

To: Council
Date: 23 September 2015
Title of Report: 29 Questions on Notice from members of Council and responses from the Board Members and Leader

Introduction

Questions submitted by members of Council to the Board members, Leader of the Council, by the deadline in the Constitution are listed below in the order they will be taken at the meeting.

Responses are included where available.

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

Board member for Climate Change and Cleaner, Greener Oxford

1. From Councillor Brandt to Councillor Tanner

Now that the World Health Organisation has classified Glyphosate as 'probably carcinogenic to humans' will the City Council stop applying it to our streets?

Note: See <http://www.theguardian.com/cities/2015/apr/21/glyphosate-probably-carcinogenic-pesticide-why-cities-use-it>

Response

Glyphosate is used in weed spraying across the City and this work is undertaken by a specialist contractor. Currently there is no intention to use an alternative based on the following information received from our contractor.

"It seems that it is not possible to rule out entirely that glyphosate could be carcinogenic, which seems to be the reason for the up-regulation by the IARC from 'unclassifiable'. However due to limited evidence of carcinogenicity in humans and other mammals in testing, it is also not possible to conclude that it does pose a cancer risk. Whilst glyphosate products are still deemed safe to use by the relevant UK and European authorities and are therefore still approved for use, not only in amenity but in many agricultural situations and on many crops found in our supermarkets, we will continue to use them throughout the course of our business."

2. From Councillor Brandt to Councillor Tanner

Could the portfolio holder provide the latest figures on fly-tipping across the City over the last few months?

Response

A detailed breakdown of the fly tipping figures from 1st March 2015 to 31st August 2015 is shown below.

| Fly Tipping Input Data | | |
|---|-------------|-------------|
| Land Type | Waste Type | Size / Cost |
| Waste Type | Count | |
| Animal Carcass | 0 | |
| Green | 20 | |
| Vehicle Parts | 5 | |
| White Goods | 64 | |
| Other Electrical | 31 | |
| Tyres | 9 | |
| Asbestos | 1 | |
| Clinical | 0 | |
| Construction/Demolition/Excavation | 17 | |
| Bags - Commercial | 2 | |
| Bags - Domestic | 33 | |
| Chemical Drums, Oil Or Fuel | 3 | |
| Other Domestic Waste | 783 | |
| Other Commercial Waste | 48 | |
| Other (undefined) | 2 | |
| Total Number of Incidents Actioned | 1018 | |

Statistically this indicates a 20% increase from the same period last year but we believe this to be due to more comprehensive and accurate recording systems now being in place rather than fly-tipping being on the increase.

3. From Councillor Brandt to Councillor Tanner

Air Quality Progress Reports for Oxford City were published by the Council in May 2013 and May 2014. Will a 2015 Report be produced?

Response

An updating and screening report will be produced later in the year.

4. From Councillor Brandt to Councillor Tanner

When does Oxford City Council expect to be compliant with the EU air pollution limit on NOX within the City's Air Quality Management Area?

Can the Councillor set out the pathway how compliance will be achieved?

Response

Air quality in Oxford is steadily improving over most the City is already compliant with the European Union air pollution limits. There remain some troubling hotspots despite the success of reducing pollution from buses. The City Council will continue to measure

pollution levels and to press the County Council, as the highways authority, to take appropriate action to tackle the hotspots.

Defra's latest analysis shows that Oxford will be compliant with the EU air quality limit value for nitrogen dioxide by 2020. The City Council's Air Quality Action Plan 2013 – 2020 outlines the actions that the City Council will take to improve air quality in the city which is available on the Council's website:

<http://www.oxford.gov.uk/Library/Documents/Environmental%20Development/Air%20Quality%20Action%20Plan%202013.pdf>

5. From Councillor Brandt to Councillor Tanner

The Portfolio Holder is quoted on the Friends of the Earth website saying "Flowers and herbs don't just look nice, they are key to our survival. We need everyone to do their bit to encourage our bees, whether it's with a window box, a garden or an allotment." Can you please therefore ensure that the window boxes and hanging baskets in the City for which the Council are responsible are planted with bee friendly flowers?

