Gladiator Club is registered as an Asset of Community value. This is a welcomed visionary act by Bob Price's Council and his Executives. Volunteers, for no financial reward, often administer many of our Community organisations. Occasionally Council assistance may be needed to help these voluntary community organisations.

I also note that a recent City Executive Board agreed a loan of £2.3m at preferential interest rates to Low Carbon Hub, despite the fact that many people of science dispute the theory that Climate Change is manmade. Nevertheless, this is to be welcomed by Oxford people as a visionary act.

Will the Elected Councillors discuss options for similar financial arrangements with Mr Nigel Gibson, as Director of the Community Interest Company (CIC), currently preparing a proposal to take over and operate another Asset of Community Value: Temple Cowley Pools and Gym?

The people of Cowley have seen their Community Centre destroyed and they do not want to see their Pool and Fitness centre destroyed also. Please include Temple Cowley Pools and Gym in your vision for the people of Oxford Mr Price and the Elected Councillors.

**Response:** The Council's approved Corporate Strategy sets out its vision for Oxford, under the key themes of economic development, housing, leisure, reduction of carbon usage, community development and efficient

and effective provision of services. Providing a top class leisure service at an affordable cost to customers and Council Tax payers is one of the key objectives in that Strategy. The decision to replace the old Temple Cowley and Blackbird Leys pools with a new pool linked to, and jointly managed with, the Blackbird Leys Leisure Centre on Pegasus Rd was taken in support of that objective. It will contribute to the reduction in the level of subsidy per visit to indoor leisure facilities to zero, as well as providing a modern, regional competition standard pool that better meets the needs of swimmers.

The Council's financial policies allow investment in externally owned assets that provide a sound commercial rate of return; the examples of the Low Carbon Hub loan to support solar power installations, and the possible purchase of the Gladiators Club are two recent examples. Any future proposals of that type will be assessed against the Council's policy and statutory financial regulations.

**(4) Question to the Leader of the Council, Corporate Strategy, Economic Development and Planning (Councillor Bob Price) from Helen Marshall**

Helen Marshall attended and asked her question.

Housing and scrutiny issues

Given that:

- The Oxford & Oxfordshire City Deal was passed without any public consultation,
- The Spatial Planning & Infrastructure Partnership, whose Executive Board meetings are not subject to public scrutiny, appears to have agreed a vision for Oxfordshire based on economic growth at all costs,
- And that the unelected Local Enterprise Partnership is now responsible for delivering the Oxfordshire Strategic Economic Plan which, in contrast to previous County Structure Plans, has not gone through Full Council let alone public consultation,

what is the role of democratically elected Oxford City councillors?’

**Response:** The Oxford and Oxfordshire City Deal was reported to Council earlier this year and the Strategic Economic Plan will come to Council in the autumn as planned.

The City Council adopted an economic development framework in 2012 in the Oxford Strategic Partnership Economic Growth Strategy. This sets out the city's economic development needs and plans. The City Deal and the Oxfordshire Strategic Economic Plan both reflect the City Council's policies, and were consequently endorsed by the Council's representative on the LEP.

The Spatial Planning and Infrastructure Partnership Board, not the Executive, has been responsible for determining the policies of the Partnership, and the minutes of that Board are published. The SPIP Board was comprised of councillor representatives from all the districts and the county, plus the chair of the LEP, with representatives of Government agencies as observers. It was chaired in rotation by one of the Councillors. The functions of the SPIP Board have now been subsumed into the Oxfordshire Growth Board with effect from this month.

The City Council is seeking to ensure that Oxford is a world city class for all its citizens and can realise its potential as a national economic asset. The city contains one of the greatest concentrations of research and knowledge based employment in the world, as well as an outstanding environment. The city is successful in many ways, with a third of all employment in the county, great economic vitality and with a global reputation.

It is also clear from a range of independent studies that for a number of years the city has not been realising its full potential and that there are continuing major issues of low incomes and poor housing. In particular:

- the universities, big science facilities and successful business need space to grow and develop, or investment and economic activity will locate elsewhere in the UK or to other countries.
- The city is the least affordable location for housing in the country; the impacts of the lack of housing and, particularly, of affordable housing are clear at every level. The universities, hospitals and businesses have difficulties attracting and retaining the staff that they require, the exceptional turnover of teaching staff in schools undermines children's education and attainment levels, and the pressures of overcrowding and homelessness are increasingly evident.
- According to the University's 'Innovation Engine' report, the lack of effective strategic planning for the wider city economy and housing to support growth has already cost the local economy over £0.5bn in economic activity, as well as contributing to inequalities and social injustice.

### **33. PETITIONS**

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

### **34. OUTSIDE ORGANISATION/COMMITTEE CHAIR REPORTS AND QUESTIONS**

#### Oxfordshire Health Improvement Board

The Head of Policy, Communications and Culture submitted a report on behalf of Councillor Ed Turner (previously circulated, now appended) which informed Council of the work of the Oxfordshire Health Improvement Board.

