

To: Council

Date: 6 February 2017

Title of Report: **Public addresses and questions that do not relate to matters for decision – as submitted by the speakers and with written and verbal 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 was republished after the Council meeting as part of the minutes pack. This lists the full text of speeches delivered as submitted, summaries of speeches delivered which differ significantly from those submitted, and verbal responses.

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

Addresses in part 2

1. Address by Adam Berry - budget cuts for Donnington Doorstep Family Centre
2. Address by Sobiah Hussain – relating to petition on situation in Kashmir
3. Address by Rick Mower, Director of RAW Workshop (social enterprise based on Blackbird Leys) – relating to motion on social enterprise
4. Address by Liz Sawyer – Seacourt Park and Ride extension
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7. Address by Jane Alexander – Leisure provision

Addresses in part 2

1. Address by Adam Berry - budget cuts for Donnington Doorstep Family Centre

My name is Adam Berry, I'm 15 years old and I attend St. Gregory the Great Catholic School. I am talking today on the matter of the budget cuts for Donnington Doorstep Family Centre. The family centre are currently in a position of crisis which means that the centre does not have an adequate amount of money to run the full 6 days of the week (as they did before). The drop-in service has now been cut to 1 half-day a week, which is very devastating for parents and their children who attend the centre.

The centre is quite often mistaken for a playgroup. The services which Donnington Doorstep provides are much more broad and useful than those provided by a playgroup. Donnington Doorstep provides a safe, caring and friendly place for parents to take their young children, and receive support (including family support).

Most parents who attend the centre are aware of the services that Donnington Doorstep provides to its local community, which the council funding body often disputes due to the small area it serves. Donnington has always been at a disadvantage due to its small size, although Doorstep has always helped people from many different areas.

Donnington Doorstep is the heart of Donnington, with such a welcoming set of services, which are currently at stake.

The Services that Doorstep provide were starting to collapse in March 2016 when the County Council's contract of £60,000 per annum, ended. This was very frustrating for the centre and caused in to cut down on services so they were only open for 5 days a week, which then led to 4 days, which then led to 4 half days. And now, we're in the catastrophic situation that leaves Doorstep only opening for 1 half day a week, and nothings to say this won't end soon as well.

I appreciate the Oxford city council isn't responsible for the budget cuts, but I am here requesting city council lobby County Council to find a means to support Donnington Doorstep so that this valuable community asset can survive.

Response given at the meeting by Councillor Simm, Board Member for Culture and Communities

Thank you for speaking to us. Councillors who are trustees at the centre are as devastated as you are about the loss of funding when the Sure Start and Children's Centre funding was cut. We are looking at ways to be more self-sufficient and have asked the county council for enough funding to keep going till we reach that position. The drop in service is key and well used, and we do have other sessions with secured funding. We need your support and that of other users to help with the campaign to keep the services running and increase the Doorstep and drop in service again.

2. Address by Sobiah Hussain – relating to petition on situation in Kashmir

Chief executive, Lord Mayor, Members of the Council

I am grateful for the opportunity afforded to speak about the tragedies suffered by I am grateful for the time afforded today to speak about the tragedies suffered by Kashmiris over the last two centuries. The debate about Kashmir is long standing and has come before the government on many occasions. The recent upsurge in violence in the Indian administered Jammu and Kashmir in the last six months, has brought this matter to the forefront once again; the videos shown on social media have appalled thousands of Kashmiris who are resident in the UK.

I have links to Kashmir, my grandparents and wide family members reside in Kashmir, it is deeply upsetting to see this conflict continue without any real solution on the horizon. My family live close to the line of control and we hear many stories of the suffering endured by Kashmiris and it is deeply upsetting.

It is of great concern, that no real progress appears to have been made over the years, the Kashmiris are still suffering and the abuse is being allowed to continue, people are being maimed and scarred and lives are being destroyed. The UN Resolution includes the option for the people of Jammu and Kashmir to have the right of self-determination, although there have been some advances, the Kashmiris still have no referendum.

The conflict does not receive as much world attention as it should, we need to press our governments to do more to help build a resolution to the longstanding crisis. The uprising because of the violence had been met with strong resistance; the response of the police cannot be ignored, the police and security forces have acted disproportionately and there are clear abuses of power.