Notes: 1. Many were planted this year with bee unfriendly petunias and pelargonium

2. This can be achieved by planting single flowering bulbs which provide a flowering succession from February through to mid-summer to be replaced by nasturtiums from mid-summer into Autumn. Such a planting would be low maintenance and has been proved to survive in hostile city centre locations.

Response

We are working with Dr Judy Webb (a local Ecological Consultant) to help to look at all our planting. In the recent Biodiversity Action plan the following two action points were agreed:-

- Work in partnership with Friends of the Earth and other organisations to further improve our parks and open spaces for pollinating insects.
- The council will consider the following priorities when choosing species for new planting schemes – native provenance, enhancing biodiversity, attracting pollinating insects, resilience and contributions to the environment.

To further assist us, Dr Webb has sent us a list of pollinator friendly plants and made a few recommendations for particular plants that are useful to pollinators for bedding displays, which we will look to incorporate into future displays.

6. From Councillor Brandt to Councillor Tanner

What steps will the City Council take to prevent the construction of a road and bridge, as suggested in the County Council's transport strategy, across the Lye Valley SSSI and Nature Reserve site?

Response

Oxford City Council strongly opposed the construction of a bus route across the Lye Valley nature reserve in our response to the County Council's transport strategy for Oxford. On the County Council Labour and the other opposition parties opposed Local Transport Plan 4, which includes the Oxford transport strategy. However the Conservative majority approved LTP4 so the threat to Lye Valley remains.

Oxford City Council remains opposed to any construction of a bus route through the Lye Valley nature reserve. If and when a funded scheme is brought forward the City Council would be obliged to consider it on its merits.

However Natural England would take an active role in any application and ensure that no damage was caused to the SSSI. If approval was by means of application by the County Council under the Transport and Works Act the City Council would expect to be actively involved from the pre-application stage, as not only are we a planning authority, but also our Parks team manages the Lye Valley SSSI Nature Reserve

Board member for Culture and Communities

7. From Councillor Benjamin to Councillor Simm

Can the portfolio holder tell us whether the longer-term proposal for East Oxford Community Centre is to return it to more local management?

Response

A return to local management is the Council's long term aim, but the priority at present is to achieve a well run Centre meeting the needs of local people. There will be a wide and full consultation about the future of the Centre, including its management.

8. From Councillor Benjamin to Councillor Simm

Can the portfolio holder promise that room hire prices won't increase following the Council's takeover of the East Oxford Community Centre?

Response

We have committed to hold room hire charges for this financial year and the rents will remain stable except for increases reflecting inflation. We will need to review these charges on an annual basis in line with all other charges.

9. From Councillor Benjamin to Councillor Simm

In the architect's brief for the East Oxford Community Centre, issued by the City Council, it states under Part B specification that "For the avoidance of doubt Oxford City Council will require the proceeds of the sale from the disposal of the Howard Street [Film Oxford] and Collins Street [East Oxford Games Hall] sites to fund the development of the re-developed East Oxford Community Centre on Princes Street."

Can the portfolio holder please say:

- How, or where, will the badminton, basketball and gymnastics facilities currently available at the East Oxford Games Hall be re-provided?
- How, or where, will the specialist audio-visual facilities currently provided at Film Oxford (an editing suite, training, exhibition and screening space and an office) be re-provided?
- Will the popular community garden that forms part of the Film Oxford site, outlined in the brief for development, be preserved.

Response

We are exploring possible ways to be able to improve the community centre and have let people know the options we feel are the most viable, but need to complete the study to have an informed view. The focus of the Feasibility study is to explore these very issues and that we are committed to retaining existing activities but looking to see how these could be incorporated into the development scheme for the EOCC site.

