

To: Council

Date: 20 July 2017

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

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.
3. Please note that the first address on the Motion will be given by two separate speakers.

Addresses in part 2

- 1a Address by Shaista Aziz on the Motion on reducing hate crime
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2. Address by Hassan Sabrie, Chair East Oxford United Football Club
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4. Address by Judith Harley – replacement for Temple Cowley Pool

Addresses in part 2

1a Address by Shaista Aziz on the Motion on reducing hate crime

My name is Shaista Aziz, I'm a proud Oxfordian and was born in the city and grew up here and attended nursery and primary and high school in the city. My family live in Oxford and my nieces and nephews attend local schools.

I'm a journalist, a former aid worker and a women's rights and anti racism campaigner.

I'm the founder of the anti racism digital platform 'The Everyday Bigotry Project'. We aim to create debate and disrupt narratives around bigotry. We are advocacy project and work closely with another anti racism project – Post Ref Racism.

The Everyday Bigotry Project creates space to generate debate and discussions on how to tackle bigotry – one of our main focuses has been anti Muslim and racial hate crime, however we believe all forms of bigotry must be tackled and in order to do this we understand the interaction – the connections - between racism, misogyny, homophobia, disability, and classism.

Increasingly we are working on issues around gendered Islamophobia.

I have been working in schools in London to debate issues around racism and bigotry in schools with pupils of different ages.

I've conducted media training workshops for British Muslim women so they feel more comfortable to do media interviews and tell their stories, one of our key areas of work is to challenge narratives around bigotry which have been created and amplified by a number of media organisations and also by sections of social media users and sadly, our elected officials.

Over the past year I have moved back to Oxford following my work with international aid organisations and working in numerous international contexts across the world.

I have always known that despite my work taking me across the world, Oxford is my home and where my roots are and where my family, friends, and wider community are.

Sadly, like many visible minorities in our city and county I have been subjected to a number of hate crimes over the past three years, each of these racial and anti Muslim hate crimes have been reported to the police, here in Oxford and London. The incidents have included a man shouting racist abuse at me before driving his car at speed towards me in London, a man racially abusing me at a bus stop in Heading ton and then lurching to punch me, and most recently, in June, my mum and I were subjected to racial abuse and intimidating behaviour by a man in the centre of Oxford.

Again, this incident was reported to the police who continue to investigate the incident.

Racism has a devastating and visceral impact. It can make individuals lose self-confidence, fear further attacks, and retreat into themselves. It makes you question why your humanity, life, and dignity are of no worth to those who chose to target you with hate.

As I have said bigotry intersects, misogyny and Islamophobia is connected – my visibility as a woman, in the very public work I do and my visibility in places where bigots do not expect to see me, my confidence – it acts as a trigger to these individuals, in my experience they have always been men. Islamophobia is increasingly gendered and it is designed to push women back into their homes and to make women feel scared.

The toxic political and public discourse in our country especially in the run up to the Brexit vote has created an atmosphere where open and brazen racism is again visible and present on the streets of our country.

As an anti racism campaigner and a journalist I am hearing more and more testimonies from individuals- especially women impacted by hate crimes.

A few weeks ago I organised and chaired a meeting for Muslim women in our city to hold a discussion with representatives from Thames Valley Police to discuss their lived experiences of unreported hate crimes.

One woman of Pakistani heritage said she no longer felt safe to take her granddaughter to the park alone. Another woman spoke about how in the past year she has been racially abused while walking. She said this had not happened to her in the previous six years of living in Oxford.

I have also kickstarted an idea now being carried forward by Oxford City Council to put up posters in our city asking the public to report hate crime.

It is important for us as a city to send a clear message – we are a city that has a zero tolerance policy towards hate and all forms of bigotry. This is especially important because we are an international city with links across the globe.

We must not be complacent in understanding why we need to publically and vocally advocate for creating a city where everyone feels safe, respected and valued.

1b. Address by Dr Hojjat Ramzy on the Motion on reducing hate crime

Honourable members of the Oxford City Council, I greet you with the Islamic greeting of peace Assalamu Alaykum, peace be up on you all.

The number of hate crimes in Oxford and UK is growing, and we are in urgent need of tougher punishments for all acts of racism, islamophobia, anti-Semitism and other forms of prejudice and discrimination.

As a representative of the Muslim community in Oxford and director of Tell-MAMA in the Thames Valley, which measures Anti-Muslim Attacks, I would like to praise Cllr Tom Hayes and the Oxford City Council for attempting to highlight this issue to the government. I believe all Muslims in Oxford support this action in calling for this motion.

Since Brexit, the lives of many British Muslims have been turned upside down.

Muslims are fearful for their lives, their properties and their places of worship.

The far right has interpreted the 'yes' vote for Brexit as a licence to show hatred and enmity towards Muslims and other minority groups in the UK.