Councillor Ed Turner introduced the report.

Council agreed to note the report and the work of the Oxfordshire Improvement Board.

### **35. 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 ordinary meeting of Council.

Councillor Craig Simmons as Chair of the Scrutiny Committee moved the report. He said that while there was a heavy workload for the Scrutiny Committee he welcomed suggestions from Members on possible areas which the Committee may wish to look into as some of this work could be undertaken by the various Panels such as the Finance Panel rather than just the main Committee

Councillor Val Smith said that Scrutiny should be vibrant and take on issues especially ones that mattered to the public. Councillor Jean Fooks added that maybe consideration should be given to having two Scrutiny Committees as there had been in the past.

Council agree to note the report.

### **36. MOTIONS ON NOTICE**

Council had before it five Motion on Notice and reached decisions as follows:

**(1) Control of residential lettings boards in the City – (Proposed by Councillor Ruth Wilkinson, seconded by Councillor Steve Goddard)**

Liberal Democrat Group Member - Motion on Notice

Council acknowledges that “To Let” and “Let by” signs are erected on some properties for months despite the properties being occupied. This creates visual clutter, community objection and planning enforcement complaints, highlights student-targeted areas, and police advice in other parts of the country has pointed to a strong correlation between crime levels and the properties displaying “To Let” boards.

Council notes that other authorities have tackled this issue by means of either a voluntary code or a mandatory code, and that mandatory codes have been introduced in Leeds, and also in Newcastle following a review of a previously agreed voluntary code. Council further notes the well-documented success of a mandatory code on the erection of residential lettings boards in Inner NW Leeds which led to a reduction in crime and antisocial behaviour, and improved the appearance of two predominantly student areas in the City.

Council also notes that the majority of agencies involved in letting residential properties do ensure that boards are taken down when reminded.

Council asks the City Executive Board:

- (a) To require officers to introduce a code on the erection of residential lettings boards in Oxford
- (b) To carry out a formal consultation process on whether this code should be voluntary or mandatory
- (c) To work with landlords, estate agencies which operate lettings, lettings agencies, boards agents, Oxford City Council officers and the Universities on the content of the code, taking into account the relevant regulations and ensuring that there is an agreed and clear definition of the start date of a tenancy which triggers the board erection process.

***Councillor Bob Price seconded by Councillor Ed Turner moved the following amendment:***

*To delete points (a), (b), (c) and replace with the following:*

*To ask the officers to bring forward proposals for a code of practice on the erection and removal of sales and letting boards in the City, including consideration of both voluntary and mandatory status ,and proposals for involving letting and estate agents in the development of an effective code.*

Councillor Ruth Wilkinson accepted the amendment and following a debate Council voted and the amended Motion was adopted as follows:

Council acknowledges that “To Let” and “Let by” signs are erected on some properties for months despite the properties being occupied. This creates visual clutter, community objection and planning enforcement complaints, highlights student-targeted areas, and police advice in other parts of the country has pointed to a strong correlation between crime levels and the properties displaying “To Let” boards.

Council notes that other authorities have tackled this issue by means of either a voluntary code or a mandatory code, and that mandatory codes have been introduced in Leeds, and also in Newcastle following a review of a previously agreed voluntary code. Council further notes the well-documented success of a mandatory code on the erection of residential lettings boards in Inner NW Leeds which led to a reduction in crime and antisocial behaviour, and improved the appearance of two predominantly student areas in the City.

Council also notes that the majority of agencies involved in letting residential properties do ensure that boards are taken down when reminded.

Council asks the City Executive Board to ask the officers to bring forward proposals for a code of practice on the erection and removal of sales and letting boards in the City, including consideration of both voluntary and mandatory status, and proposals for involving letting and estate agents in the development of an effective code.

**(2) Future of the Temple Cowley Pool site – (Proposed by Councillor Dick Wolff, seconded by Councillor Sam Hollick)**

**Green Group Member – Motion on Notice**

In a letter published in the Oxford Mail on June 16th last, Cllr Price said:

'It is . . . untrue to assert that the (Temple Cowley) pool site will be 'turned into a block of flats for Brookes students'. The site is out to tender, and is registered as a Community Asset. We are expecting a proposal from the campaign group for a combined pool and housing development. Other developers will be offering different combinations of housing and leisure/ community uses, but Brookes will not be among them.'

Firstly, Council endorses Core Strategy para 21:

'Planning permission will only be granted for development resulting in the loss of existing sports and leisure facilities . . . if no deficiency is created in the area. Alternative facilities should be provided . . . in areas that have an identified shortage.'

Noting that the Cowley Community Centre is being replaced with a much smaller community room as part of a housing development, other leisure facilities (e.g. the Morris Motors Club, the Parish Halls on Between Towns Road) have been lost, and the Temple Cowley Pools & Leisure complex is being closed, Council 'identifies' a consequent clear 'shortage' of 'sports and leisure' facilities in Cowley/Temple Cowley.