10. From Councillor Wolff to Councillor Simm

Why did the City Council choose to put the rebuilt Rose Hill Community Centre under City Council management rather than allowing the existing Community Association to continue to manage it?

Response

Rose Hill is a large, complex building with youth space, a gym, health services, a sports pavilion, community halls, social space, a café and a number of tenants such as the police and citizens advice. During conversations with the Association they agreed it would not be viable for them to manage such a complex building.

Board member for Leisure, Parks and Sport

11. From Councillor Wolff to Councillor Rowley

Why is participation at our leisure centres by target groups falling so dramatically? (Indicator LP106)

Response

We have seen significant increase in visits to the city's leisure facilities by targeted groups ever since Fusion Lifestyle took over their running. The increase is from just over 800,000 visits in 2009 to 1.3 million last year.

The area where we have had the greatest increase is on our target groups. The increase in usage by our target groups since 2009 is 134%.

There will occasionally be blips in a general rising trend of participation and this is not the first. Officers are working with Fusion to work out what is responsible for failing to meet the target referred to and how this can be avoided in future. We are committed to continuous improvement of our leisure services in close partnership with Fusion.

12. From Councillor Gant to Councillor Rowley

The Oxford half marathon is a well-established and successful event, which generates a wonderful atmosphere and raises large amounts of money for charity. This year's change of route was made for good reasons, and the new route has many advantages over the old.

However, the process of consulting and informing those affected by the new route has been inadequate. Residents, traders, churches, schools and other places have complained in large numbers that they were either presented with a fait accompli or not informed at all. In many cases, inadequate attention has been paid to their needs, for example access to schools by parents or to churches by less mobile parishioners.

Will the councillor agree with us that it is not acceptable for Church services to be cancelled and visits to school by parents prevented? Will he give us an absolute guarantee that even at this late stage he will do everything in his power to ensure that these things do not happen? Will he undertake to work with local councillors and that where expressions of concern are received, either he or the organisers will personally contact the organisations affected quickly, in order to reassure them and address their concerns? Will he guarantee that the area bounded by the High Street to the south, Saint Giles and Banbury Road to the west, Marston Ferry Road to the north, and the river Cherwell to the east, will remain accessible on foot and by bike, and for emergency services? Will he work with us to contact traders in Summertown and elsewhere to use the event to enhance their footfall, not the reverse? Will he agree with

us that the success of an event like this depends on the goodwill of all stakeholders, that such goodwill is easily lost, and work closely with us to try and preserve it?

Response

The Council will do everything consistent with public safety to ensure good access for residents and visitors, in consultation with the event organisers and the police. However, it must be expected that some disruption will occur, as it has in the past in other areas.

The Oxford Half Marathon takes place for a few hours once a year and is a great advertisement for our beautiful City. As the question acknowledges, the route is an improvement on the previous one and I hope that participants and non-participants alike will enjoy the spectacle and the friendly spirit of the event.

Board member for Planning, Transport and Regulatory Service

13. From Councillor Hollick to Councillor Hollingsworth

How many HMOs are there estimated to be in the City and what percentage of these have been registered under the City's HMO Scheme?

Response

When the National Award Winning Additional Licensing Scheme for HMOs commenced in 2011 it was estimated that there were 5,000 HMOs and that the Council would have licensed 3544 HMOs by January 2017, i.e. 70%. To date the Council has licensed 3511 which is 69%.

14. From Councillor Hollick to Councillor Hollingsworth

Why did the portfolio holder refuse to accept Scrutiny Committee's reasonable request, as part of the review of the Oxford Growth Strategy, to look at how remote and mobile working could be more effectively used to alleviate Oxford's housing crisis given that this suggestion was made in addition to agreeing to the document's ambitious housing targets?

Response

My response gave a clear explanation of my reasoning, as follows:

For many years now the growth in technology-driven networked working, in particular fast broadband, has been used as an argument for reducing the absolute numbers of new homes that would be required, and for their dispersal over a wider geographic area, which appears to be the suggestion here. However the evidence that such dispersal is actually workable is no more compelling now that when the same arguments were produced to argue for reductions in housing numbers during debates over the emerging South East Plan in the early 2000s.

