

To: Council
Date: 24 April 2017
Title of Report: Questions on Notice from members of Council and responses from the Board Members and Leader republished after the meeting to include supplementary questions and responses

Introduction

1. Questions submitted by members of Council to the Board members and Leader of the Council, by the deadline in the Constitution are listed below in the order they will be taken at the meeting.
2. Responses are included where available.
3. Questioners can ask one supplementary question of the councillor answering the original question.
4. This report has been republished after the Council meeting to include supplementary questions and responses as part of the minutes pack.

Questions and responses

Board member for A Clean and Green Oxford

1. From Councillor Landell Mills to Councillor Tanner - air pollution

Can the Board Member state what analysis been undertaken on the potential impact of increasing Park and Ride costs on air pollution in the city. Namely, if Park and Ride prices increase, and provide more revenue, more motorists may drive further into the city centre, where fumes will be more concentrated which in turn will exacerbate air pollution and lower air quality.

Response

For customers that wish to park for longer periods the City Council has encouraged motorists to use the Park & Ride sites. The operation provides customers with an efficient service into the city, whilst also offering low cost parking. The disparity between parking charges at the P&R sites and a city centre location is significant. As a consequence, the pricing structure adopted by the Council helps to ensure that Park & Ride is the primary choice for customers that wish to park for extended durations.

Whilst the City proposes to increase the charge at these sites in 2018/19, the tariffs in the city will remain considerably higher than the £3.00 proposed fee. It would therefore be most unlikely that customers would migrate from the Park & Ride sites to the city centre car parks.

2. From Councillor Fooks to Councillor Tanner – standards we should expect for cleaning roads

I get regular complaints about the state of roads and pavements on residential roads. Leaves and litter seem to remain on some roads for a very long time. Can you set out the standards we should expect for cleaning roads, especially the gutters, and pavements in the city?

Response

All shop fronts and associated bins are maintained daily throughout the Suburban area. All residential roads, pavements and cycle tracks are mechanically swept on a weekly basis. Residential areas receive a fortnightly clean by the mobile crew and this includes litter picking, removing syringes, removing dog fouling and fly tipping.

With regard to leaf collection, resources are deployed on the basis of need. However, this is a significant task.

Concerns regarding street cleaning service standards can be reported to Streetscene via streetscene@oxford.gov.uk or via the Council's contact centre. Once the Streetscene Team has reviewed the nature of the report the issue will be dealt with either via the rapid response team or scheduled in the planned programme of work.

Supplementary question

What is the process if areas are not cleaned, and are there enough staff to deliver the service?

Supplementary Response

There are enough staff to provide the specified service and councillors should notify the Head of Service if there are shortfalls in the expected standard of service.

3. From Councillor Thomas to Councillor Tanner – radio interview fall-out

On the 20th February, during an interview on Radio Oxford, speaking on the subject of homelessness in the City you said; "I would like to go up to some of these rough sleepers and say you are a disgrace" You later went on to say that you thought that they should have 'more respect'. At the last Council meeting you chose to issue an apology which referred not to 'rough sleepers' but 'beggars'. The text of that apology was later circulated – this too referred only to 'beggars'.

As I am sure that you are aware, rough sleepers and beggars are treated separately under the law and by the Council. As vulnerable groups, they have very different needs and requirements.

Following your apology the Greens politely asked that you re-issue your statement amended to refer to the group that you had originally wronged. You did not reply. Will you now agree to re-issue your apology amended as requested?

Response

I understand the councillor wants to make a political point. My apology of course referred to both homeless people and beggars. But street homelessness and begging are important, complicated and separate issues which deserve proper consideration.

Any of us at any time can find ourselves homeless for a variety of reasons. Living on the street is extremely bad for mental and physical health and should not be necessary in a civilised society.

So I am very proud of the £1,546,914 being spent by the City Council on homelessness prevention this year. But the continuing cuts in Government and County Council spending mean that street homelessness in Oxford is, most unfortunately, likely to increase.

I am very proud too of the City Centre Public Space Protection Order (PSPO) which enables the City Council to act against aggressive begging. At the same time I am aware that the Government is denying access to public funds for increasing numbers of people in desperate need.

Our advice to the public is not to give to beggars but to support one of the many excellent street-homeless charities in Oxford. The City Council will continue its policies of no-second-night-out, providing hostel beds for the homeless and supporting people to move into permanent accommodation.

