

To: Council

Date: 25 July 2016

Title of Report: Part 2 - Public addresses and questions that do not relate to matters for decision – as submitted by the speakers and with written responses

Introduction

1. Addresses made by members of the public to the Council, and questions put to the Board members or Leader, registered by the deadline in the Constitution, are below. Any written responses available are also below.
2. This report will be republished after the Council meeting as part of the minutes pack. This will list the full text of speeches delivered as submitted, summaries of speeches delivered which differ significantly from those submitted, and any further responses.

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

Addresses in part 2

1. Address by Chaka Artwell - summer activities for young people
2. Address by Chaka Artwell - Barton community facilities
3. Address by Sharyn Hyde, PSPnO campaign group
4. Address by Nigel Gibson - Save Temple Cowley Pools Campaign
5. Address by Chaka Artwell - city centre PSPO

Questions in part 2

1. [Question from Cressida Jervis Read – public events](#)
2. Question from Hazel Dawe – air quality
3. Question from Steve Dawe – private landlords
4. Question from Ann Duncan– parishing the city
5. Question from Elise Benjamin– Carnival
6. Question from Matthew Ledbury – local government funding
7. Question from Mr Chaka Artwell – letters to the Council
8. Question from Sietske Boeles, CPRE Oxfordshire – Green Belt development
9. Question from Judith Harley – FOI 5462 – Request For Catalyst Temple Cowley Pools (TCP) Lease

Addresses in part 2

1. Address by Chaka Artwell - summer activities for young people

Why does Oxford City Council neglect the Youth of Oxford? With two weeks to go to the start of the six-week school holiday, my enquiries of the City Council Staff asking what holiday provision has been made for the thousands of Oxford Youth, reveals that very little provision has been made.

For example, I asked Mr Jason Carbon for details of his annual, and popular "wrap around" daily summer sports activity, which has operated from Barton's Bayard's Hill School, and in Barton generally, since 1996. Mr Carbon's programme has traditionally been a vital component for the Youth of Barton, primarily because the programme is well organised and staffed, and operates from 9 a.m. to 3 p.m. with affordable fees. This greatly assists working parents, and provides for children who might otherwise have no structured play activities.

Mr Carbon informed me that his annual grant from Oxford City Council, for his Fun Activities, has been reduced by forty percent, making his programme unviable. Moreover, the Barton Community Association has not offered to fund the difference.

There is a very worrying dearth of community inspired activities for Oxford's Youth across the city and I believe the City Council policy of separating, and even "privatising", the management of community centres is partly responsible.

It is not acceptable that Oxford City Council has spent millions on "Community Centres" like Rose Hill, whilst at the same time destroying or undermining the management of those Community Centres traditionally managed by the community. This has happened in Rose Hill, Cowley, Northway, Barton and East Oxford.

The Council's dictatorial policy of undermining the tradition of community people managing their community centres has now led to the crisis whereby our Youth have no well structured, ordered and daily programme of "wrap around" activities to look forward to. Moreover, local people no longer feel they have the access to community centres or the influence to address this ruinous situation for our Youth.

It is acknowledge by Head teachers and the Police that organised activities for our Youth greatly reduces youthful nuisance behaviour. Oxford City Council's "Street Sport" summer offering, as welcome as it is, is a patchy, two hour, city wide programme of weekly activities which does not begin to meet the needs of Oxford's Youth for structured, daily, "wrap around" summer activities. For example, there is little for the under tens; or for

girls; or for those who are not motivated by football or sport in general. Why are the Youth being so neglected?

Why is Oxford City Council giving corporations like Green Square a management role which effectively privatises Community facilities, alienating local people from actively providing ideas to meet community need? Who speaks for the Youth within the City Council? Will you fully fund Mr Carbon's grant? How will the Council redress the lack of varied organised activity for the Youth of Oxford during the summer holidays?

Chaka Artwell, Barton, Oxford.

2. Address by Chaka Artwell - Barton community facilities

The people of Sandhills & Barton rightly feel powerless, neglected and excluded from any consultation that directly impacts the residents of this City ward. For example, the expenditure of the recent 3.7 million-pound regeneration fund was allocated in March without any energetic efforts to consult with even the active groups on the estate.