The City Council has been strongly of the view that the most sustainable and practical approach to the allocation of housing to meet Oxford's needs is by carefully designed urban extensions to the city itself, not dispersal to Oxfordshire's towns and in particular not widespread dispersal to villages (villages will be planning for housing to meet their own needs, but the quantum of housing needed to meet the unmet need of Oxford would far exceed those figures, and would be highly detrimental to village communities without benefitting the city itself). In particular the proximity of existing services and networks, whether transport, data/technology or social/community, makes development

adjacent to the current built-up area of the City the most environmentally, economically and socially sustainable approach.

The assumption that mobile working makes is that all members of a household will be equally able to work remotely, and that all activities carried out by that household are equally able to be done using remote working technology: neither assumption is tenable. While it is true to say that many people are now able to carry out their work remotely, it is far from true for all occupations. For example, it is not possible for nursing staff at the city's hospitals or skilled engineers at BMW to carry out their jobs remotely. Equally, children cannot go to school remotely, and while internet shopping in some retail sectors has grown exponentially in recent years, so have small scale markets and local shopping, and it is not possible for many other social activities to be done remotely.

Moreover, it is clear that the unequal access to high-speed broadband in urban and rural areas is a major constraint on existing rural communities being able to make full use of the opportunities for remote working, thus making a policy of dispersal of Oxford's unmet housing need based on universal access to high-speed data highly problematic.

The Oxford Growth Strategy is directly concerned with working with partners to bring forward sustainable locations for the homes that Oxford needs but is unable to build within its own administrative boundaries, and demonstrating that the option of Green Belt review and urban extension would be sustainable and deliverable. Given the Corporate Plan direction and considerations explained above, it is reasonable and prudent to maintain this focus.

15. From Councillor Brandt to Councillor Hollingsworth

Given residents' justifiable concerns over air quality and noise issues at the Northern Gateway, will the Council be insisting on the development of a credible transport strategy and putting in place a comprehensive air and noise pollution monitoring programme taking any necessary mitigating actions?

Response

The Northern Gateway Area Action Plan (NGAAP) makes it clear that planning permission will only be granted for proposals where it has been demonstrated that it is acceptable in terms of noise and air quality (NGAAP Policy NG7). In particular relation to transport, the AAP (para 6.4-6.5) advises that "at the early stages, a Transport Assessment and Framework Travel Plan will be required to accompany any outline planning application. Then as the scheme progresses, each detailed planning application/reserved matters application will need to demonstrate how the development will contribute to sustainable travel and the mitigation of any significant traffic impacts".... "every effort will be made to reduce the noise levels and air pollution effects of road traffic in the area... detailed assessment of air quality and noise implications will be required at planning application stage; planning permission will only be granted where it can be demonstrated that the proposal is acceptable" (para 7.12).

Policy NG7: Design and Amenity

Planning applications will be required to demonstrate that new development has been designed with an understanding of the area's heritage, setting and views. In particular, applications will be required to demonstrate how the Wolvercote with Godstow Conservation Area and how views of, into and out of the site have influenced proposals.

Planning permission will only be granted for developments that demonstrate compliance with the Design Code.

Planning permission will only be granted for developments that provide usable, well designed and good-quality publicly-accessible green open space. At least 15% of the total site area must be provided as green public open space; this must be distributed so that at least 15% of any parcel proposed for residential development is green public open space.

Planning permission will only be granted for residential development where it has been demonstrated that it is acceptable in terms of noise and air quality.

16. From Councillor Brandt to Councillor Hollingsworth

What planning conditions are being imposed to safeguard the SSSI and Port Meadow SAC close to the proposed Northern Gateway development and protect them from water pollution and other forms of pollution?