4. From Councillor Brandt to Councillor Tanner - flood alleviation channel alternatives

The Environment Agency has stated that, even if the flood alleviation channel is built, there will still be a need to implement upstream flood prevention measures. Has the Council done any further work with the EA, collaborated with other Councils, or is the Portfolio Holder aware of any other relevant work, that looks at how the upper Thames catchment area could be better managed for water attenuation to reduce flooding as well as, or instead of, the expensive proposed flood alleviation channel.

Response

Oxford City Council collaborates with Oxfordshire County Council, Thames Water, Network Rail and the Oxford Flood Alliance on flood risk management matters within Oxford city boundaries via the Oxford Area Flood Partnership for which the City Council is the secretariat. As a district council, Oxford City Council lead in reducing flood risks from development in the floodplain through the planning system and the management of drainage and non-main river watercourses.

The powers to intervene in flood risk management matters relating to main river ('the Thames') and outside the Oxford City boundaries ('Upper Thames Catchment') would rest with Oxfordshire County Council as the Lead Local Flood Authority for the County working with the Environment Agency which works on a regional catchment level.

For the reasons outlined above, the City Council has had and will continue to have limited involvement with Upper Thames Catchment Area investigation work.

Officers will be asked to write to the Environment Agency for an update on their work for the future in terms of the management of the Upper Thames Catch and let Members have a copy of the response.

5. From Councillor Brandt to Councillor Tanner – action on biodiversity

The Executive Summary of the recent The State of Nature in Oxfordshire Report 2017 (Wild Oxfordshire) concludes with the words; "The report not only outlines the losses

and gains in Oxfordshire's biodiversity, but is also a serious "call to action". We must encourage a greater, collective ambition for increasing our network of wild spaces, reducing devastating pressures on the environment, and halting the continued loss of biodiversity in the county if we are to secure a 'net positive' direction of travel in the future." What is the City Council planning to do to respond to this 'call to action'?

Response

The City Council has noted the publication of the 'of the State of Nature Report' and its call to action. We already have an adopted Corporate Biodiversity Action Plan for our own estate and operations and we will continue to examine what we as an authority can do as part of the development of the new Local Plan. A great example of what we as a local authority have done is encouraging pollinators for bees, providing bird and bat boxes, and introducing green roofs.

The City Council also has a good track record of working in partnership with a range of organisations to deliver biodiversity improvements such as: volunteering opportunities across our parks to deliver coppicing and wildlife survey; joint work with the RSPB and others as part of the Oxford Swift City project; and best practice with BBWOT as part of Wild Oxford, working in four of our nature reserves (Chilswell Valley, Rivermead Nature Park and Lye Valley, and Raleigh Park) to run events, talks, workshops on traditional conservation skills such as coppicing, hedge laying and scything.

6. From Councillor Brandt to Councillor Tanner - enhance the environment for butterflies and other species

Bearing in mind new evidence that urban butterflies are declining faster than butterflies in rural areas, will the City Council review its policies in consultation with local biodiversity and conservation groups to ensure Oxford's green spaces are a) protected from development which impacts on natural habitats and b) given new planting regimes that enhance the environment for butterflies and other species.

Response

The Parks and Open Spaces Team manages 26 countryside sites with the main purpose of maintaining and enhancing the biodiversity of these sites. This has seen Acid grassland restoration at Shotover, restoration of hazel and blackthorn coppice rotations which favours woodland species of butterflies and finer woodland flora, reed management which sees the finer fenland plants able to flower. In addition to management on the specific countryside sites we also work with colleagues in the formal Parks which has seen us establish wildflower meadows, pollinator friendly beds and rotational hedgerow management. All this work is ongoing with plans to extend the pollinator friendly beds and wildflower areas. We work in partnership with a range of community groups and wildlife groups such as BBOWT and Shotover Wildlife. In addition we are working with the Wild Oxford Partnership at linking sites using green corridors that would provide a green and sustainable way for communities to visit sites and also see habitat improvements so that they become wildlife corridors.

7. From Councillor Wolff to Councillor Tanner - Green Travel Plan for its Depot site in Marsh Road

Will the City Council implement a Green Travel Plan for its Depot site in Marsh Road, Oxford, as overspill parking is occurring in Owens Way and this is not welcomed by local residents?