I understand that Oxford City Council will be spending millions of pounds reconstructing the flats and the shops at Barton's Underhill Circus as a means of "gentrifying" Barton; this is in keeping with the City Council's policy of making Oxford a "world class city", where the working poor will not be made welcome. There has been no meaningful local consultation for this major development which will impact greatly on the people of Barton.

In the recent City Council elections in May, over two hundred people in Sandhills and Barton shared my great concern at the diminution of community facilities on the ward, and voted for the message that "Barton people need a place to celebrate & Party."

The Royal British Royal has closed. St. Mary's Church Community Hall has closed. The Sports Pavilion has closed in order to provide access for the new estate. In September 2015, at the Barton Community Association's AGM, the BCA Secretary stated that the Neighbourhood Centre has not had a celebration for any Youth from the estate for the last two years. This is on an estate with well over 800 people under the age of eighteen.

The way the people of Sandhills & Barton are being treated by the City Council officers and the Elected Councillors is an affront to the principles of democracy.

Can you please inform me, and the two-hundred-plus people of the constituency who are equally concerned to know, what the City Council's plans are to address the severe lack of Community facilities on the estate? Can you guarantee that the site of the former Royal British Legion will be retained for "licensed" community benefit and managed by the people of the estate?

Chaka Artwell, Barton, Oxford.

3. Address by Sharyn Hyde, PSPnO campaign group

My name is Sharyn Hyde. I'm here as a representative of the PSPnO campaign group, which was formed to oppose the Waterways PSPO. I am addressing you here today to ask that you oppose the implementation of a PSPO on Oxford's waterways as short-sighted, unworkable and likely to increase problems on Oxford's waterways. It was developed in discussion with local housed residents and landowners, and with very little involvement with boat dwellers, despite the terms primarily affecting us. We ask that instead of supporting the PSPO you use this opportunity to create positive alternatives that build on Oxford's rich waterways heritage and increase cohesion between communities.

The PSPO is unworkable for many reasons. A few examples are:

- Making it a crime to moor in ways permitted by primary legislation criminalises legitimate boating activity. Seeking permission from the landowner when mooring is often not possible.
- The PSPO is too poorly worded and non-specific as to be enforceable, unless OCC wishes to ban all mooring in Oxford.
- If the river is in flood conditions, it isn't safe to move. In the winter, this can be for several weeks, even months.
- The PSPO may lead to reduced boat presence in some areas. Boat presence often limits anti-social behaviour.
- Boaters use solid fuel stoves to heat their homes, and engines to generate electricity. Both of these are protected under international human rights law. Boats are homes and yet these homes could be left unheated and without lighting, running water or power during winter because of the PSPO.
- The implementation of the PSPO is susceptible to "vexatious complainers". How can this be judged by an enforcement official?

Boaters' experience prejudice in a number of ways:

We are concerned that introducing a PSPO will escalate existing tensions between boaters and local residents and city council officers. Some examples of harassment include:

- Several boaters moored on visitor moorings in Jericho have experienced questioning as to how long they planned to stay, being told (incorrectly) by local residents how long they are allowed to stay for, and some residents have alluded to the PSPO and made derogatory comments about 'breaking the rules' to boat dwellers who have been doing nothing wrong.
- We have heard reports of council officers threatening boaters with the PSPO.
- Boaters have been criticised for polluting the area, or creating smells.

I personally have been told by a CRT employee that local residents in Jericho were anti boater and that BW (CRT's predecessor) had to fight to retain the one 7 day mooring stretch in the City. I was also shocked on another occasion to hear the views of someone who lives along the waterway and had known me for some time talk about boaters as people who steal things and don't pay their way. I left Oxford City in July 2014 due to poor conditions of mooring sites and antagonistic landowners. The individual and systemic pressures affect us in multiple ways. I had to sign a piece of paper declaring myself homeless to enable myself to vote. I am not homeless. I love boating. It's not an easy lifestyle, but I accept that as part of my choice. What I didn't

realise was how much the sense of being unwelcome and feeling that I constantly needed to watch my behaviour eroded my sense of peace and relaxation. I didn't realise this until I stopped very recently after having successfully bid for a mooring. The PSPO would increase this feeling for all boat dwellers throughout the City of Oxford and would legitimise those who harass boaters for simply being there.