People of Jammu and Kashmir deserve freedom, to live in peace, free from fear of persecution, discrimination, abuse, rape and torture, let them have access to education and health. They have suffered for too long; human rights abuses occur daily and we should not stop fighting to help them.

Councillors we would like you to be the voice for Oxford-based Kashmiri people. Please raise our concerns about the plight of the people of Jammu and Kashmir with national and European MPs. Please ask them to apply pressure on Government Ministers to work hard to resolve this conflict.

We greatly need your help so that Kashmiris can live normal lives. Thank you for listening to our concerns.

This speech was considered as part of the debate on the related submitted petition.

3. Address by Rick Mower, Director of RAW Workshop (social enterprise based on Blackbird Leys) – relating to motion on social enterprise

RAW Workshop is a social enterprise based in Blackbird Leys.

We operate a large joinery workshop and wood recycling service. Over 85% of our workforce will be facing prejudice and disadvantage. Our Crew includes people with physical and learning disabilities, people with mental health illness, folks in recovery from addiction and ex-offenders.

We also engage younger people and currently support projects for Young Unaccompanied Asylum Seekers and Young Offenders.

Our mission is to prove that people, no matter the life-path they have walked, can be Exceptional rather than being the Exception. We don't focus on the negative. We focus on the ability.

We do that not by nice partly educated middle class people like me standing up and saying 'everyone has value, give them a chance'. Rather we do it by showing – by making products and providing services that are high-quality, competitively priced and robust. We say 'give us a chance to supply you' and you'll see how good people can be. When you get a good product – it's an unequivocal statement about ability and quality. Not an opinion.

The truth is that people who have had to struggle and survive have a resilience and a level of sheer grit that is not properly recognised. RAW is a place where that tenacity and ability is nurtured and channelled into brighter futures.

Month on month RAW is increasing the amount of human social impact it delivers (1,400). This comes in the form of employment, training and skills, or just somebody not sitting at home, being isolated and watching Jeremy Kyle. Being part of somewhere with pride, ambition and creativity is life-enhancing and, ultimately, reduces call on services.

Of course, buying locally adds a huge amount of value to the local economy and also makes difference to the environment. Rather than buying large products – such as parks furniture – from elsewhere in the country or even abroad, you create a significant reduction in carbon emissions alone.

The reality of the world is that funding is being cut but we don't want to be funded. We want to trade, create an example and be a place that grows, employing more and more people from disadvantaged backgrounds on merit. If we can create our own income to a sufficient level it leaves more to go around for organisations that don't have that ability. That's a very simple way that we can also support wider social impact.

Finally, I would like to give a recent example of how smart procurement has made a difference. With the energetic support of Linda Smith, we were able to secure an order with Oxford City Council for 15 park benches. These were high-quality, delivered on time and created in excess of 150 hours of local social impact. They generated benefits for the local economy, helped us employ local people and probably saved a large, dirty delivery lorry rolling into our city.

I'm incredibly proud that RAW makes social, quality, economic and environmental sense. It changes lives and is embedded in our community. On behalf of all the Crew at RAW, thank you for listening to me.

QUESTION: How many more park benches do you want?

Joking aside, how can we ensure that we're front of mind for the procurement teams? We make a large range of products – both interior and exterior – and also work with clients to develop bespoke products so we can adapt to City Council specs.

We also offer a wood recycling service to building companies and developers – how can we ensure that when contractors win Oxford City contracts, they know we can supply that service to them?

We're not asking for favours. We're asking to compete and get in front of the right people so we can keep growing a sustainable social enterprise that self-funds, and goes on creating unique opportunities for people to make the most of their lives and breaking cycles of deprivation.

Response given at the meeting by Councillor Brown, Board Member for Customer and Corporate Services

Thank you for this. I have visited your workshop and Councillor Smith is also a strong supporter of social enterprises and has submitted a motion to encourage us to take these more seriously in our procurement process. We all recognise the value of social enterprises and will try to support these where we can.

4. Address by Liz Sawyer – Seacourt Park and Ride extension

Ladies and Gentlemen, good evening. This is the second time that I have come to talk to you about the Seacourt Park and Ride expansion plan. I come now as a member of the Oxford Flood Alliance.

I have made my objections regarding the application's contravention of local and national planning policy to the relevant councillors and officers, and I appreciate the discussions that I have had with them. I focus now on a concerning and potentially tragic aspect of this development: the risk to life.