Response

The Council has a workplace travel plan which includes a wide range of initiatives including encouraging staff to walk, cycle, use public transport or car share in getting to and from work. Some key city services run out very early in the morning from the Marsh Road Depot such as street cleansing, recycling and waste collections, often before public transport runs which can reduce travel options for employees. Within these constraints staff are regularly asked to consider how they travel to work with a view to reducing the number of journeys and cars on the road. To facilitate this, Direct Services has doubled the cycle parking provision at the Cowley Marsh Depot, introduced electric bikes at both the Horspath Road and Cowley Marsh Depot which staff use to commute between sites and allow employees to take our fuel efficient vehicles home so that they can travel straight to site in the morning. We also encourage use of the Council's cycle purchase scheme.

We realise that the parking in Owens Way and the surrounding area is inconvenient for residents and may prove a nuisance to them and we have asked staff to be considerate with their parking. We are currently reviewing parking provision at the Cowley Marsh Depot.

Board member for Culture and Communities

In the absence of the Board Member, Councillor Simm, the leader of the Council, Councillor Price answered supplementary questions.

8. From Councillor Wilkinson to Councillor Simm (Hollingsworth) - old Rose Hill Community Centre

Given that residents' groups using the old Rose Hill Community Centre were given just four weeks to vacate the building in Dec 15/Jan 16 prior to a change of locks and demolition, can the Board Member explain why the site was left boarded up for more than a year before demolition started?

Response

The new community centre opened in December 2015 and it has become a great asset for all the Rose Hill Community.

The new centre was able to accommodate all the bookings from the old centre and a wide range of new activities so there was no point having two centres open at the same time.

Supplementary question

Why has the site been left vacant for so long when there is such a need for housing?

Supplementary Response

The initial plan was to dispose of the site to a private buyer for a capital receipt but we would like to offer it to Oxford City Housing Limited to develop as this should provide the best outcome for the city.

9. From Councillor Wade to Councillor Simm - The Oxford Marathon

The Oxford Marathon is a 13.1 mile race, run for the last two years through the heavily residential suburbs of North Oxford. The race has caused disruption to many residents but it now appears that it will be held again. The management company has apparently changed from GO2 to Virgin Sport, and the manager has also changed. A meeting for councillors of affected wards was offered on 16th February but was cancelled with a one line explanation: "meeting is postponed until a confirmed presentation from Virgin Sport is received in relation to Half Marathon or a 10 mile event."

Will the Board Member now undertake to arrange meetings both for councillors and for residents along the route as a matter of urgency?

Response

The Oxford Half Marathon takes place on public highways and the route and other arrangements relating to the event are matters to be agreed between the County Council and the event organisers. The City Council's events team will help to ensure that the event runs as smoothly as possible for participants and residents. The City Council's events team will coordinate a meeting with councillors once Virgin Sport have prepared the necessary information. Councillors who wish to hold public meetings on this topic should liaise directly with the event organisers and the County Council.

Supplementary question

Why do we have to wait until Virgin have made their plan of action? Can the events team organise a meeting so that we can have some input into this?

Supplementary Response

This is not a council event and this council has no responsibility for this. Concerns need to be raised directly with the organisers (Virgin) and the County Council.

Board member for Housing

10. From Councillor Thomas to Councillor Rowley – council owned company business plan

In the budget debate, you were heard to say that the Council would re-develop the Lucy Faithful House site for social housing. How do you explain the fact that the housing company business plan shows only 50% social housing – the level of social housing that any private developer would be expected to provide.

Response

There are a series of misconceptions here.

The Housing Company must have a statement in its Business Plan that it will comply with the City's planning policy. This should be uncontroversial, and is a matter of form.

In fact our ambitions substantially exceed the 40% social housing plus 10% other affordable housing expected of private developers. 77% of the new homes to be built in the Housing Company's current schedule will be for social rent.

The other great advantage of the Housing Company is that it can build high-quality social and affordable homes at a time when in practice even the Council's minima are very difficult to obtain from a private developer.

As I said in the Budget debate, if and when an agreement is reached with the leaseholder on the future of Lucy Faithfull House, "we hope to provide permanent affordable housing on the site, which is in the long run the only real solution to homelessness." It is our Housing Company that makes possible a positive outcome from the County's sudden abandonment of this facility.

Board member for Leisure, Parks and Sport

11. From Councillor Goff to Councillor Smith - replacement pavilion in Five Mile Drive

With local elections almost upon us and still no replacement pavilion in Five Mile Drive recreation ground, another £2,500, or more, will be spent by the Council on using the existing facility as a polling station. Please can the member be specific about money available for a replacement permanent building, and offer a date to meet with local representatives to discuss the outcomes of a recent survey undertaken to ascertain preferences for both sport and local community use?