Positive Alternatives To The PSPO:

The use of a PSPO narrows down the options for collaborative solutions between OCC, housed residents and boat dwellers on the waterways in and around Oxford. The PSPO will create divisions between waterways users, housed residents, and OCC. We have seen that UMBEG didn't work as it was enforcement based and had no effective boater representation.

Alternatively, the time, effort and expertise of all the groups and agencies currently involved could be used to find genuine, sustainable solutions to the problems that the PSPO claims it will deal with. Oxford City and County Council has an excellent track record in working with a range of stakeholders to create positive solutions to problems in other areas, and developing social infrastructure that lasts over the years. The creation of Low Carbon Oxford, and the ongoing support the County Council provides to the Community Action groups (CAGS) are hallmarks of good practice across the UK. Instead of bringing in a PSPO, this is an opportunity for creative thinking. The council could establish a working group along the lines of its already established area forums, with full participation of all waterways users and residents.

We note that no other Local Authority in the entire UK has used a PSPO for enforcement on the waterways. Oxford is conspicuous in being the only authority pursuing this, which is surprising given its strong record in Council- community collaboration in other areas. This is an opportunity for Oxford City Council to embrace and work with the expertise, goodwill, experience, dedication and commitment of residential boat dwellers, and other waterways users, to generate a positive example of lasting social and physical infrastructure.

Written Response from Councillor Sinclair

Thank you for your submission to Council on the draft Waterways PSPO for consultation. I found our meeting with the PSPNo group very useful and constructive where we discussed many of the concerns you raise in your submission. 'I want to give sufficient time for further stakeholder discussions to ensure we look at alternative solutions thoroughly and will review the position in 6 months' time, before any wider public consultation takes place..

My name's Nigel Gibson, and I am speaking to you this evening as a member of the Campaign to Save Temple Cowley Pools.

As many of you may be aware, the Campaign has been running since 2009, when the public first became aware of the City Council's intention to close the centre. Despite massive public opposition as it became clear and evident that the reasons put forward for closure by the City Council were a combination of inaccurate, incomplete, misleading and untrue, the Labour majority on the City Council, opposed as well by the other parties, in particular the Greens, voted for closure in December 2014.

You might think that, 18 months after closure, that support for it would wane as Labour's political decision fades into a distant memory, people move away from the area, or are forced, if it's still sensible for them, to make alternative arrangements, costing more in time and money.

And this was brought into sharp relief to me, talking to someone a few weeks ago. "But it's only a leisure centre," she said, "there are far more important things than that...". In one sense she was absolutely right; the recent violent events around the world do certainly put things into perspective; but this is and remains a local issue, that directly affects local people. And not just a few; the closure has had a direct effect on 40,000 people, who, through the City Council breaching its own core policy CS21, can no longer sensibly walk, cycle or use public transport to get to the leisure centre.

The term leisure centre conjures up the idea of a bit of fun, and is totally misleading as it masks the true value that a place for health and exercise that Temple Cowley Pools, and all the other leisure centres you operate, represent.

This is not simply a luxury that you can regard as low priority, and something you can easily dismiss as an unnecessary cost compared to other issues. The closure of Temple Cowley Pools has affected so many people in so many different ways.

- Children learning to swim and being confident in water, developing their independence because it's close enough to walk or cycle to.
- Schools – who saved time/money by walking rather than having to use a coach, and integrating swimming into a learning programme by visiting the library at the same time
- Enabling the disadvantaged – Temple Cowley Pools provided a stepping stone to help rehabilitating drug users/homeless by giving them a routine for socialising and integrating back into society.
- People recovering after an accident
- The infirm/disabled maintaining/improving their fitness
- A shared social space for community cohesion – with the open style single-sex changing rooms rather than the hated 'village changing'
- Supporting 'family time' to walk/cycle together, as a family

- Elderly – maintaining fitness levels so they are fitter, more able and independent for longer, and thus more value to society through their independence – and in so doing save costs to the NHS
- People fitting exercise conveniently between work and other commitments
- The only leisure centre in the city that can offer proper women-only sessions throughout the building

And, of course, there is the simple pleasure of taking exercise for the sake of it