The rate of reported hate crimes by police and Tel-MAMA is high and the rate of people who have been the subject of hate crimes is even higher.

Many are afraid that if they report these crimes, the police complicated procedure may add to their stress and the perpetrators may retaliate and the situation may escalate. Therefore, they don't report it.

Consequently, in fear, they are suffering in silence, and many more will do so too, If the full force of law is not been used against the perpetrator of these evil acts.

Dear Friends the tougher laws and punishments will reduce the rate of hate crimes and restore hope and security to communities around the country.

Thank you and God bless

Written Response from Councillor Hayes, Board Member for Community Safety

Everybody living, working, and visiting Oxford has the right to be treated without discrimination or prejudice. New figures show a significant increase in racially motivated

hate crimes in Oxford (and across the country) which is why the City Council is considering a motion which calls for unity and tolerance across all our communities and a government review of hate crime legislation.

We have seen two strong public addresses on the issue of hate crime, which this Council will no doubt reflect upon during our later discussion of the hate crime motion. I would like to thank the two members of the public for their addresses to Full Council, their long-time campaigning for a stronger, united, and diverse city, and their ongoing campaigning to tackle hate crime.

As part of that ongoing campaigning, I'm pleased to see a commitment to talking with everybody affected by discrimination in this city. I hope to see more of the meetings which one speaker has organised and chaired for Muslim women to speak directly with local police officers.

Oxford City Council takes reports of hate crime seriously and works closely with Thames Valley Police to address them, and I'm having fruitful discussions about this matter with Oxford's police leadership.

We take very seriously indeed our role in building cohesive and strong communities all year round. Through the funding of community events such as Cowley Road Carnival (which happily takes place in part in my ward), the funding of community groups, and the organisation of community, sports, and leisure activities, we help to bring the city's communities together. And one particularly important way of bringing people together is through the council's maintenance of shared public spaces, namely our fantastic community centres across Oxford.

Newly released hate crime figures reflect those incidents which have been reported. Clearly there will be an underreporting of hate crime, which means we don't have the clearest or fullest picture of the level of hate crime in Oxford. I hope that these addresses and the motion to be considered later will encourage everybody to report hate crime if they experience or witness it.

2. Address by Hassan Sabrie, Chair East Oxford United Football Club

Hello Councillors

Thank you for inviting me to speak to you on behalf of East Oxford United Football Club (EOUFC). The club has been set up since 2009 and now has 85 members. The age of the young people coming to the club varies and we have teams for different age groups (7 year to 16 age groups).

The boys who come along, mainly come from low-income families in Oxford including East Oxford, Blackbird Leys, Barton and Rose Hill. They also come from many different cultural backgrounds - Somalia, India, Jamaica, Afghanistan, Sudan. Any others?

We have already had an 8 a side football tournament for refugees, asylum seekers and migrants playing for a 'United Oxford Club' to foster community cohesion and integration. This was a great success and brought together many different organisations to work together including MIND, Refugee Resource, the City Council and the Oxford Mail.

We are planning this year to have another football event linked in with Oxford Against Cuttingwork to help prevent female genital mutilation (FGM) of girls and women living in Oxfordshire. There will be 12 countries represented at the football tournament and it will a great event to highlight the issues related to FGM at an event where lots of different cultures and backgrounds will be there.

We also plan to have more activities for girls in the future, including football, and are currently working with MIND on table tennis activities for both boys and girls.

The club is also really excited because as part of Oxford's twinning relationship with Perm, Russia, young footballers from EOUFC have been invited to take part in a summer camp in Perm in August 2017. The club has been fundraising in every way possible, through sponsorship, grants, and events, and still have a bit of funding left to find and would be grateful for any contribution from councillors.

The club are doing great things in the community and want to become more self-sufficient as the boys and their families really enjoy the football matches and it is good for both increasing physical activity and also community cohesion and integration.

We have to pay out weekly hire charges for the football pitches and changing rooms at Cowley Marsh park and also pay for the referees for matches. We are applying for grants to help us. If we can get trained some of our members as referees then we can save on the costs of buying in referees. We would also like to see if we can talk with the Council about whether our group together with any other local groups could manage the Cowley Marsh Pavilion. This would save us hiring it from the Council and would help us to become more self-sufficient in terms of funding.

EOUFC have really strong links across a wide variety of cultures and communities in Oxford. We have done really well to raise funding to go to PERM but it has taken a lot of time to do this. We want to develop and grow and have lots of ideas to get people active, so need more funding and volunteers to keep moving forward!

I'm immensely proud of our football club, and I'm here now to ask you - the Council - to work with us - in providing modest funds and helping access facilities – to help promote social cohesion here in Oxford.