Response

There has been significant investment within the vicinity including completion of the £800,000 Cutteslowe Lower pavilion project (Sept 2016) and in 2013 we invested £390,000 into Cutteslowe Top Pavilion. There is currently no Council budget available to replace Five Mile Drive. We have met with members of the community earlier in the year and Summertown Stars on several occasions to talk through their plans and also to give advice and support on potential external funding pots that may be available.

Supplementary question

I understood that there would be a replacement for the now demolished pavilion at Five Mile Drive and that money was available. Please can you reconsider?

Supplementary Response

There is neither the requirement nor budget to provide a social space. Summertown Stars have said they need only toilets and a kitchen and we are working to provide these.

12. From Councillor Landell Mills to Councillor Smith - funding raised by "events" in Parks

How much of the funding raised by "events" in Parks is retained for use by City Parks to repair and improve the parks, and how much is this as a % of the gross and net amounts raised?

Response

The Council invests a significant amount each year into its parks, both to keep them in good condition and on improvements. Recent improvements include modernised pavilions, play areas, fitness trails, tennis court, games areas and a new splash park.

10% of the income received for events in the parks is transferred to Parks.

For 2016-17 the amount Parks received was £6,940.

Supplementary question

Is this sum adequate to deal with the damage caused to the parks as a result of these events being held?

Supplementary Response

Any damage should be put right or paid for separately by those running the events.

13. From Councillor Landell Mills to Councillor Smith - Green Flag Awards in 2017

How many parks and gardens has the City submitted for Green Flag Awards in 2017?

Response

Six and we retained all six.

14. From Councillor Landell Mills to Councillor Smith – health and parks

As a matter of public health what progress has the City had in liaising with the County Council to use the City's parks and green spaces for improving health and well-being of Oxford's citizens?

Response

The County are one on many partners we work with. The establishment of the Green and Blue Spaces Network has developed closer cooperation and joint working between partners to increase access and greater use of green spaces in the last few years.

A good example is where we are working with the County, Oxford Preservation Trust and BBOWT is to devise and promote a number of green routes to encourage walking and increase the use of green spaces. This includes short routes for those starting out on the road to developing healthier lifestyles (and for 'green prescriptions') and long distance walks in and around the city.

Board member for Planning and Regulatory Services

15. From Councillor Wade to Councillor Hollingsworth - Novsca Article 4 Direction

The consultation period for the North Oxford Conservation Area Appraisal is now drawing to a close, although the extension of the consultation period to the 28th April is welcome. Many recommendations in the draft are similar to those in the previous appraisal and so there is a concern that, without an Article 4 Direction to remove

permitted development rights, the new appraisal will be no more effective than the existing one in preserving and enhancing the Novsca area.

Will the Board Member establish a framework for the creation of an Article 4 Direction and, if so, when is the expected start date?

Response

There are limited resources in the heritage team, and they need to be focussed on the completion of the current Conservation Area Appraisals. There are five still to complete, including the large Central Area one, which will take a considerable amount of time and effort to manage.

It is also important to establish a consistent city-wide approach, so I want to make sure that all CAAs are complete before the Council starts looking at Article 4 applications for each of them. This is to ensure a comprehensive offer across all the Conservation Areas - not necessarily a uniform Article 4 approach as views may differ from area to area - which can only be done once all the appraisals are in place.

It is also important for the experience of the Jericho and Osney Article 4 Directions to be fully and properly assessed before making recommendations on expansion to other areas. There are clear benefits, but there are also dis-benefits for local residents and on the development control process in handling the applications. An Article 4 Direction of this sort means a significant additional workload, which needs to be carefully costed in advance.

As for timescale, at present I would anticipate the remaining Conservation Area Appraisals to be complete in around 24 months' time, depending on the progress on the complex and resource intensive Central Area appraisal. Once that end date is in clear sight, the lessons from the Osney and Jericho Article 4 Directions and the resource implications of extending those Directions across some or all of the other Conservation Areas will be compiled and subject to scrutiny in the usual way.

Supplementary question

As this area is changing very rapidly around us can we reconsider the urgency of the Article 4 Direction as the need for it is becoming critical?

Supplementary Response

It is best to wait until all the conservation area appraisals are complete rather than prioritise one over the others as we need to know the overall impact for the city. Priority is being given to completing these.