Council therefore welcomes the Leader's commitment, in line with CS21, and agrees to secure continuing public leisure facilities on the Temple Cowley site, regardless of whether the Temple Cowley Pools campaigners succeed in producing a bid within the time available, and - recognising that, in the Council's Sites & Housing Development Plan Document, community use is described as "unlikely to be a viable use for the landowner" - agrees to provide capital funding for the leisure component.

Secondly,

(a) In line with the principles of 'transparency and clarity' in the Council's proposed 'Community Engagement Strategy', which states

'The boundaries of the decision (being consulted upon) must be defined — it should be clear which aspects are being consulted upon, and where decisions have already been made. To avoid creating unrealistic expectations, stakeholders and citizens must be told what they can or cannot influence by responding to engagement, and what the next steps will be.'

- (b) in view of the statement in the Leader's letter that the development of the site has already gone out to tender,
- (c) recognising (under the community engagement principle of 'proportionality') the potential impact of the development particularly on the Temple Cowley area
- (d) recognising that the Sites & Housing Development Plan document allocates the site only for 'residential' development, but that since the adoption of that plan the Pools & Leisure complex have been registered as a Community Asset
- (e) acknowledging that the tender document itself is not commercially sensitive

Council commits to:

- (1) making this tender document public and,
- (2) fully engaging with local residents, using the results as the key determinant in assessing tenders from developers.

***Councillor Mohammed Altaf-Khan seconded by councillor Andrew Gant moved the following amendment:***

- (a) Delete the paragraph beginning 'Council therefore welcomes the Leader's commitment.....' and replace with the following

'Council therefore welcomes the Leader's commitment , in line with CS21, and asks the Executive Board to investigate how leisure facilities could be provided on this site together with housing, whether or not this is achieved by the bid from the Temple Cowley pools campaigners.'

- (b) Amend the last point (2) to read

'fully engaging with local residents, ensuring that their views are taken into account when assessing tenders from developers.'

Councillor Dick Wolff did not accept the amendment and following a debate Council voted and the amendment was carried.

Following a further debate Council resolved under Procedure Rule 11.19(d) to have a named vote on the amended Motion. The result of the named vote was as follows:

For the amended Motion – Councillors Craig Simmons, Mohammed Altaf-Khan, Elise Benjamin, Ruthi Brandt, Stephen Curran, Jean Fooks, Andrew Gant, Steve Goddard, Michael Gotch, Mick Haines, Sam Hollick, David Thomas, Liz Wade, Ruth Wilkinson, Dick Wolff.

Against the amended Motion – Councillors Mohammed Niaz Abbasi, Rae Humberstone, Laurence Baxter, Mary Clarkson, Colin Cook, Van Coulter,

Roy Darke, James Fry, Pat Kennedy, Ben Lloyd-Shogbesan, Mark Lygo, Sajjad Malik, Michele Paule, Susanne Pressel, Bob Price, Mike Rowley, Gill Sanders, Scott Seamons, Christine Simm, Dee Sinclair, Val Smith, John Tanner, Richard Tarver, Ed Turner, Louise Upton, Oscar Van Nooijen.

With more Councillors voting for the amended Motion than against the amended Motion was adopted as follows:

In a letter published in the Oxford Mail on June 16th last, Cllr Price said:

'It is . . . untrue to assert that the (Temple Cowley) pool site will be 'turned into a block of flats for Brookes students'. The site is out to tender, and is registered as a Community Asset. We are expecting a proposal from the campaign group for a combined pool and housing development. Other developers will be offering different combinations of housing and leisure/ community uses, but Brookes will not be among them.'

Firstly, Council endorses Core Strategy para 21:

'Planning permission will only be granted for development resulting in the loss of existing sports and leisure facilities . . . if no deficiency is created in the area. Alternative facilities should be provided . . . in areas that have an identified shortage.'

Noting that the Cowley Community Centre is being replaced with a much smaller community room as part of a housing development, other leisure facilities (e.g. the Morris Motors Club, the Parish Halls on Between Towns Road) have been lost, and the Temple Cowley Pools & Leisure complex is being closed, Council 'identifies' a consequent clear 'shortage' of 'sports and leisure' facilities in Cowley/Temple Cowley.

Council therefore welcomes the Leader's commitment , in line with CS21, and asks the Executive Board to investigate how leisure facilities could be provided on this site together with housing, whether or not this is achieved by the bid from the Temple Cowley pools campaigners.

Secondly,

- (a) In line with the principles of 'transparency and clarity' in the Council's proposed 'Community Engagement Strategy', which states

'The boundaries of the decision (being consulted upon) must be defined — it should be clear which aspects are being consulted upon, and where decisions have already been made. To avoid creating unrealistic expectations, stakeholders and citizens must be told what they can or cannot influence by responding to engagement, and what the next steps will be.'