I want to make you, the full Council, aware of the real hazards this application creates. As you know, the site for the proposed car park extension is in the functional floodplain, and will flood far more regularly than the existing car park does. It slopes gradually down, away from Botley Road, towards the river. It is more low-lying, and would be accessed by the public via two ramps from the existing site. On average, the new site is 80cm lower. But both car parks undulate, so some areas can be badly flooded while others are still passable. Parts of the proposed new car park would be a full 2 metres lower than parts of the existing one. Those lower areas will be under water that is deeper than a fully-grown man before the floodwater starts to come close to the Botley Road.

Therefore, it is quite wrong to compare the risks posed by the new car park to the safety record of the existing Park and Ride, as the planning application does. The flooding in the new area will be both more frequent and much, much deeper.

Now, I grew up in Tewkesbury, where people know from experience about the dangers of flood waters. And yet people have still been killed there in flood events. To show how dangerous flood water is, here are 9 of the Automobile Association's 'flood facts':

1. Most drowning deaths happen within only 3m of a safe point.
2. Two thirds of those who die in flood-related accidents are good swimmers.
3. A third (32%) of flood-related deaths are in vehicles.
4. Just 15cm of fast-flowing water can knock you off your feet and be enough for you not to be able to regain your footing.
5. It's a challenge to stand in waist-deep water flowing at only 1m/s (2mph). By 1.8m/s (4mph, walking speed) everyone is washed off their feet.
6. If the speed of the flood water doubles, the force it exerts on you or your car goes up four times.
7. Just 60cm of standing water will float your car.
8. Just 30cm of flowing water could be enough to move your car.
9. A mere egg cupful of water could be enough to wreck an engine.

Remember the proposed car park is 80cm on average lower than the existing one, and more than twice that in places. This application opens up the real risk of a large body of deep floodwater that is easily accessible to the public.

I give you just one of the many flaws in the inadequate 'flood response plan' in the application. The document recommends closing the lower car park in times of flood merely by putting up signs, and that the site not be manned in times of flood. But what is to prevent someone from slipping down the ramps into the water as they approach the bus stop? Would the council ever allow a bridge to be built that had no safety railings? And suppose the council puts up signs at 8.30pm in anticipation of flooding,

but at 11pm someone moves one to get their car out of the slightly flooded car park, and forgets to put it back? How many cars will drive down the ramp into the lower car park the following morning before the council employee returns and replaces the sign? People could drive down into deepening water, and be unable to drive their cars back out, up the ramp. Many scenarios are possible, but the flood response document considers not a single one. The entire emergency plan is 640 words long, shorter than this address. It reads as an afterthought to the planning application, an irresponsible, negligent afterthought. There is no way to make such a planning application safe: hence national planning guidelines prohibit such developments in the functional floodplain, on the grounds of public safety.

I urge you to think very seriously before allowing this application to proceed. Thank you.

Response given at the meeting by Councillor Hollingsworth, Board Member for Planning and Regulatory Services

Thank you for this, your correspondence and the meeting we had to discuss this. The area planning committee will be asked to make the decision and I will seek to ensure that the concerns you have raised are adequately addressed in the final planning application.

5. Address by Sarah Lasenby,

Address to Full Council

After I addressed you on the subject of democracy and debates I had a response from Bob Price. He wrote: **Party whips are used in all democratic legislatures - in Europe, America and elsewhere.**

I understand that there are circumstances when whipping is a helpful method to get certain things done expeditiously but I believe is not relevant when there is a debate. In these situations the leaders of the groups should trust their councillors to decide what is right for the citizens of Oxford.

Bob Price continued

There is nothing anti democratic about the process of agreeing a party line - it reflects the fact that candidates are elected on a specific manifesto and that should be implemented. All groups on the Council decide whether to have a group decision on each topic that comes up or leave it to a free vote; our decision depends on the topic and its relationship to our policies and values.

What were the **values** of the Council that made it imperative to use a whip to control the way the councillors voted after they had heard and participated in a debate on saving Temple Cowley Pools that had been triggered by the signatures of over 1500 people?