16. From Councillor Thomas to Councillor Hollingsworth - registering "developable" brown field sites

Did Oxford City Council meet the 16 April 2017 deadline set by the Housing and Planning Act 2016 of registering all "developable" (defined as suitable, available and achievable within 15 years) brown field sites within its area of authority, and if not when will the registration be completed?

Response

The Housing and Planning Act 2016 introduced the concept of Brownfield Land Registers. Following this, the Town and Country Planning (Brownfield Land Register) Regulations 2017 came into force on 16th April 2017. These regulations set out the

requirement that each local planning authority must prepare and maintain a register, and must publish their register by 31st December 2017 (paragraph 3(2) of the regulations).

Oxford City Council was one of the pilot authorities for the Brownfield Register and as part of that testing project published online a pilot register, with 65 sites listed, in July 2016; the position will be reviewed for the December deadline.

Members will be aware that the City Council is currently working on a new Local Plan for the city to cover the period to 2036. As part of that process, a thorough review of all available land within the city is being carried out. This has included a call for sites and the production of a Housing and Employment Land Availability Assessment (October 2016, and also available on the website).

The City Council is actively doing everything possible to find sites that can deliver the much needed housing and required supporting uses to sustain Oxford's future.

17. From Councillor Wilkinson to Councillor Hollingsworth – cancelling EAPC

The East Area Planning Committee was cancelled for April yet two meetings for it have been scheduled in May and a number of applications are expected by the Committee. Can the Board Member explain why the meeting was cancelled?

Response

No. Decisions about the timing of the different Planning Committees are the responsibility of the Chairs of those Committees, so the question should be directed to the Vice-Chair of the EAPC.

Supplementary question

Will the Board member investigate whether there is a workflow problem?

Supplementary Response

There is no problem. Planning services have achieved nearly 95% of applications determined in a timely manner. I am not aware of any issue with workflow.

18. From Councillor Landell Mills to Councillor Hollingsworth – CIL income

How much CIL was raised in 2015-16 and 2016-17 and how much has been used or allocated for Green infrastructure in the same periods?

Response

In the years 2015-16 and 2016-17 the City Council received the sums of £2,046,195.67 and £2,295,922.69 from CIL respectively. This is reported in the Annual Monitoring Report each year. As outlined in the relevant legislation, 5% of CIL income is spent on administering the process of setting and collecting the CIL income.

Of the money received, 15% is the neighbourhood portion. This is passed to Parish Councils where there is one, and in areas where there are no parishes the CEB agreed to add £2,500 to each of the Members' budgets to be spent in line with the CIL regulations. The City Executive Board also agreed to spend up to £500,000 as a contribution towards the pedestrianisation of Queens Street, particularly focussing on the public realm.

The remaining 80% of CIL income is to support the growth of the City, and as allocated to specific schemes in the Capital Programme, which was debated at Council in February. CIL funds of £350,000 formed a contribution towards the construction and equipping of the gym at the Oxford Spires Academy; £1,490,000 is allocated to the design and construction of the Oxford and Abingdon Flood Alleviation Scheme; £1,134,000 is allocated to Westgate area public realm improvements; £1,200,000 is allocated for the construction of Quarry Pavilion; £1,600,000 is allocated to the Seacourt Park and Ride extension.

Supplementary question

Do you regard the Seacourt Park and Ride extension as green infrastructure?

Supplementary Response

No.

19. From Councillor Wade to Councillor Hollingsworth – Seacourt flood modelling

What flood modelling has been undertaken to take into account the effect of the proposed expanded area of Seacourt Park & Ride on the flood plain and the risk of increased flooding in the surrounding area?

Response

A detailed Flood Risk Assessment was submitted with the planning application which showed that there is no increase in flood risk associated with the proposed extension to Seacourt P&R. Further information will be formally submitted shortly in response to a request from the Environment Agency to demonstrate that this would remain the case when the anticipated impacts of climate change are taken into account.

Supplementary question

Is this available to the public?

Supplementary Response

Yes – it will be available on the website .

20. From Councillor Wade to Councillor Hollingsworth – Seacourt flooding

How often might the proposed Seacourt Park and Ride extension flood and what would be done to protect it from flooding?

Response

It is not possible to ascertain the frequency of flooding within the car park from the flood model data. In the absence of suitable modelling data, historic flooding records have been used to estimate the expected frequency of flooding for the proposed car park extension. Historic flood data has been provided by the EA, based on their records of flood warnings issued in the vicinity of the site and dating back to 1947. Taking into account all flood events since 1947, the expected frequency of the car park flooding would be approximately once in every five years. Taking only the last 10 years of flood data into account this increases to approximately 6 days once in every 1.7 years.