Response

The AAP makes it clear that planning permission will only be granted for proposals where it has been demonstrated that it is acceptable in terms of noise and air quality (NG7). Also see quote from policy NG7.

A full Habitats Regulations Assessment (HRA) was carried out as part of the preparation of the NGAAP and concluded that “the policies of the AAP can be implemented without having an adverse effect on the integrity of the SAC” (para 7.15). this was carried out in consultation in experts at Natural England. In addition there is a specific policy to address protection of the Oxford Meadows SAC, and the importance of the SSSI’s is also fully recognised in para 7.14.

NG8: Oxford Meadows SAC

Unless the applicant for planning permission can demonstrate that the development is not likely to have a significant effect on the Oxford Meadows Special Area of Conservation, the application will be subjected to appropriate assessment under the Habitats Regulations and permission will be granted only if it is ascertained that the development will not adversely affect the integrity of that Special Area of Conservation, in terms of the following conservation objectives:

- recreational pressure; and:
- the hydrological regime; and:
- air quality

17. From Councillor Benjamin to Councillor Hollingsworth

Can the Portfolio Holder say what, in his view, would be the minimum acceptable level of affordable and social housing at the proposed Northern Gateway development?

Response

The policy on the Northern Gateway site is identical to those that apply throughout the city: affordable housing provision, including social rent units, will be subject to the normal planning policy requirements as set out in the Core Strategy and the Sites & Housing Plan in particular Policy HP3: Affordable homes from large housing sites. The City Council will therefore be seeking provision of 50% affordable housing (of which 80% will be social rent) in line with policy requirements. In the event that a developer were to claim that the policy requirements would make their proposal unviable, then there is a cascade approach set out in the Affordable Housing and Developer Contributions SDP, involving open-book evidence for the City Council to then make a judgement based on the evidence. Examples from elsewhere in the country show that developers of small and large sites are using viability arguments increasingly frequently to challenge Local Plan policies on affordable housing; the City Council will be robust in making clear from the earliest stage that we regard our affordable housing policies not

as an optional extra for developers and landowners, but a fundamental part of meeting the needs of the city as a whole.

18. From Councillor Benjamin to Councillor Hollingsworth

Has the City received any formal response from the County to its carefully-considered submission on the Oxford Transport Strategy?

Response

The County Council Full Council has formally considered the LTP4 and Oxford Transport Strategy. The responses of the County Council were reported to Full County Council as part of their consideration, albeit in summary form. The response can be found on the County Council website (County Council 8th October, Item 14 Connecting Oxfordshire: Local Transport Plan 2015 – 2013, LTP – Annex 1 Consultation Summary and LTP Annex 2

<http://mycouncil.oxfordshire.gov.uk/ieListDocuments.aspx?CId=116&MId=4398>

19. From Councillor Benjamin to Councillor Hollingsworth

Will the Council consider setting limits on the provision of new hotel accommodation in the City since existing provision is broadly in line with the national average and that using the land for market, social and key worker housing is surely a higher priority?

Note: There is 78.9% occupancy in hotels in Oxford in 2014 which is only slightly higher than the national average of 75.1%. London by comparison had 82.6% occupancy in 2014.

Response

The survey from which the figures cited come only assessed four hotels in the wider Oxford area, two of which are not actually in Oxford – they are in Wheatley and Milton Common - and two are on the edge of the city centre at Pear Tree. While interesting for the purposes of a press release, they do not form a comprehensive or robust study of hotel accommodation and demand in the city of Oxford, not do they make clear the difference between the city centre and broader regional hotel markets, which are quite different.

The tourist economy in its broadest is a critical part the Oxford economy. Oxford is the seventh most visited city in the UK by international visitors, and is a major regional hub and a gateway to the region's tourism offer. It attracts more than 6.8 million visitors a year, around half of them international, generates £770 million of income for local Oxford businesses, supporting 12,800 jobs. This includes the traditional 'holiday makers' and the business visitor as well. A key aim of our approach to tourism is to get tourists to stay longer and spend more. This requires sufficient supply of visitor accommodation in both quantity and quality terms.