The signatures on the petition relating to the loss of Temple Cowley Pools were easy to collect. Many people came up to ask to sign without prompting. I have not asked them if they knew what the specific manifesto item was on this subject that is why I am asking for information about this. The people of Cowley and East Oxford desperately want to have a replacement pool and soon. They are missing the now demolished pool.

This Council needs to demonstrate the democracy we all value. I believe this must include not whipping your councillors when there is a debate triggered by the people. Otherwise it is clear you do not believe in listening to the people and that you do not take your debates seriously.

The pool has now been demolished despite it being suggested that it would be better not to do this till after the planning application has been heard.

Ah me. In these circumstances we must ask that you start planning for a replacement pool. You cannot do this too soon; many of the local people cannot get to Blackbird Leys and are desperate. Specially those without cars.

Response given at the meeting by Councillor Price, Leader of the Council

No other issue has been so thoroughly analysed and debated over so long. We have limited funding and provision for leisure facilities and must spend our resources wisely and economically. We are limited in what we can realistically provide and do not have capacity or space to provide a pool for everyone who wants one.

Councillor Gant raised a point of order and asked the Leader to distance himself from comments made by the speaker about a named council officer. The Leader concurred.

6. Address by Artwell - East Oxford Community Centre

At the last Full Council meeting I asked, indeed. I begged and pleaded with you, the Elected Councillors, to halt the Council's plans for East Oxford Community Centre, until Cllr Simms, the portfolio holder for Communities, could actually attend and explain the Council's plans; and their preferred option 3, to the multitude who had attended the last public meeting with the expectation of consulting and engage with Cllr Simms regarding the future of East Oxford Community Centre.

I was informed at the last full council meeting that Cllr Simms had a previous engagement and was unable to be present at the public consultation meeting in December and no substitute Councillor was sent in place of Cllr Simms. I was informed that Cllr Simms would be willing to address the people of East Oxford in order to present the Council's plans and to hear the concerns of the people of East Oxford.

It is now February and the people of East Oxford have still not been given a chance to consult with Cllr Simms as promised at the last Full Council meeting.

Inviting the Chair of East Oxford Community Association and one other Trustee to a private meeting, is no substitute for holding a public consultation meeting with the variety of people who care about the future role of East Oxford Community Centre.

For the second time I am addressing the Full Council asking that the Council's plans for East Oxford Community Centre be halted until the portfolio holder, Cllr Simms, is willing to publicly address and consult with the people of Oxford East.

Many people in Oxford East are genuinely concerned with the future of this vibrant and well used Community Centre. A variety of East Oxford people are concerned that the Council's preferred third option could result in a forty percent reduction in Community space in East Oxford. I believe Cllr Simmons and Cllr Wolf's "option three plus" better fits the community space needs of the people of East Oxford and this option needs to be thoroughly shared with Cllr Simms.

I call once again on Cllr Simms to urgently attend a public meeting in order for a proper, meaningful and open consultation to happen, regarding the future of East Oxford Community Centre.

Response given at the meeting by Councillor Simm, Board Member for Culture and Communities

I have continued, and will continue, to meet and talk to the people of east Oxford and the East Oxford Community Centre Association about the council's plans as these progress because that is my job.

7. Address by Jane Alexander – Leisure provision

She departed from her submitted speech and a summary is given below

She attended the Scrutiny meeting on Monday 30 January and was disappointed by the lack of transparency by council officers and some councillor and, as a disabled person found much of what was said disappointingly inaccurate.

She spoke about the need for transparency, and for councillors to be actively involved in scrutinising and holding the council to account rather than taking information at face value. She spoke about the problems with Blackbird Leys pool including inadequate changing and poor access to the pool, how busy it was and the difficulty of getting there compared to getting to Temple Cowley pools and urged councillors to investigate for themselves.

Response given at the meeting by Councillor Smith, Board Member for Leisure Parks and Sport

I am sorry to hear about the problems at the committee and hope these can be resolved. The level of subsidy this council paid per leisure visit has reduced from £3 in 2006 to a target of zero this year and we hope to start to make a profit for the city. User group meetings are public and advertised and your specific concerns may be better raised there. We understand the views of Cowley residents and need to encourage use of the new pool, and with this in mind Fusion have contacted previous members and users of Temple Cowley Pools.

Councillor Gant said that as the Chair of the scrutiny committee he was well aware of that proceedings should be audible and had he been made aware of the problems at the time and so was unable to address these.