As the site is in the flood plain it will not have any special measures to prevent flooding.

Supplementary question

Flooding can happen very fast, rise swiftly, and cause serious damage to cars. What measures to prevent flooding are proposed?

Supplementary Response

I refer to the written answer

21. From Councillor Wade to Councillor Hollingsworth – Seacourt vs Eynsham

Has traffic modelling for the proposed expanded Seacourt Park and Ride taken into account the impact of the proposed development of a County park and ride at Eynsham?

Response

No. The traffic modelling to support the planning application was submitted as agreed with the Planning and Highway authorities (Oxford City Council and Oxfordshire County Council respectively). Further information will shortly be submitted in response to issues raised by the County Council and objectors; this further work confirms that the bulk of users of the Seacourt park and Ride come from the A420 corridor, whereas the catchment for the proposed Eynsham site is described by the County Council as being "Witney, Carterton, Cheltenham and Gloucester". The two sites are therefore serving different catchment areas, and the planned Eynsham P&R – which is likely to be subject to the successful implementation of the major A40 bus lane scheme in order to create a sufficiently attractive bus service to serve it – is both physically and in terms of timetable sufficiently far off as to have a very limited impact on the proposed Seacourt extension.

Supplementary question

Are we sure that this extra car-parking capacity is required for the city, taking into account the spaces provided at existing park and ride car parks and the proposed park and ride at Eynsham?

Supplementary Response

We have looked carefully at traffic flows. Eynsham will take cars which would otherwise park at Pear Tree from the A40 but will not greatly impact on cars travelling to Seacourt who approach from different directions. Subject to planning consents, the Seacourt extension can be constructed quite quickly whereas Eynsham is much longer term and dependent on a number of factors which may prevent its construction.

22. From Councillor Wade to Councillor Turner Hollingsworth – Seacourt vs smart signage

Has traffic modelling been undertaken for the proposed expanded Seacourt Park and Ride that assesses the efficacy of smart signage on the greater utilisation of other existing P&R car parks around Oxford, up-dating motorists as to availability of parking around the city?

Response

No. Smart signage should improve the utilisation of existing parking spaces. However Seacourt is already regularly operationally full, and the future scenario modelling shows

significant increases in traffic on Botley Road if the extension is not built, and smart signage will not have a significant impact on that increase.

Supplementary question

Why can smart signs not simply be used to direct traffic towards other sites and away from Botley Road altogether?

Supplementary Response

This could be done, but traffic flow modelling predicts this alone would not help to remove traffic.

23. From Councillor Landell Mills to Councillor Hollingsworth – Westgate parking charges

Have the Westgate operators informed the City Council what they will be charging for the Westgate car park and how will this compare with the cost of city car parking nearby?

Response

No. We currently expect that the Westgate Alliance will be making a formal public announcement about the charges at the new Westgate Car Park in the early Autumn.

Supplementary question

Why in the original planning permission did we not agree that we would have control of the parking fees with the Westgate Alliance?

Supplementary Response

I am not sure of all the detail but am sure a response can be provided for you.

Deputy Leader of the Council, Board Member for Finance, Asset Management and Public Health

24. From Councillor Wolff to Councillor Turner– social return on investment

Does the portfolio holder think that spending £4m on a car park extension represents a good social return on investment for Oxford's taxpayers?

Response

As things stand, I think the proposal does bring a good return on investment in social and financial returns. It would bring a wide range of benefits to the city in terms of economic sustainability, and traffic reduction, but also a financial contribution, converting one-off capital outlay into a regular revenue return for the Council's budget base, which can then be invested in frontline services into the future, helping insulate us from reductions in government funding.

Supplementary question

Do I understand that there is no direct social return, only a financial one, and an indirect social return?

Supplementary Response

This is social investment for the city in the wide sense of providing jobs and reducing traffic in the city, plus the revenue from income gives us the ability to provide other social benefits.

25. From Councillor Simmons to Councillor Turner – children’s centres

At the budget, additional money was agreed to support the Children’s Centres. Have the Centres been informed of this additional funding? Have any applied for grants?

Response

None of the children’s centres have applied for support within our grants programme. We are currently working through how this funding can have the most impact which we will then talk through with the relevant organisations, and will then launch the programme of support as appropriate.