We can tell, using Freedom of Information, that Labour councillors are not enamoured that we come back to remind you of the folly of your decision. But you should remember why we do this – it's the massive support that we still receive whenever we meet the public – collecting signatures for the latest petition, or as earlier in July when we were at the Cowley Road Carnival. It's that level of support, and the stories we hear about how long it now takes people, how much more it costs, why they don't or can't get their exercise as frequently, or even at all, now that you have closed Temple Cowley Pools that means the Campaign will continue – even the destruction of Temple Cowley Pools, with its beautiful interior, will not stop us campaigning for a proper replacement where people want it, in Cowley. And although your 'good news' culture interprets overcrowding as success, it's evident that since the closure of Temple Cowley Pools there has been much pressure on classes and also attendances across the other public leisure centres.

We have, however, been delighted with the recent change in Labour strategy. During the last council elections, Councillor Malik announced that Labour will build a new pool on the Cowley Marsh Works site within ten years. We welcome this, and look forward to working with the council to ensure that the facilities people want, like a diving pool, are included this time. And we were pleased that Councillor Smith came to our stall at the Cowley Road Carnival, asking what could be done to provide people with what they want – we look forward to meeting with her as soon as practicable to develop these facilities.

The need for health and fitness facilities in Cowley remains – what you have in place at present is inadequate and you have breached your own CS21 policy by closing Temple Cowley Pools. These facilities are vital, not a luxury, particularly for an area that's seen the highest population growth across the city since the turn of the century in a neglected part of Oxford, and I look forward to this Labour council doing the right thing and fulfilling your promises for the people you have been elected to represent.

4. Address by Nigel Gibson - Save Temple Cowley Pools Campaign

Written response from Councillor Smith

Oxford City Council does not regard it's leisure services as a 'luxury' and our strategy is set out in our Leisure and Wellbeing Strategy 2015 to 2020, which clearly recognises its value. Leisure is not only enjoyable in its own right, but supports community cohesion cutting across social divides and improves physical and mental health. Our aim is to increase participation rates in leisure activities across the city and our partnership with Fusion Lifestyle has delivered results.

1. The overall number of visits to leisure facilities in 2015/16 was more than 1.44 million, this is an increase of 71% (598,000 more visits per year) since we started the contact with Fusion Lifestyle in 2009.

2. In 2015/16 the number of visits to leisure facilities by target groups increased 194% from 2009 (c400,000 more visits per year).

3. Visits by young people through the council funded free swimming sessions has increased by 10%; more than 2,200 more visits and 900 more young people registered for free swim cards.

4. Across Oxford leisure facilities: In 2015/16:

- swimming lessons completed increased by 63%; 34,000 more lessons completed year on year.
- Schools term time swimming lessons increased by 6%; 2,500 more lessons completed year on year.
- Overall swimming visits increased by 36%; 70,500 more visits year on year.
- Overall visits to leisure facilities increased by 10%; 130,000 more visits year on year
- Overall visits by:
 - those under 17 years of age increased by 28%; 58,000 more visits year on year
 - residents in wards of deprivation increased 81%; 72,800 visits year on year
 - Black, Minority & Ethnic customers increased 31%, 9,000 more visits year on year
 - Customers aged over 50 years increased 27%; 26,500 more visits year on year
 - Women and Girls has increased by 28 per cent; 110,000 more visits year on year.

I understand why Temple Cowley Residents who used Temple Cowley Pool were sad to see it go, and it is true that those local residents now have to travel further to swim. However, it has been replaced with an up-to-date first class facility in nearby Blackbird Leys which has resulted in a dramatic increase in users, a wider leisure offer and a reduction in carbon emissions.

Furthermore, Cowley has a new gym open to the public at the Oxford Spires Academy, (as a result of a partnership between the school, Oxford City Council and Fusion Lifestyle). Pure Gym have also recently opened a facility at Templars Square adding to various other non-council provision in the area.

I am always interested in talking to any Oxford residents with ideas about how to increase participation at our leisure centres, and if members of the STCP campaign group wish to make positive suggestions about how to further improve take up by Cowley residents at our facilities then I would welcome a discussion.