The Oxford Hotel and Short Stay Accommodation Futures Study was last commissioned by Oxford City Council in March 2007. The research assessed the supply of hotel accommodation in Oxford and identified a total of 23 hotels in Oxford with 1,751 letting bedrooms, and 74 guest-house accommodation establishments with a total of 665 letting bedrooms. In terms of market segments, Oxford has been shown to have a limited supply of 3 star hotels and only a few 2 star hotels. Furthermore, the greatest proportion of the city's hotel stock is located outside the City centre. By comparison the City centre comprises mainly luxury / boutique hotels and a number of 3 star hotels. Hotels in this location are mainly small in size. Since the 2007 study there has been limited City Centre Hotel development and there are only a small number of outstanding planning permissions waiting to be implemented. There has been more

development on the outskirts, where sites have been more available. The City Council has received 3 speculative hotel enquiries for sites in Oxford City Centre in the last few months, highlighting clear developer interest in Oxford as a location.

The Core Strategy identifies a projected need for up to 15 sites for hotel, hostel and serviced-apartment development in Oxford up to 2026, to fully meet the identified market potential for new provision. The Oxford Hotel and Short-Stay Accommodation study confirmed that there is 'a strong hotel market in Oxford', with 'all standards achieving high occupancies' and 'room rates' and evidence of business being denied both during the week and at weekends. The assessment of occupancy rates highlighted that 'hotel occupancies are very high in Oxford, well above national averages'. The research showed that there are distinct City centre and out-of-centre hotel markets in Oxford, with significant differences in hotel performance between these two locations, city centre performing best in terms of occupancy. Published in 2014, the Cambridge Model study on the 'Volume, Value and Impact' of Tourism in Oxford highlighted strong growth in Oxford from overseas visitors, with a 4.1% increase in overseas nights. The number of domestic staying nights actually decreased by 8%, suggesting the lack of supply is pricing domestic visitors out of the city centre market. Significant domestic growth is evident in neighbouring locations, backing this assumption further.

Both the Barton Area Action Plan and the Northern Gateway Area Action Plan make provision for additional hotel space. The need for additional hotel accommodation was considered by the Planning Inspectorate earlier this year as part of the examination for the Northern Gateway, and she found there was a need for additional hotel bed spaces.

The conclusion is that there is a significant undersupply of hotel accommodation in Oxford and a potentially significant latent demand, backed by the level of confirmed developer interest. Ultimately the answer to the question is that to have a sustainable city we need to support a broad range of uses for the well-being of the Oxford. It is a matter of setting and supporting the appropriate balance between the uses in a compact City, tight administrative boundary. This is what we have done in the range of documents which make up the Local Plan.

20. From Councillor Goddard to Councillor Hollingsworth

Given the difficulties over the summer in the Planning department, with delays in handling applications, can you inform Council what steps have been taken to improve the service provided in this area?

Response

Following from the restructure of the planning department earlier this year a number of individual officers chose to leave, and it took longer than hoped to replace them. As a result there was a dip in planning performance, as measured by the percentage of applications determined within specified time limits in April-May 2015.

To address this issue the planning service reallocated and refocused resources to address and rectify the situation by clearing the backlog of older cases. As well as determining cases that gone past the appropriate time limit, new applications were dealt with more quickly, increasing the proportion of major and minor applications concluded within the time limits.

The work to clear the backlog of older cases was completed two months ago, and since then performance has been well above targets and we are well placed to continue at

this level. Measuring the total performance across the year, overall performance is gradually improving and is on target for major applications; while municipal year performance for minor applications is currently below the annual target as we recover from the issues in the first two months of the year, continuing the current level of performance will mean that the targets for both minor and major applications will be met or exceeded by the end of 2015/16.