Supplementary question

Can we move this forward quickly before it is too late for the centres, and make sure all centres know the procedure; and ensure the small grants process is followed to get money to them quickly.?

Supplementary Response

Yes we can, although we have to remember this is not providing long-term funding.

26. From Councillor Simmons to Councillor Turner – ward member CIL

We were earlier informed that any unspent CIL money (from the fund allocated to Councillors) would not be rolled over to the new financial year. But I am aware of at least one Councillor who has been told differently. Can you please clarify the situation?

Response

The City Executive Board took a decision recently, at its 9 February meeting, to roll forward Member’s CIL allocations for one year. This proposed they should be spent by 31 March 2018 and after that money would only be rolled forward for schemes that may be implemented over more than one year or for schemes that are in the budget report.

Minute 134 of the minutes – page 91 of your agenda – records this.

Thank you for giving me the opportunity to ensure all councillors are fully aware of this extension.

27. From Councillor Landell Mills to Councillor Turner– covered market

What plans have the City Council to market the Covered Market to all the new visitors who will come to Oxford once Westgate opens?

Response

As part of our continued marketing campaign for the covered market we plan to re-issue a covered market leaflet/flyer to local businesses, attractions, hotels etc. This will

continue to be placed at the park and rides, railway station and other local tourist destinations such as Bicester Village.

We have also contacted the Westgate Alliance to explore any opportunity to include directional signage to the covered market from within Westgate.

There are also plans to continue with the outdoor events on Market Street and include the covered market in the Oxford Independent Business guide which has been launched this spring.

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

28. From Councillor Gant to Councillor Price - unitary Implementation Exec

The bid for a single unitary authority currently with the Secretary of State envisages that, in the event of a decision in principle that the Secretary of State is "minded" to proceed, a statutory joint committee will be established, to be succeeded in due course by an Implementation Executive, both bodies including representation from this council.

Will the Leader take part, and/or nominate a member of CEB?

Response

The Council's response to the Secretary of State's decision will be determined at the time that it is known.

Supplementary question

Would it not indicate that the Leader has Oxford's interests at heart if he were to agree to take part?

Supplementary Response

I am not speculating or making a decision on any course of action until after the response to the County Council's bid is known which will not now be until well after the general election on 8 June.

29. From Councillor Gant to Councillor Price – unitary transition team

The proposal for a single unitary council also envisages a "transition team drawn from the skills of all the existing councils". Will senior city council officers take part?

Response

The Council's response to the Secretary of State's decision will be determined at the time that it is known.

30. From Councillor Gant to Councillor Price – unitary spend

Could the Leader provide a statement of how the funding allocated by council for a "robust" response to the single unitary proposal has been spent so far, including:

- the cost of the petition and associated campaign

- the cost of the direct mailshot to all households
- whether the items above and any other items were authorised by officers under delegated responsibility powers

Could he also confirm that these and all other items of expenditure associated with the campaign have come from the funding stream allocated by Council for that purpose; whether any of those funds remain unspent; if so, how the remaining funds will be used

Response

Expenditure in response to the unitary county council proposals and the County Council's extensive publicity campaign has been as follows:

2016/17 Expenditure to date

Funded from the devolution and unitary proposals budget (£53,000 for 2016/17), and from the communications budget

- £6,800: for additional communications capacity
- £14,700: Ipsos/ MORI residents' survey
- £23,900: Distribution of the letter to residents
- £3,300: Design and printing
- £4,700: Advertisements

Budgets 2017/18

- A budget allocation of £75,000 was agreed by Council to fund future policy and communications work (if needed), in connection with devolution proposals.
- To date this includes a £17,000 to commission Deloitte for an analysis and report to respond to the unitary county submission.

Decisions on spending within the agreed budgets are delegated to officers with approval from legal and finance officers where required.

31. From Councillor Fooks to Councillor Price - City Representatives scheme funding

Can the Board Member set out how much Council funding has been allocated to the City Representatives scheme?

Response

The City's twinning links are highly successful and of long standing and the City Representatives programme is an initiative to increase the involvement of young people in twinning.

Through a programme of web-development training, travel, and event design, the objective is to create a community of young people who will be ambassadors for twinning among other young people in Oxford.