5. Address by Chaka Artwell - city centre PSPO

As reported in the Oxford Mail on 6th July, Cllr Mike Rowley's behaviour at the Town Hall EU Referendum count raises serious questions about the inconsistent attitude of the Oxford Labour Party to antisocial behaviour. Cllr Rowley's Labour Party pushed hard for the implementation of Public Space Protection Orders (PSPOs) to tackle the sort of behaviour described in the Oxford Mail report, which necessitated the intervention of the Door Supervisors and ultimately Police Constables, who then escorted Councillor Rowley home, courtesy of the Council Tax Payers of Oxford. The Oxford Mail article stated that Cllr Rowley has apologised, by saying he made a "bit of a tit of himself" and that "the Labour Party confirmed it would take no disciplinary action over the incident."

Despite huge opposition to PSPO's from the Greens, Oxford University, Liberty and others, in February this year, Oxford City Centre became a PSPO Zone. As the Town Hall is in the City Centre, one would expect PSPO measures, such as handcuffing, public strip-searching, threats of use of Taser or CS Gas, or an On The Spot Fine, to be applied to anti-social behaviour on these premises. If Police are called to intervene when anti-social behaviour occurs, one might expect a Police Caution to be issued for this behaviour.

Readers of the Mail report might be baffled that non of these Actions were not taken. Readers might speculate that the status of Councillor, and being Caucasian, provides protection from such Actions. The experience of Mr Ali (reported in the Oxford Mail on 29th June) is testimony to the different actions people of colour and the poor receive. Mr Ali was purchasing pet food when Thames Valley Police Constables treated him as if he was guilty of a crime. He was detained, denied his liberty, and publicly handcuffed, on a mere allegation from a suspect in Police custody.

Clearly, Oxford Labour and Thames Valley Police are selective with their application of the law. People of colour are instinctively aware of this; however, working class people, rough sleepers and others must be made aware that they are deemed second class citizens as Oxford City Council marches on with its policy of transforming Oxford into a "world class city" for the affluent and the well travelled.

Why should Councillors receive special treatment for their irresponsible behaviour, and be regarded as being above Labour's PSPO Law? We, the people, should not be content to allow Councillors to escape from penalties to which others, especially people of colour, would be subjected. Labour – be consistent. I have some questions for you on this matter:

First: As one of our "elected representatives" Councillor Rowley should set standards of behaviour, not be excused bad behaviour. The Mail report, that "the Labour Party confirmed it would take no disciplinary action over

the incident" seems to excuse bad behaviour. Can all others expect the same leniency for similar behaviour?

Second: If you are not going to penalise Cllr Rowley for his public display of antisocial behaviour, when will you be consistent and scrap the PSPO's for everyone else's antisocial behaviour?

Chaka Artwell, Barton

Written Response from Councillor Price

The City Centre Public Spaces Protection Order provides controls against a range of anti social behaviours including urination and defecation in a public place, misuse of public toilets, unlawful trading, cycling in prohibited areas, aggressive begging and failure to control dogs. None of these behaviours have any bearing on the incident referred to which occurred in the foyer of the Town Hall on 23 June. Any complaints about differential policing related to ethnic origin should be made to the Police and Crime Commissioner or the Chief Constable of Thames Valley Police.

Questions in part 2

1. Question from Cressida Jervis Read – public events

Question to the Board Member, Councillor Simm

In the light of problems experienced by the Oxford Stays event, can the Leader please provide clarity on when organised public events need to comply with the event team guidance on, for example, insurance, and how this impacts on the right of free protest?

Written Response from Councillor Simm

While Oxford City Council does not officially approve or authorise protests, it strongly supports the right to free protest. In the interests of public safety we would always encourage protest organisers to follow appropriate safety guidelines.

Protests in Oxford are regulated by Thames Valley Police and protest organisers have the obligation to notify TVP about their plans. If the proposed protest is to take place on Oxford City Council land, protest organisers should check with the council about any requirements it might have. Oxford City Council will always place the highest priority on public safety and arrangements that organisers have in place to ensure this. We will also need to be sure that the site of the proposed protest has not been previously allocated to a licensed event.

Where a protest becomes an organised event, which includes infrastructure such as a stage, we might recommend that organisers should hold adequate insurance and that their plans are risk assessed.