- (b) in view of the statement in the Leader's letter that the development of the site has already gone out to tender,

- (c) recognising (under the community engagement principle of 'proportionality') the potential impact of the development particularly on the Temple Cowley area
- (d) recognising that the Sites & Housing Development Plan document allocates the site only for 'residential' development, but that since the adoption of that plan the Pools & Leisure complex have been registered as a Community Asset
- (e) acknowledging that the tender document itself is not commercially sensitive

Council commits to:

- (1) making this tender document public and,
- (2) fully engaging with local residents, ensuring that their views are taken into account when assessing tenders from developers.

**(3) Unmet housing need in Oxford – (Proposed by Councillor Bob Price, seconded by Councillor Scott Seamons)**

Labour Group Member – Motion on Notice

Council notes the very significant scale of unmet housing need in the city in the Strategic Housing Market Assessment, and regrets the serious social and economic problems that the pressure on the existing housing stock is creating. It also notes that the result of the South East Regional Plan inquiry in 2007 was a recommendation for a review of the Green Belt designation of the land to the south east of the city with a view to a significant urban extension in that area.

Council calls on the other District Councils and the County Council to take forward the findings of the Housing Market Assessment through the 'duty to cooperate' that is at the heart of the NPPF, and to identify sites that will provide sustainable housing growth on a sufficient scale that will meet the needs of the city and the county for the next two decades.

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

**(4) Developing an ethical investment policy – (Proposed by Councillor Craig Simmons, seconded by Councillor Ruthi Brandt)**

Green Group Member – Motion on Notice

At its 24<sup>th</sup> March 2014 meeting, the Scrutiny Finance Panel considered revising the content of the City Council's current Treasury Management Strategy having previously determined that it did not include a statement on ethical investment.

The Finance Panel have stated that they would like to work towards making recommendations on this as soon as possible. They proposed the following draft Ethical Investment Statement:

*The Council will not knowingly invest directly in businesses whose activities and practices pose a risk of serious harm to individuals or groups, or whose activities are inconsistent with the Council's mission and values. This would include, inter alia, avoiding investment in institutions with material links to:*

- human rights abuse (e.g. child labour, political oppression)*
- environmentally harmful activities (e.g. pollution, destruction of habitat, fossil fuel extraction, refinement companies )*
- socially harmful activities (e.g. tobacco, gambling)*

*With respect to its indirect investments, the Council will work with a ratings agency to develop a workable ethical policy aligned with the above mission and values.*

Council welcomes this work by the Finance Panel and asks the City Executive Board to instruct officers to undertake the necessary research, in collaboration with Finance Panel, to develop a workable Ethical Investment Statement along the lines set out in the draft proposed above.

Council notes that this draft includes a recognition of the need to divest from companies involved in the extraction and refinement of fossil fuels.

***Councillor Ed Turner seconded by Councillor Bob Price moved the following amendment:***

- (a) To delete all of the words in the second paragraph and replace with the following:

*Council welcomes this work by the Finance Panel and asks the City Executive Board to include the statement below in the next iteration of the Treasury Management Strategy, and encourages the City Executive Board to follow these principles from now on, in the absence of a formal policy:*

- (b) To add at the end of the bullet points in the third paragraph the following

*These principles will be applied to all investments made by the Council.*

- (c) To delete the fourth, fifth and sixth paragraphs and replace with the following:

*Council notes and endorses the encouragement made by the Leader of the Council to the Oxfordshire County Council pension fund to disinvest in fossil fuels.*

***Councillor Jean Fooks seconded by Councillor Mohammed Altaf-Khan moved the following amendment:***

*To delete all of the words in the final paragraph and replace with the following words:*

*Council notes that while this draft suggests total disinvestment from companies involved in the extraction and refinement of fossil fuels, it fails to encourage investment in alternative energy sources, which is essential before this disinvestment is viable. Any Ethical Investment Statement should include this caveat.*

Councillor Craig Simmons did not accept the amendments proposed by Councillors Ed Turner and Jean Fooks.

Following a debate Council voted:

- (1) To adopt the amendment in the name of Ed Turner
- (2) Not to adopt the amendment in the name of Councillor Jean Fooks
- (3) To adopt the amended Motion as follows:

At its 24<sup>th</sup> March 2014 meeting, the Scrutiny Finance Panel considered revising the content of the City Council's current Treasury Management Strategy having previously determined that it did not include a statement on ethical investment.

Council welcomes this work by the Finance Panel and asks the City Executive Board to include the statement below in the next iteration of the Treasury Management Strategy, and encourages the City Executive Board to follow these principles from now on, in the absence of a formal policy:

The Council will not knowingly invest directly in businesses whose activities and practices pose a risk of serious harm to individuals or groups, or whose activities are inconsistent with the Council's mission and values. This would include, inter alia, avoiding direct investment in institutions with material links to:

- ♣ - human rights abuse (e.g. child labour, political oppression)
- ♣ - environmentally harmful activities (e.g. pollution, destruction of habitat, fossil fuels)
- ♣ - socially harmful activities (e.g. tobacco, gambling)

These principles will be applied to all investments made by the Council.

