

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| To: | Council |
| Date: | 29 January 2018  |
| 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**

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.

This report is republished after the Council meeting as part of the minutes pack. This lists the full text of speeches delivered as submitted, any written responses, and any verbal responses.

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

#

# Address by Judith Harley

Lord Mayor, Councillors,

As some of you may be aware, Monday 15th January was Dr. Martin Luther King Junior Day. In the United States, Martin Luther King Jr Day is a federal holiday, to celebrate Dr. King’s role in the American Civil Rights movement and in combating legalised racism. Traditionally, this day is the Monday closest to Dr. King’s birthday, of January 15, 1929. In the UK, there is little mention of this celebration, or its significance.

During the week of January 20th – 27th, Oxford Town Hall hosted the “Never Again” exhibition to mark Holocaust Memorial Day in Oxford. This event is held in association with Oxford Stand Up To Racism, whose website states, “Throughout the event there will be guest speakers invited from Jewish, Muslim, Roma, LGBTQ, Women, disabled communities, Trade unionists and the Labour movement.” There is no mention of guest speakers from the African Caribbean community.

Oxford City Council gives great publicity to championing the LGBT communities. Oxford City Council is a Stonewall Diversity Champion and the City Council marks Oxford Pride in June, Bi-Visibility Day in September, and International Trans Day of Remembrance in November.

In the UK, African heritage people have yet to be granted a National day to remember those African heritage people who suffered under colonialism and slavery. As mentioned earlier, Oxford City Council celebrates a range of days celebrating various communities. It is high time that Oxford City Council acknowledged, and addressed, the challenges, and limited life opportunities, faced by those of African heritage in the City today; this could include an African Remembrance Day.

On the City Council’s website, Councillor Ed Turner, is quoted: “We are proud of Oxford's position as a welcoming, tolerant city, while always aware that there is more that can be done so that everyone can feel at home here.”, and Councillor Tom Hayes is quoted: “As a council we seek to create a cohesive and tolerant community in the city and to understand the particular challenges facing different groups.”

It seems to me that the City Council’s sights are disproportionately set on championing the LGBT community, whilst the City’s African Caribbean community are severely under-represented, ill-considered, poorly served, and generally neglected. Those of African Caribbean heritage feel that they are being ignored, stigmatised, and met with racism and disparity.

Few of you – few of us – can possibly know what it is like to live in a black skin. My colleague, Artwell, submitted an address for today’s Council, expressing his concerns that the City Council’s recent public call for drug dealers to be reported will result in disproportionate, unjustified, discriminatory, and racist reporting of those of African heritage. This concern is supported by the fact that current British Oscar nominee Daniel Kaluuya sued the Police in 2013 for assault and false imprisonment after being wrongly suspected of drug dealing. Artwell’s address was, in my opinion, unreasonably censored by Council Officers; it appears that, whilst the City Council widely and publicly champions such matters as LGBT issues, it fails to address its own discrimination, racism, under-representation, and disparity of opportunity which affects Oxford African heritage residents today.

Last September’s David Lammy Review revealed shocking levels of racial bias throughout the justice system, concluding that the treatment of African heritage young people is getting worse. The Lammy Review was followed by October’s publication of the Government’s Race Disparity Audit, which highlights deeply ingrained racial disparities in the UK, especially for those of African heritage, in education, the courts, employment, and life opportunities.

Dr Martin Luther King Junior said, “Injustice anywhere is a threat to justice everywhere.” What will you, the City Council, do to address the injustices to, and to understand the particular challenges facing, Oxford’s African Caribbean community, and make Oxford more welcoming to this group?

This year marks the 50th anniversary of Dr King’s assassination; he died on 4th April 1968. This year would be a good opportunity for Oxford City Council to recognise, and begin to tackle, the racism, neglect, and lack of opportunity for those of African Caribbean heritage in this City today, both within, and outside, the Council. The City Council should seek advice from the City’s African Caribbean community, as it has from other groups, and employ someone, with appropriate skills and expertise, specifically to address their matters and concerns.

I look forward to hearing if the Council comprehends this, and how the Council plans to redress this situation.

Thank you!

**Summary of verbal response from Board Member Councillor Price**

The council’s priority has been to treat equally all groups who are disadvantaged. This is considered in all reports and monitored. The council is affiliated to the NABAEMC (National Association of Black Asian and Ethnic Minority Councillors) (UK) and has contributed to their recent ‘equalities tracker’ survey of their member authorities. The council would be happy to have conversations with African and African Caribbean heritage groups about supporting heritage events.

# Question by Mr Lawson, delivered by Dr Piechnik accompanied by Mr Lawson

My name is James Lawson. I am a 67 years old Council Tenant, resident of Plowman Tower, which undergoes the major refurbishment right now.

Last year in October I addressed this council to say that the extensive works seriously interfere with my life and made a mess of my property. I have not received a written response to my address. One of the councillors stood up then and promised that everything will be addressed. In all this time I have heard nothing back and there was no action taken. And I am not the most angry one, I hear that another resident took to attacking a Fortem worker with their walking stick.

Hence repeat my question from the previous address, Is it true I do not pay for the works, and If I do pay, why no one has ever listened or responded to so many of my concerns. even after I flagged them here at the council meeting.

**Written Response from the Board Member, Councillor Rowley**

When the Council made the decision to upgrade the tower blocks to ensure we provided good quality, safe accommodation to modern standards into the future, we acknowledged that these works were likely to cause some disruption to residents.

Both Fortem and Oxford City Council have Resident Liaison Officers working on the tower block project in order to liaise with residents and ensure that the works inconvenience them as little as possible. I can confirm that we are and have been aware of Mr Lawson’s concerns.

Mr Lawson has been advised by the OCC Resident Liaison Officer that we would be able to provide support throughout the works and he has the appropriate contact numbers. In addition, the resident Liaison officer from Fortem has also been in contact with Mr Lawson during the works and we have been working with him to try and resolve his concerns.

We are continuing to work with Mr Lawson to address his concerns and hope that we can quickly reach a satisfactory conclusion.

I can however confirm that as a tenant Mr Lawson is not directly paying for these works.

**Summary of verbal response from Board Member Councillor Rowley**

I would add (*to the written response*) that there is no excuse for anyone attacking a worker doing their job.