2. Question from Hazel Dawe – air quality

Question to the Board Member, Councillor Tanner

In view of the considerable problems with air quality in the City, will the council consider installing near real time air quality monitoring similar to that already operating in cities across the UK e.g. Bristol and review decisions such as that to discount City Centre car parking in the light of its implications for air quality?

Written Response from Councillor Tanner

The City Council already have 3 real time continuous monitors located in the City in the following locations: St. Aldates, High street and at St Ebbes School. In addition to this we monitor air quality at 75 locations across the city using diffusion tubes. Data from our monitoring can be found on the following website: <http://www.oxfordshire.air-quality.info/>

The City Council's car parking policy seeks to keep in balance the demand for parking and availability in the city centre. Since the closure of the Westgate Shopping centre the availability of car parking in the city centre has reduced significantly. Due to the high levels of disruption currently experienced in the city due to redevelopment, the Council felt it was appropriate to offer a reduced fee on a limited basis. Whilst we understand your concerns raised, we would like to reassure you that we encourage the use of alternative travel methods and people are encouraged to use the park and rides if travelling to Oxford by car.

3. Question from Steve Dawe – private landlords

Question to the Board Member, Councillor Hollingsworth

Only 5% of the 60 complaints against landlords made in 2015 led to convictions, according to information supplied to the Oxfordshire Guardian 21/4-27/4 edition. The National Landlords Association has called upon the Council to do more to combat what it describes as 'rogue landlords.' What measures will the City Council be putting in place to convict landlords guilty of illegalities?

Written Response from Councillor Hollingsworth

Oxford City Council is one of the leading Councils in the UK for taking enforcement action. These figures relate to a narrow freedom of information request and in 2015 the Council took legal action against 30 landlords - issuing 12 formal cautions and taking 18 prosecutions that resulted in a total of £102,916 of fines, costs and compensation for tenants.

Research published this year into private sector housing enforcement found that local authorities in England took a total of 95 prosecutions in 2013, which is an average of less than 1 for every council. In the same year, only 0.2% of complaints to local authorities resulted in a prosecution. In 2013 Oxford City Council took 9 prosecutions, i.e. the Council was responsible for nearly 10% of all the prosecutions taken nationally, which demonstrates our robust approach to tackling rogue landlords where necessary.

The Council is committed to improving and regulating the private rented sector, as evidenced by our recent renewal of the HMO Licensing Scheme and our adoption of a Private Sector Housing Policy this month that seeks to increase our licensing powers as well as continue our proactive approach to inspections and build upon our tough enforcement stance.

4. Question from Ann Duncan– parishing the city

Question to the Leader, Councillor Price

As part of the proposed transition to Unitary authorities in Oxfordshire, will the City Council support full parishing of the area currently covered by Oxford City Council, as contribution to local democracy and decentralisation?

Written Response from Councillor Price

This question is more than a little premature since there is as yet no timescale for a move to unitary authorities in Oxfordshire, nor any certainty that such a move will in fact take place.

5. Question from Elise Benjamin– Carnival

Question to the Board Member, Councillor Simm

Can the leader explain what went wrong with Carnival that led to the confusion over the £1 voluntary entrance fee and how similar confusion will be avoided in the future?

Written Response from Councillor Simm

Cowley Road Works, a social enterprise, are responsible for the organisation and management of Carnival. CRW decided this year to experiment with a voluntary £1 contribution from visitors to increase income and to provide a fund which could be used to support planning for future years' events. I have not heard any comments about the way that the charge was managed among the many comments praising the quality and range of activities at Carnival. CRW are currently undertaking their normal post event evaluation and the questioner may wish to contribute her comments to that evaluation process.

6. Question from Matthew Ledbury – local government funding

Question to the Leader, Councillor Price

Given the fact that the recent vote in Parliament to support an eye-wateringly costly renewal of the Trident nuclear missile system will put further pressure on funding for local government services and public services at a time when austerity cuts are biting deeply, what representations will members of this Council Chamber be making to their parliamentary parties on the consequences of this vote?

Written Response from Councillor Price

I can assure the questioner that all three parties represented on this Council have been campaigning strongly against the impact of the austerity policies of the current government and will continue to do so both through the parliamentary processes and lobbying through the Local Government Association. Regrettably, the impact of Brexit on the national economy is likely to be even more significant than the cost of renewing Trident on the process of deficit reduction.