Council notes and endorses the encouragement made by the Leader of the Council to the Oxfordshire County Council pension fund to disinvest in fossil fuels.

**(5) Privatisation of the Probation Service – (Proposed by Councillor John Tanner)**

**Labour Group Member – Motion on Notice**

Oxford City Council considers the planned privatisation of 70% of the Probation Service as reckless, dangerous and costly. It is likely to increase re-offending in Oxford, could compromise the safety of local residents and ignores the expertise of the local probation service.

Coming hard on the heels of the savage cuts in Legal Aid this attack on the Probation Service underlines the Coalition's lack of interest in tackling crime. We call on the Government to withdraw its proposals and negotiate with the National Association of Probation officers for a sensible way forward.

Councillor John Tanner's Motion on notice was not considered as the time allowed for Motions on Notice by the constitution had lapsed.

### **37. MATTERS EXEMPT FROM PUBLICATION**

**The meeting started at 5.00 pm and ended at 9.35 pm**

## Park Pitt – Address to Council

### Wildflower Wipeout

Every year we are treated to the glories of the English spring – birds sing, the leaves come out, the sap rises and our spirits soar, so too the wildflowers spring up, festooning the verges and green spaces still remaining in our city, yellow, white, purple, red, burrs to bells, petals to peas, a multicultural, multi-coloured riot of life of every shape and hue, their names redolent of beauty - marigolds, poppies, cinquefoil, pennywort, hair's tail grass, dandelions, bluebells and brambles and that sticky stuff.

The butterflies flutter, tortoiseshells, the painted ladies, Blues, in a complex ecosystem that brings life to the city and joy to our hearts.

Then along come the Oxford City Council mowers and smash it all up, yes it's the annual May Day Massacre, and this wonderful effusion of life and joy is razed to the ground in a senseless and brutal destruction and the garden of Eden is reduced to ugly grass.

With each successive cutting there are less seeds and less flowers next year, and, as only the grass survives this savage and wholly pointless assault, can we wonder it is seen as a mess?

Can anyone here explain to me what is so attractive about grass cut less than an inch of its life? Monotonous, one dimensional, an artificial ecological desert almost devoid of life and its sustenance, with all the charm and subtlety of a freshly scrubbed lavatory - and yet so appear our verges and too much of our parks.

What is this Victorian impulsion to tame nature, cut back and kill, impose order on "chaos", to stake our claim, as if nature were our enemy, stay back foul fiend! This is ours! Keep Out!

Is this a reflection of us? Is that really who we are? Is that it?

We would rather dominate a desert than share paradise.

How did this happen? The officers I have spoken to are dedicated, hard-working and helpful.

Lets start with the Green Spaces Strategy, misnamed as it is not "a plan of action" but just aims. It scarcely mentions biodiversity, and then in the context of SSIs. Verges are not even considered green space, the precious wildflowers are simply to be tidied up along with the bins by Streetscene.

Our lips drip with the cant of the new church of Green, ecology, environment and emission reduction, yet there are two ways to cut carbon – reduce production, or increase absorption, so why this war on wildlife?

If we love and treasure our wildflowers and the birds, butterflies and all creatures great and small that depend on their habitat, why are we destroying it with such misplaced zeal?

What can we do?

Lets start by adopting the recommendations of Alan Titchmarsh and The Charity Plantlife that demand that all councils should not cut any verges prior to the end of August and before the end of March.

But he is talking about 100's of miles of rural verges in Oxfordshire alone, but in the urban context, with so little green space left, these are much more precious, and we must go much further to save our ecological heritage.

Lets rip up the grass that has become dominant due to decades of mismanagement.

Bring in the ecologists, horticultural experts, - the scientific jury is out as to the degree to which exotic species compete with native ones. Involve the Friends of this, that and the other, let low traffic areas in parks return to nature, and provide grants for planting.

In Headington for example, engage the Oxford Preservation Trust, Ruskin College, Headington High ask them to review their mowing and planting strategies, there are large private green spaces in Headington where scarcely a single wildflower exists among hectares.

Lets reduce the energy inefficient, gas guzzling co2 producing, water absorbing, ecological deserts called lawns, lets plant according to ecological value and not just ornamentation.

Lets say farewell to the silent spring, senselessly smashed.

I dream of a Headington where Cuckoo Lane is once again a riot of colour and a haven for wildlife, a walk of choice, where the verges of Dunstan and Osler Road flower late into the year amongst the buzz of insects, and children pick posies in Bury Knowle Park and take them proudly home to their mummies and daddies, where wildflowers are regarded as our friends and companions, to be kept close, nurtured and cherished in a city we should not call just our own.

Thank You.



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## **Oxford City Council Must Engage with the East Oxford Community**

Much has happened since I addressed Council on the last occasion the public was permitted to entertain you. We've had another local council election, and some councillors have left, some new ones have arrived and some of you I see still remain. I thought you would all like either an update on the Save Temple Cowley Pools Campaign, or an introduction. And, on behalf of the people in the community of East Oxford, I have a request for all councillors.