3. Address by Artwell – facilities in Barton

Barton has lost three community spaces in the last four years. Because of this, the very successful Ballet Dance troupe has ceased to function, along with other youth and adult gatherings. Sandhills and Barton has well in excess of 800 people under the age of eighteen, and the loss of three community spaces has impacted greatly on their group activities. Council, in the City by-election in May over two hundred Sandhills and Barton residents voted for the Independent candidate, who called for more community-managed Community Space for hire for the people of the ward. Elected Councillors and Executive Officers, over five hundred people have already signed a Petition asking for the former Royal British Legion site to be restored as a community-managed Community Space. In addition, we require assistance with the restoration of St. Mary's Church and Community Hall, which was heavily used by the people of Barton, prior to the Hall's closure.

My plea is very simple: please listen to the people of Barton. Instead of – or as well as – improving the neighbourhood centre, please use some of this very considerable amount of Regeneration money to restore the Royal British Legion site into a community-managed community space, and help to restore St. Mary's Church and Community Hall for the people of the ward.

At the City Executive Board meeting on Tuesday 20th June 2017, the expenditure of £3.7 million Regeneration Grant for Barton, including £950.000 to "improve" the largely pristine neighbourhood Centre, was approved.

It is of great concern that none of decision-makers or speakers at the CEB were residents of Barton. As a resident of Barton, and as someone who is aware of the needs in Barton, I would ask the Council to use this considerable amount of public money to meet the real needs of the people of Barton. I believe it would be a dereliction of public duty to spend the £3.7 million in the form currently outlined by the CEB meeting.

Written Response from Councillor Sinclair, Board Member for Culture and Communities

Barton residents have told us clearly and repeatedly that they believe the success of the Barton Park development depends on communities being well integrated. Key to this integration is community space which is shared across Barton and Barton Park. The investment we are making will bring an improved Neighbourhood Centre – part managed by the community – which will provide more accessible and flexible use whilst also developing health services for the growing population. The new pavilion will not only provide modern changing facilities for the sports pitches but also further flexible space for community use. There will be a new community hub attached to the school in Barton Park and of course Barton Leisure Centre already provides a multi-purpose room in addition to an excellent swimming pool and gym. Further to this we understand that Bayards Hill primary school is currently looking to offer their facilities, both inside and out, for the use of the community.

We have previously approached the British Legion about surrendering their lease but they have declined to do so. We have a responsibility to invest funds in programmes which reflect the community's priorities whilst providing value for money and through this investment Barton stands to enjoy at least four modern community facilities to meet a variety of needs. If the ballet troupe is still looking for alternative accommodation we would be very keen to investigate alternative accommodation for them.

4. Address by Judith Harley – replacement for Temple Cowley Pool

Lord Mayor, Councillors,

As you should know, the City Council is working on a new Oxford Local Plan 2036, which will shape development in Oxford over the next 20 years. The current public consultation runs until Friday 25th August, and the current consultation leaflet states: "We have listened to what local communities, businesses and other organisations told us and are now considering a range of options."

Councillors, I am asking you to listen to what the local communities in Temple Cowley, Cowley, and further afield have been telling you for several years – we need a swimming pool in Temple Cowley to serve the needs of the ever-increasing local population. We do not want to hear from you a re-run of your arguments about the new swimming pool in Blackbird Leys, which have been fully explored and exhausted. We want – and need – a swimming pool in Temple Cowley. The Oxford Local Plan 2036 could be a means of achieving this.

On Wednesday 28th June I attended the Oxford Local Plan Consultation Briefing facilitated by the Civic Society and the City Council. On speaking to City Officers after the event it appears that some current site designations in the existing Local Plan, 2016, are being re-assessed and could change according to local need for the Local Plan 2036. With this in mind I am asking you as a Council to support the residents of Temple Cowley and the surrounding area in their proposal to re-designate the site of the Marsh Road City Council Depot, which we are told will be vacated within the next 5 years, for leisure – specifically for a new swimming pool and associated facilities – instead of its current designation for housing. We appreciate that there is a chronic housing shortage in Oxford but, as I have said at numerous Planning meetings, housing consideration should not override all other considerations. With increasing housing development all around us, including on the former Temple Cowley Pools and Fitness Centre site, we need increasing leisure facilities in Temple Cowley, and the Marsh Depot, conveniently situated next to Cowley Marsh Park, would be an ideal leisure site to complement the Park itself.

One of our local City Councillors, Councillor Saj Malik, told residents on the doorstep when campaigning for last year's local elections that he expected to see a new swimming pool on the Marsh Depot site within the next 10 years. Our previous Local MP, Andrew Smith, said something very similar on BBC radio last year, and told me in person, around the same time, that the Marsh Depot would make a good site for a swimming pool. As we already, clearly, have the backing of our local councillors and our former MP for this scheme, can I ask the rest of the Council to answer the following question:

As housing consideration should not override all other considerations, will you support the residents of Temple Cowley and the surrounding area in their proposal, for the Local Plan 2036, to designate the site of the Marsh Road City Council Depot for a new swimming pool and associated facilities, instead of its current designation for housing?

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