7. Question from Mr Chaka Artwell – letters to the Council

Question to the Board Member, Councillor Brown

Lord Mayor, Elected Councillors, City Council Officers and Executive Officers: our democratic form of governance encourages the governed to fully participate in the democratic process by lobbying and writing to Ward Councillors and the servants of the City Council.

I have written numerous letters to City Council Officers and Councillors, many of which have received no reply. What is the City Council's policy, for both Officers and Councillors, regarding acknowledging and answering written communications from Ward or City residents?

Chaka Artwell, Barton, Oxford.

Written Response from Councillor Brown

The City Council is committed to putting the customer's needs first. We have consistent service standards across the organisation to make sure that no matter which part of the organisation Oxford residents come into contact with, they receive the same high standard of service

These service standards are the first indication to our customers of how we intend to do business, setting expectations and enabling us to manage demand so that we meet these expectations.

Officers aim to acknowledge and answer written communications and emails, and handle comments, complaints and compliments as follows:

Emails, requests made via the Council's website and written correspondence.

- We aim to acknowledge each customer contact received within one working day, either giving an answer in full or setting an expectation of what will happen next.
- We aim to provide a substantive reply within five working days.
- If English is not your preferred language, we will provide a translation service for you on demand.
- We use a number of accessibility tools within our website to enable all customers to read or hear its content.

Comments, complaints and compliments.

- When you make a comment, complaint or compliment to the City Council, we will acknowledge this within three working days.
- We will provide you with a full response within 10 working days and if this is not possible, we will contact you again to let you know when you can expect to hear from us.

Correspondence with councillors

I cannot answer on behalf of all councillors. In my experience however, councillors of all parties work hard to represent their constituents and to respond to requests for advice and assistance. This is the case whether these are received by email, letter, telephone call or message or from encounters in the streets or from door knocking.

Inevitably councillors, many of whom work full time, will not always be able to respond immediately, but in my experience councillors are very good at picking up urgent case work quickly and responding appropriately to less urgent matters.

8. Question from Sietske Boeles, CPRE Oxfordshire – Green Belt development

Question to the Board Member, Councillor Hollingsworth

CPRE Oxfordshire notes that:

- in 2014, there were just over 200,000 motor vehicles entering and leaving Cambridge per 12-hour day (7am to 7pm). This represents an increase of 5% compared with 2013. (Annual Traffic Monitoring Report 2014, Cambridgeshire County Council)
- House prices in Cambridge have risen at a faster rate than those in any other town and city in England and Wales since 2010... Cambridge's reputation as a tech hub has driven up the cost of property' (Guardian, 18 March 2016).

On this basis, do Councillors agree that the Cambridge example of sacrificing its Green Belt to development should not carry any weight in Oxford City's own decision-making?

Written Response from Councillor Hollingsworth

No I do not agree, and indeed I draw the opposite conclusion. Cambridge, like Oxford, has suffered from many decades of planning policy which attempted to disperse housing and development across a wider area, with the result that tens of thousands of people end up reliant on car-based commuting to get between their jobs and their homes. In Cambridge that policy is starting to be reversed, with new developments on the edge of the city, but reversing decades of ill-conceived planning mistakes takes time.

Evidence from all over the world shows that the most successful cities, measured economically, environmentally and in terms of the happiness and well-being of their citizens, are those that are compact, co-ordinated and connected. For example Barcelona has a carbon footprint half that of Atlanta, a city of roughly the same population, because its carefully planned development and dense urban core means that homes and jobs are located close to one another, services are easily accessible by foot, bike or public transport, and populations are concentrated enough to support thriving local businesses.

Oxford is a successful city, and will continue to attract jobs and people; to pretend otherwise is to fail to learn the lesson of Canute more than 1000 years ago. The challenge we face is to accommodate those jobs and people in the best way, and in my view communities based on carefully planned sustainable urban extensions to the city of Oxford are far better than isolated dormitory developments scattered across the county and only accessible by car.

9. Question from Judith Harley – FOI 5462 – Request For Catalyst Temple Cowley Pools (TCP) Lease

Question to the Leader, Councillor Price

Lord Mayor, Councillors,

During December 2015 I had an exchange of e-mail correspondence with City Council Executive Officers, under the Freedom of Information Act (FOI 5462), on the matter of Catalyst Housing Ltd being granted a 999 year lease to the Temple Cowley Pools (TCP) site. The existence of this lease was confirmed by Councillor Ed Turner in his written reply to my address to full Council on 7th December.