So, for those just joining, the least you need to know. Temple Cowley Pools and Gym is classed as a 'wet/dry' leisure centre; it is not just a swimming pool. It has a 25m competition swimming pool, but also a diving pool, a learner pool, a steam room and sauna suite, an exercise studio and a gymnasium. You, Oxford City Council, have decided that you wish to close it, and build what is only a 25m swimming pool in Blackbird Leys – you call this a replacement – we, all non-Labour supporters (and even lately some Labour ones), recognise that it is not.

You've said that Temple Cowley Pools is too costly to run, that its carbon emissions are too high, that it is old and at "risk of catastrophic failure". We have, over the last five years, demonstrated repeatedly, mostly using your own information, that none of this is true.

Maintenance costs are under £100,000 a year, the facility remains even now the most energy efficient centre of its type, it is barely halfway through its expected lifespan having been rebuilt in 1987, and a recent visit by a structural engineer attested to it not being about to fall down in any way anytime soon.

This is not an issue on which reasonable people can reasonably differ – it is not and cannot be a matter of opinion. The facts, and we've presented them time and again, are compelling, whether or not you have chosen to ignore them. And along with the indomitable will of all the people across Oxford and beyond who have contributed so much to this Campaign, this means that only one reasonable conclusion is possible to reasonable people – that Temple Cowley Pools should remain open.

What may have been true once was your original stated aim of needing £1.5m from the sale of Temple Cowley Pools in order to fund the construction of the new pool in Blackbird Leys. Even that is now redundant – you stated last year that the new scheme was completely funded, and at the last City Executive Board it was revealed that you are running at a £5m surplus. So you have no need to sell yet another asset that by rights belongs to the people, and which you are supposed to hold in trust on their behalf.

Nonetheless, on the 21<sup>st</sup> January this year, you decided to put the Temple Cowley Pools site up for sale. The plot, incidentally, includes the car park for the adjacent library, so you have to wonder what beloved asset will go on sale next.

The Campaign reaction was considered and measured; should we continue? After extending the life of the Pools by three years was there any point in carrying on. You obviously know the answer; we of course continued, and we registered Temple Cowley Pools as an asset of

community value. The Council, in recognising this, acknowledges that the centre is of value to the local community, something that is clearly self-evident.

But that meant that an appropriate organisation could exercise a Right to Bid under the Localism Act legislation. So we did exactly that by forming a community interest company. We have until October 7<sup>th</sup> this year to put in a bid. You can then evaluate that bid and decide whether the community, the public you are here to serve, deserve to take over operating the centre, or whether you will sell to a property developer who will of course make a tidy profit from the transaction. In contrast, the community company is 'not-for-profit' – there are no shareholders to benefit financially, no well-paid employees and directors who can expect to gain; all profits, or 'surplus' as it is known, will go back into the centre, and/or back to public funds controlled by the Council.

It was very encouraging when I spoke at the last Council meeting and you debated the seventh petition from the general public asking you to co-operate with us, that so many councillors of all political persuasion announced their support and interest in our proposal. We have had encouragement from councillors since then, even I have to report very recently from a CEB member.

It is unfortunate then, that your council officers do not seem prepared to offer similar support. And here lies the problem for which I have come to you this evening to ask for your help. We have asked to meet with council officers to discuss our proposal; we have asked for the information we need to put together a credible, financially viable and acceptable proposal. This is a community group asking for help and information, not a commercial private developer experienced and used to making a profit out of the sale of public sector assets.

I have to report that we have been met with refusal, delay and a continuing lack of information. We have a deadline set by you of October 7<sup>th</sup>, which gets ever nearer; delay and lack of information and active co-operation from the council severely prejudices our bid. This we believe is both unfair and inequitable. So I am here this evening not only to provide an update, but to ask for your help, building on the encouragement and support you have provided in recent months; please speak with your council officers and ensure that they engage with us to provide the information that we need. Our plans to develop Temple Cowley Pools have met with overwhelming support as we consult with the public. Their support is being shown yet again through a petition – our eighth, yet another record for the Campaign and a record we wish we didn't have. And another record: speed. In the space of a week we have collected over 700 signatures towards the 1,500 needed to enable you to debate this matter. We have made it clear time and again that the people want Temple Cowley Pools kept open even if the Council doesn't. Please, collectively, work together and with the Council officers to help us to make our case.

## **Sarah Lasenby – Address to Council**

### **Temple Cowley Pools campaign**

To all City Councillors

I have been helping with the Campaign to Save Temple Cowley Pools and want to share my experience of the local people's responses on the issue.

In the past, when I was asking people if they would like to sign a petition (number 7) to help save Temple Cowley Pools, I have been surprised to find some people running up and asking to sign. Of the other people I spoke with, a very large number of people want to sign as soon as they know what it is about.

Recently there has been misinformation in local press and some have said, 'oh but it's too late' or, 'I thought it had been decided to keep it'.

More recently we have been showing people the proposed plan as to how the pool and leisure centre could be retained; a space for a Community Centre added and flats built, 50 % of which would be for social housing.