The aims are:

- To encourage more young people to get involved in twinning
 - o Participants will lead twinning activities and begin to develop groups of young people around each link who can plan their own projects

- To discover what activities would attract and engage young people
- To increase the profile of twinning by creating a more engaging web presence for Oxford twinning activity which is:
 - o Accessible for twin links to contribute to events calendar and photo gallery themselves
 - o Attractive and exciting for public
 - o Provides a one-stop information point for events, opportunities to get involved, and requests for help across all the links

The budget for the scheme is derived from three places:

- £950 from International Links budget 16-17
- £1500 from International Links budget 17-18
- £2500 from OIL grant 17-18
- Small donations from some councillors' ward budgets

Supplementary question

When will there be a report on this scheme?

Supplementary Response

I don't have that information.

32. From Councillor Simmons to Councillor Price – replace SMT

What is the plan for replacing those members of the senior management team who are leaving the Council's employ?

Response

The Appointments Committee will be meeting on 24 and 28 April to consider candidates for an interim Chief Executive appointment. Should these interviews prove to be nugatory, an alternative internal interim arrangement has been developed. Peter Sloman's last day in post is June 16th. Peter has already put in place arrangements to cover David Edwards' post, and discussions about additional resources required to meet the demands in planning and housing are taking place currently.

33. From Councillor Thomas to Councillor Price— council owned letting agency

Just over a year ago, the Council passed a Green motion (amended by Labour) which sought to address the high levels of private rents in the City. As part of the agreed motion, it was stated that the Council would 'in the longer term' take into consideration:

1. Setting up a new letting agency owned and operated by the Council
2. Operating this letting agency according to best practice by: (a) charging no fees to tenants (b) offering longer tenancies where appropriate (c) publishing and promoting fair rent levels

This letting agency should look at the feasibility of voluntary agreements involving "third-generation" rent controls (inflation-related rent stabilisation) coupled with strong

contractual rights (including first refusal rights on the next tenancy and flexibility for landlords wishing to occupy/sell and so on)

3. The Council may also consider offering accreditation to other agencies wishing to operate under this standard.

Has any progress been made on these 'longer term' actions?

Response

No. The recent regulatory changes announced by government can be expected to have an effect on the private rented sector and could potentially reduce the level of abuse of agency fee charges. As the impact of those changes becomes clear, there may be a case for revisiting this proposal. At the current time, our view is that it would be unviable to set up an agency of this type without a substantial subsidy. The private rental market is extremely buoyant, and of course, there is no budget allocation to cover such a subsidy.

Supplementary question

We did talk about what we could do to reduce rents. When will we start seriously to look at reducing rents in the city?

Supplementary Response

A letting agency does not of itself reduce rents: this is in the gift of landlords. We need a change in government policy before this will change. The letting agency proposal was intended to provide a viable means of helping to regulate the private rented sector: at the moment it is not so we are not pursuing this.

34. From Councillor Simmons to Councillor Price – EU nationals leaving council

I have heard several reports of non-UK EU nationals leaving employment in Oxford, and departing the UK, as a result of the uncertainties created by Brexit. Has the City Council experienced any such trends amongst its own staff? If so, has this created particular recruitment problems?

Response

Currently, there are a maximum of 146 Council employees who may be EU nationals (89 undeclared and 57 specified on the council's HR system (iTrent)).

Since the Referendum there have been 75 resignations from the Council and only three of these were non-UK EU Nationals – 1 Irish, 1 Italian and 1 Polish. 23 staff did not declare their nationality. Staff turnover for the whole organisation was 10.61% for 2016/17, which is the average for a large organisation like the City Council.

There have not been any noticeable recruitment issues stemming from the decision to leave the EU although it is clear that the number of non UK EU nationals who apply for posts that are advertised has fallen – especially for posts in City Services.

We have communicated our commitment to assist employees who might be impacted by the change of citizenship status, and have offered assistance to any employees who would like to apply for a document to prove their right to live in the UK, as a citizen of a European Economic Area (EEA) country or Switzerland. The cost of this is £65 and we are offering to fund this amount on proof of application.

Supplementary question

Is there anything more we could do to increase applications from EU nationals?

Supplementary Response

This is a widespread problem, part of the wider effect of government policy. The uncertainty leads to fewer applications from EU nationals. We will do all we can to encourage people to apply, and suggestions are welcome.

35. From Councillor Wolff to Councillor Price – EU freedom of movement

The Council has previously voted to support the rights of non-UK EU residents living and working in the City. What is the City Council doing to publicly support and campaign for the continuing freedom of movement of people between the UK and the EU?

Response

See the answer to q 33, and in addition, we have established the Oxford European Association which will be a citizen led vehicle to campaign for the rights of EU citizens living and working in the Oxford area.