My first FOI 5462 questions were:

- “Can I have a copy of the lease contract?”
- “Is there a clause in the lease whereby Catalyst must return the property to the Council in the state in which they took it over?”

On 18th December I received the reply that:

“A copy of the lease between the Council and Catalyst Housing Ltd is publicly available from the Land Registry and can be accessed via the “Search for Property Information” portal on the Registry’s web site. The freehold title is ON299912 and the leasehold title ON316477.”

I responded that this reply did not answer my questions, as I already had copies of the relevant Land Registry documents, and neither of these showed the information I had requested. I repeated my request for a copy of the signed lease contract, with terms and conditions, between Oxford City Council and Catalyst Housing Ltd. leasing the TCP site to Catalyst.

I received a second reply similar to the first:

“As [we] informed you, there are just the two documents: the contract for sale (a copy of which is available on the Council's web site) and the 999-year lease (a copy of which can be accessed via the Land Registry’s web site).”

For the second time, I replied that this response still did not give me the information I sought, and for the third time, I requested the terms and conditions of the lease between Oxford City Council and Catalyst Housing Ltd. for the TCP site. I also asked the amount of rent due to be paid by Catalyst to Oxford City Council for the lease, and how much rent had actually been paid by Catalyst over the then twelve months since the lease was signed. I also asked specifically for any other terms and conditions of the lease, as I cannot find these in any of the documents so far referred.

I am still waiting for this information.

Following the lack of information from Executive Officers, I had also asked the Scrutiny Committee to investigate my requests, and although indications were that this would be addressed, it was not done.

This is not the first time that my FOI requests to the City Council over the TCP site have gone unanswered way over the statutory response time. In desperation I am now asking you, the full Council, to answer my questions, which are:

1. How much rent is due to be paid by Catalyst Housing Ltd. to Oxford City Council as part of their lease contract on the Temple Cowley Pools site?
2. How much rent has actually been paid by Catalyst over the now seventeen months since the lease was signed?

3. If the answer to either of the first two questions is “nothing”, then why is this the case? Why hasn’t the City Council been generating an income from this site, either in rental or in operating as a running Pools and Fitness Centre, over the past seventeen months? Isn’t this negligent use of City Council assets, and dereliction of the City Council’s duty to maximise income from such assets?
4. How much income would the City Council have received from Temple Cowley Pools had it remained open and running, not abruptly closed in 2014, until such date as a planning application has been approved for the site?
5. Is there a clause in the lease whereby Catalyst must return the property to the Council in the state in which they took it over?
6. When can I have a copy of the full lease contract?

Written Response from Councillor Price

There are two separate documents, a Lease (for 999 years) and the Contract for Sale. The two have been conflated in the FOI request and the question to Council. Both documents are available to the public: the Lease from the Land Registry, the Contract for Sale via the Council’s web site. Under Section 21 of the Freedom of Information Act 2000, information that is reasonably accessible by other means, as in this instance, does not need to be re-provided.

The answer to the specific questions are as follows:

1. The rent is a peppercorn
2. As stated above, no rent is payable. This reflects the fact that the long lease was created as an alternative to an immediate transfer of the freehold (which clearly would have produced no rental income), while protecting the Council’s position should Catalyst fail to obtain their planning consent. A substantial and non-refundable deposit was, however, paid by Catalyst on commencement of the lease, and the full purchase price will become payable on Catalyst’s receipt of planning consent for the development.
3. See 2. above.
4. Whatever income has been “lost” by closing the Temple Cowley pool has, I understand, been more than compensated for by the increased income generated by the its replacement facility at Blackbird Leys.
5. The only circumstance in which the lease to Catalyst might be terminated (other than by the transfer to Catalyst of the freehold) is where they fail to obtain planning consent for the proposed development. Catalyst are under an obligation to secure the site, for health and safety reasons, which involved boarding up and potentially demolishing the building, thus the site cannot be “handed back” in the state it was in immediately prior to commencement of the lease.
6. See the response in the first paragraph above.

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