On the 21<sup>st</sup> June when it was the 80<sup>th</sup> anniversary of Florence Park Fête I was outside the main gates and talking with people as they came in. [Only one couple did not want TCP saved.] All the rest were very keen to keep it and willing to stop and listen to my explanation of the plans that could be developed at TCP. They were really enthusiastic about the possibility of this plan becoming a reality and saving Temple Cowley Pool.

Those who came from Rose Hill were particularly unhappy as they would need to take two buses to reach the centre in Blackbird Leys. Local people see the closing of TCP as a significant deterioration in the provision for people in this area and wonder what else will be taken away.

I felt very touched by them and sad when I realised that this Council has not, and is not listening to what the people in this area want. How can these people be heard? The Council have the solution in their hands and if they do not make sure that the leisure provision at Temple Cowley is retained then they will have done a great injustice. TCP's proposal is your chance to get it right after so many years of not responding appropriately.

The people's needs are what matter and you should now be listening and acting on what you hear.

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## **Jane Alexander – Address to Council**

### **£108 million for Oxford**

BBC radio Oxford is telling of £108 million coming to Oxford from central government to be spent on various important causes.

Radio Ox is asking what we, the people of Oxford, want to see money spent on. Some of this money should be spent on making sure that the Save Temple Cowley Pools Community Interest Company can buy and take over the running of the facility for the good of all the people of Oxford.

The Council is not talking to SaveTCP CIC and only talking with their 'preferred bidder'.

How can SaveTCP CIC who have Asset of Community Value Status, prepare their bid on behalf of all of us, without vital information?

Anyone who wants to buy anything will ask the seller questions, about what they are thinking of buying and expect answers.

I believe Oxford City Council have given away other Oxford City land and premises to private developers, such as the Northway and Cowley Community Centres, and the massive land at Barton.

All of this land which belongs to Oxford residents has been given away for free. Yet the council wants to 'sell' TCP!

Why is the TCP site not yet being offered to the SaveTCP CIC for free on the same understanding, that social housing is provided too?

Of course as some of you know the 50% figure for social housing at Barton has now been dropped to 40% so yet more of these homes will be occupied, not by Oxford people but by others who want to live here increasing the population and not doing as much for the 1,800 Oxford people who do need social housing.

The SaveTCP CIC is working for the benefit of all the people of Oxford who need and want to use health and exercise facilities.

It is to the benefit of all that people take care of their health, indeed we are encouraged to do so yet in Cowley and Blackbird Leys, our facilities are being cut by half.

Some sites where people want to put housing are blocked from being granted planning permission on the grounds of not enough car parking space not being available.

Yet the Barns Road Community Centre was granted planning permission with NO CAR PARKING ALLOWED! On the grounds that this would be a car free site! (Apart from the one 'disabled' flat with its own parking space).

So 39 dwellings, half social and half private are expected NOT to have cars. And if they do have cars the council office advice given was "that they can park them in front of other houses in nearby roads"!

"Thanks very much" say the people of Cowley to whom the Council is not listening!

Let's have some openness and transparency in the City Council!

At the Carnival, people seeing both the SaveTCP mermaid and SaveTCP CIC stall, showed how much massive support there still is to save TCP!

Let's listen to the sensible, intelligent and deserving people of Cowley and Oxford and stop these hair brained schemes.

If possible, let's use just some of this money where the people want and need it to be spent.

£13 million on a new pool at Blackbird Leys which could have been beautifully built for £4 to 5 million with an ASA approved company.

2,500 signatures on an *online* petition to re-time Didcot Power station demolition.

Over 21,000 signatures on 'real paper' petition to Keep TCPools yet the Council has so far refused to listen.

Ask yourself, why?

Ask the people what they want, then listen and act on their behalf.

At the last council meeting there was a petition from the people asking that you work with us to facilitate our needs and aims. This has not been forthcoming.

I ask that you now honour your words and ensure that the council provide the information required in full, without further delay.

We want to keep our TCPools and Fitness Centre and be able to have a new replacement community centre on the site as proposed by the SaveTCP Community Interest Company.

Please do the right thing and make this happen.

## **Alasdair De Voil – Address to Council**

### **Oxford Visitor Information Centre**

This is a follow up to previous request that the full Council address how and why it is appropriate to continue its funding of a company which is not delivering a fair, transparent and impartial service viz. Visit Oxfordshire Ltd which runs Oxford visitor information centre and its associated websites on behalf of the city and county councils.

In my last address at full council, Cllr Colin Cook stated that by nature of the council's partnership agreement with Visit Oxfordshire Ltd, "the council is not legally responsible for the visitor centre". However, after investigating the circumstances of that rather suspicious looking partnership agreement, I learned that the Council never followed its own procurement handbook to tender this service as it's claimed and that the Council never actually procured the tourist info services. As that's the case, consequently, we should conclude that in fact the city Council is in fact responsible on some level for the visitor info services partnerered (including circumstances and complaints about how info is presented at the visitor info centre and on its website).