Board member for Young People, Schools and Skills

21. From Councillor Wolff to Councillor Brown

What is the Administration doing to address the shortfall in apprenticeship numbers (18 as against a target of 26)? (Indicator BI002b)

Response

The Council currently employs 18 apprentices towards its target of 26. The shortfall against the target is because of where we are in the cycle of apprentice succession planning and recruitment. A new group are starting in September which will bring the total number back up. Details of cohort numbers and conversion to employment with the Council are as follows:

| Cohort | Max. no of apprentices | No. converted to employees |
|---------------|-------------------------------|--------------------------------------|
| 2013 - 15 | 25 | 17 (68%) |
| 2015 - 17 | 23 | 0 (still too early in the programme) |

22. From Councillor Fooks to Councillor Kennedy

Following the changes to the teacher retention mortgage scheme, can you tell Council how many teachers have been supported in this way?

Response

We have developed the scheme at the request of the schools as recruitment and retention of staff is a major challenge that they face. We have recently broadened out the scope of the scheme to enable more teachers to access it and we have met with all of the schools to promote it. This relaunch took place in early July. So far, no teachers have been supported under the scheme, but it is obviously very early in the school year.

Leader of the Council, Board Member for Corporate Strategy and Economic Development

23. From Councillor Hollick to Councillor Price

What is the Administration doing to address the slippage in the building of new social housing for rent and get back on track following the latest quarterly report which shows 20 new homes being built instead of the planned 60?

Response

I am very pleased to be able to confirm that we have this week taken handover of the remaining phases of Kenny Gardens (Minchery Gardens) thus completing the delivery

of our programme of 113 new Council homes. This is a significant achievement for the Council in what has been a challenging time for the construction industry.

24. From Councillor Gant to Councillor Price:

Will the leader of the council join me in noting that the city council has now succeeded in fitting mirrors and cameras to all its large vehicles, and made this part of its specification when purchasing such vehicles, and join me in thanking and congratulating the direct services team for their actions in this regard.

Will he also note that a number of applicants for planning permission have voluntarily added such a condition to construction management plans, and will he inform Council as to whether the council itself is willing to impose such a condition as standard when it acts as client?

Will he also note that the citywide ban on lorries which do not have up-to-date safety equipment has recently come into force in London, and will he brief council as to the progress of our request to the county council that they enact a traffic order making similar regulations within the city of Oxford.

Response

I think the whole Council will want to join with Councillor Gant in congratulating the Direct Service transport team on their rapid implementation of these safety measures that Council recommended some months ago. Officers are considering the legal aspects of the procurement changes implied by the imposition of a standard condition and will advise whether such changes may be judged to be anti-competitive. I am not aware of a response from the County Council so far.

25. From Councillor Fooks to Councillor Price

What progress has been made by the Mental Health Review Panel? To whom does it report?

Response

The City Council developed an Oxford City Council Mental Health Plan, in response to a Motion to Council on 3rd February 2014. The Action Plan was agreed by City Executive Board on 15th October 2014 and the Mental Health Member Review Panel was established to oversee its implementation.

The Plan sets out some specific proposals in relation to the Motion and embeds a wellbeing approach across key services and with partners. The Plan aims to:

- Enable all city councillors to become advocates for mental health and wellbeing. The Council has signed the Mindful Employer Charter and has become a member of the network. It has signed the Time to Change Pledge.
- Oversee implementation of the Council's support to employee's physical and mental health through the Employee Wellbeing Programme (which is in place).
- Work with partners, such as MIND, other mental health service providers and advice agencies and to ensure all city council services are accessible to people with mental health problems.

The Mental Health Member Review Panel, Operating Principles, state that:

"Individual Panel members will report back about specific areas of interest they may have taken on; for example the Chair will report about the national network of mental

health champions. Updates about the Panel's work overall will also be made, with support by the Policy and Partnerships Team, for example through:

- the Council's internal Stronger Communities Programme Board to officers up to director level;
- inclusion of Panel updates in regular partnership reports presented to Council."

The Mental Health Action Plan is due for its annual review in October 2015. It is proposed that this is reported to Council, as a part of the regular partnership slot in December 2015.

26. From Councillor Gant to Councillor Price

Will the leader of the council brief members on the progress of its response to the current refugee crisis? Will he confirm if the city council has now taken up the existing offer for local councils to opt to take Syrian refugees made by central government at the time of the last Syrian refugee quota and if not, why not? If they have taken up the offer can he tell us how many Syrians we are offering to take and when they will arrive? Would he welcome the suggestion of a reception centre in Oxford, housed in a currently empty building, which could be offered to central government without adversely impacting on the city's own current need for housing and making use of the huge local expertise of our charities and widespread offers to help of our residents? Does he agree that this crisis is huge and unprecedented since the second world war and now needs clear and proactive action involving a large expansion of existing resources for asylum seekers and refugees and the need to urgently develop new resources.

Response

The Council website is updated regularly on the refugee crisis and the Council's actions. We have indicated our wish to participate in the UNHCR sponsored government programme to resettle 20,000 vulnerable refugees from the camps in Lebanon and Jordan. We are clear that we cannot disadvantage the needs of existing refugees and those in already in housing need locally so we need government to agree to fully fund the costs of refugees arriving. The Assistant Chief Executive is in contact with the Home Office and the regional coordinator, and is working closely with the County Council who would have lead responsibility for unaccompanied minors and health agencies who would need to provide services. I chaired a meeting with local community and voluntary groups to coordinate support that could be offered across Oxford and Oxfordshire.

The previous scheme launched in March was small scale with 216 Asylum Seekers arriving through existing reception centres.

It is not yet clear what number of refugees will be directed to Oxford/Oxfordshire so the need for a reception centre is as yet unknown.

The excellent support organisations in the city such as Asylum Welcome and Refugee Resource and organisations to tackle homelessness and rough sleeping need as much additional financial and human resource as can be offered, and our website seeks to encourage people to donate and to offer volunteering time.

27. From Councillor Benjamin to Councillor Price

On 25 August, the Free Tibet campaign wrote to you asking Oxford City Council to extend an official welcome to the Dalai Lama (a Nobel Peace Prize laureate and leader of Tibetan Buddhism) during his visit to the City earlier this month. No response was received. Why?

Has Oxford City Council been approached by any representatives of the Chinese Government or any other Chinese representatives in regard to this recent visit of the Dalai Lama?

Response

The letter from the Free Tibet Campaign asked us to resist any pressure from the Chinese government in relation to the visit of the Dalai Lama. It did not seek a civic welcome. There has been no contact from the Chinese Embassy or other Chinese representatives. The Dalai Lama's visit to Oxford was hosted by Dalai Lama Centre. The City Council was not involved in its organisation or invited by the organisers to take part.

Oxford is a city which has welcomed the representatives of many freedom movements and campaign groups over the years. We would respond robustly to any unwarranted intervention by a foreign government.

28. From Councillor Simmons to Councillor Price

Will the Leader join me in condemning the Trade Union Bill which has just passed its second reading in the House of Commons as a vicious and unfair attack on workers' rights? Will he also be supporting any subsequent strike action that may arise as a result in the City?

Response

The Trade Union Bill is a vindictive piece of legislation which seeks to undermine the rights of employees under International Labour Conventions to withdraw their labour in pursuit of an industrial dispute, and to reduce the capacity of unions to campaign on a wide range of social and economic issues. It is also a direct attack on democracy by reducing the unions' capacity to fund political action and political parties. The CIPD has condemned it as unnecessary and outdated.

I will consider each individual instance of action against the Bill before taking a personal view on whether to support or not.

29. From Councillor Simmons to Councillor Price

Will the Leader join me in congratulating Jeremy Corbyn on his election as leader and welcome the clear signal that this sends to the political establishment just how many people support an alternative to austerity economics coupled with stronger social policies.

Response

Of course. I look forward to the new Leader decimating the Green Party vote in future elections.