It seems very odd for the council to continue funding a company by over 200K p.a. which is the object of repeated vociferous complaints made by the kinds of businesses such as my own which one would presume should be benefitting most from it - but we don't. Instead, our livelihoods are deliberately being sabotaged and undermined by the way in which the visitor centre services are presented. This includes FACTS like following:

- a) the visitor centre staff do not present impartial info on Oxford tours available. Instead, they simply market and sell their own preferred so-called 'Oxford official walking tour'.
- b) the centre sign, its counter, its windows all present only the official tour, except for one advert for the independent ghost tour (which they are happy to market as it doesn't conflict with the timing of selling their own preferred tour)
- c) The website has over 200 pages marketing only the official tour and in most brochures and in group travel leads, they nearly always only mention the official tour. This despite fact that the official tour is not a paid up partner tour. Meanwhile, businesses like mine have to pay from a minimum fee of £390 upwards pa and only get their info published on part of one page. That's 0.5% of available page views!
- d) The supposedly independent guild of blue badge guides will never respond to, nor will Visit Oxfordshire Ltd, to answer what is the status of the relationship between these two organisations and why they get such preferential status, including having special payments made on their behalf by Visit Oxfordshire Ltd to Visit England, which we don't get paid for us.

Yet all my previous attempts to get the council to review and intervene to ensure that circumstances make for a fairer marketplace have been ignored. This is not helping

struggling small traders like myself and it is minsinforming the public too. Neither does it make sense to continue funding such a company when there are public cuts. Will the council take seriously the need to address these complaints?

## CPRE Oxfordshire Address to Oxford City Full Council, 14 July 2014

CPRE believes we need more housing in Oxfordshire - affordable housing for local people.

The trouble is the unpalatable truth - that increasing land supply will not deliver this. Oxfordshire's attractiveness, and proximity to London, means that housing *demand* in the county is virtually limitless and house prices will remain out of reach for those most in need. To meet genuine housing *need*, we will need a different approach probably based on significant investment in social housing.

Meanwhile, CPRE believes we are currently facing not just a debate over housing numbers, but a fight for the future of Oxfordshire. What is the vision for the county?

Do we stay as the most rural county in the South East, a county of small village communities and market towns, with a historic city of character at its heart? Not set in stone, but growing organically to meet the needs of local people.

Or, alternatively, do we become an overflow county for London and the Thames Valley, another Birmingham perhaps, actively seeking to bring more and more people into the area?

Some time ago it seems, the leaders of our various local councils in conjunction with the unelected Oxfordshire Local Enterprise Partnership effectively decided, behind closed doors, that it was the latter vision they were after, keen to pursue a policy (in line with the government) of economic growth at all costs.

Out of this has flowed a whole series of announcements, all presented as 'done deals':

- The Oxford & Oxfordshire City Deal - no public consultation.
- The Oxfordshire Strategic Economic Plan, which proposes creating 80,000 new jobs in a county of full employment - unlike previous county plans, no public consultation and no Public Inquiry.
- And the Oxfordshire Strategic Housing Market Assessment (SHMA) - no public consultation. Heavily influenced by the draft Strategic Economic Plan, the SHMA proposes 100,000 new houses in the county within just 17 years.

This is roughly double the previous estimate and is the equivalent of a 40% increase in every town & settlement in the county.

These figures are horrifying.

They are not about meeting local need but about catering for the influx of people to meet those 80,000 notional new jobs.

It completely fails to take into account that increasing land supply will not make housing more affordable - no builder is going to build at this rate.

What it will do is allow developers to cherry pick the most attractive sites, putting our Green Belt, our Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty and other greenfield sites at risk.

### **The impacts for Oxford City**

The impacts of all these decisions are now starting to be felt in terms of planning for Oxford:

- 1) The growth plan south of Grenoble Road, looking to include both a science park extension and houses in the Green Belt
- 2) The significantly enlarged Northern Gateway Application, which proposes to take out a piece of the Green Belt
- 3) The planning application for the bioescalator and other developments coming though on Old Road Campus and at the Churchill Hospital site.

All of these will add significantly to infrastructure demands on the City in terms of transport, parking, education, health etc. So, whilst Government funding may be available to support some of this, it will not solve existing problems, but only help to offset a little of the increased impact from expansion.

### **What do we want Councillors to do?**

1. Ask for a Public Inquiry into the Oxfordshire Strategic Economic Plan so that all these issues can be explored in a proper democratic forum
2. Reconsider the Strategic Housing Market Assessment figures, which are deeply flawed as shown by an independent report *Unsound & Unsustainable: Why the SHMA will increase greenfield use but not meet housing needs* -commissioned by CPRE and available via our website
3. Ensure that development sites in Oxford are prioritised for housing, rather than employment (which creates additional housing need)
4. Direct development away from the Green Belt, which provides a much needed resource for all the people of Oxfordshire and protects the historic setting of the City itself.