

To: Council

Date: 7 October 2019

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 from Cabinet Members

Introduction

1. Addresses made by members of the public to the Council, and questions put to the Cabinet members or Leader, registered by the deadline in the Constitution, are below. Any written responses available are also below.
2. The text reproduces that sent in the speakers and represents the views of the speakers. This is not to be taken as statements by or on behalf of the Council
3. This report will be republished after the Council meeting as part of the minutes pack. This will list the full text of speeches delivered as submitted, summaries of speeches delivered which differ significantly from those submitted, and any further responses.

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

Addresses and questions in part 2

1. Address by Cllr Alexandrine Kantor- in support of Motion (a) Supporting EU nationals
2. Address by Zile Huma – situation in Kashmir
3. Address by Henry Owen, The Community Action Groups Project – in support of Motion (c) Community Wealth
4. Question from Judith Harley – Oxford Direct Services Cowley Marsh depot
5. Address by Judith Harley - retaining the William Morris Sports Field as a sports field

Addresses and questions in part 2

1. Address by Cllr Alexandrine Kantor- in support of Motion (a) Supporting EU nationals

I would like to thank Oxford city council to have submitted this motion.

My name is Alexandrine, and I am a European citizen living in Oxford Blackbird Leys and also a Councillor somewhere else. I am one of your colleague, friend, my partner and family is British.

Since 2016, EU nationals like myself were promised again and again that 'there will be no change for EU citizens already lawfully resident in the UK and [...] will be treated no less favourably as they are at present'.

This is not what we have at present. After three years of living in limbo, our homes and livelihoods are in danger of being threatened by the further uncertainty brought about by the prospect of an even more chaotic no-deal Brexit and a failing Home Office. Only a third of us have applied, and many are receiving the wrong and lesser pre-settled status.

There is no possibility of knowing how many EU nationals need to apply, leaving vulnerable and unaware EU nationals left at risk of becoming unlawful residents the mercy of the Home Office's 'Hostile Environment'.

That is why we need all the help we can get. We're your citizens too, we vote for you and pay Council taxes.

Please, I urge this Council to pass this motion and reach out to us. You need to help the vulnerable people to apply, you need to train employers and landlords to not discriminate us and teach them what to do. The Home Office is not providing enough help. Brexit hasn't happened yet and we are already being discriminated due to lack of post-Brexit Settlement scheme.

All the issues raised with this motion could be avoided if the EU settlement scheme was a declaratory or registration system where EU citizens are considered lawful per default and provided with physical document to prove the immigration status. So I thank you very much for suggesting just that to the Home Secretary.

Verbal response from the Leader of the Council, Councillor Brown

Thank you for your speech in support of the motion later on the agenda. We share your concerns and are trying to address the impact on residents, including raising awareness across the city. We recognise the situation is difficult and encourage people to apply for settled status.

2. Address by Zile Huma – situation in Kashmir

Speaker Zile Huma, Student of Master of Public Policy, University of Oxford

Respected Councillors,

Asslam O Allikum and Good Afternoon,

It is a great honour for me to address full council session of the city of Oxford to highlight ongoing humanitarian crises in Jammu and Kashmir. As we all know, The Government of India unilaterally scrapped the article 370 against the will of the people of Jammu and Kashmir on 5th August ,2019, thereby defying all democratic and constitutional norms of the civilised world.

It has been 63rd day, since 12.55 million people of Jammu and Kashmir are under curfew and facing complete information blackout. Thousands of military troops have been deployed to suppress the voice of Kashmiri people. They have no communication with the outside world. They have no access to food and medicines. The doctors have lost contact with the patients suffering from various deadly diseases. The whole area of Jammu and Kashmir has been converted into a jail.

There are multiple international media reports of violence against the protestors through pellet gun and arbitrary arrest of thousands of innocent people. The political leadership of Jammu and Kashmir have been silenced and put under arrest. According to government data, over 200 local politicians have been detained, including former Chief Ministers Mehbooba Mufti and Omar Abdullah.

According to the recent news published by international media young boys are being tortured through beating and electric shocks. The figure through media shows 13000 young kids have been arrested till now. The overall situation in Jammu and Kashmir is alarming for whole humanity and requires immediate action.

Dear Councillors, The situation in Kashmir has jolted the conscience of all peace-loving people around the world. Many US senators have spoken against this human rights abuse in Jammu and Kashmir. French parliament, first time in history has discussed this issue. Organization of Islamic countries secretariat has given statement to condemn these brutalities. Genocide watch has also raised its concerns over threatening situation in Kashmir and risk of genocide and ethnic cleansing. Many UK MPs have also taken bold stance to highlight human rights violations in Jammu and Kashmir.

Despite all these steps so far, justice has not been served. The recent earthquake that has taken 37 lives and resulted in massive infrastructure damage in Azad Kashmir, must have affected Indian occupied Kashmir as well. But Indian government is not allowing any humanitarian help to rescue people affected by this natural calamity and as well as the man-made disaster.

In these dark times, we have to play our role. I also request you all councillors to write personally a letters to your MPs, to bring this matter to the attention of higher leadership and international organisations on immediate basis to put pressure on Indian government to revoke the unilateral decision taken through force and allow the people of Jammu and Kashmir to have their say. Only people of Kashmir have the right to decide their future.

I am extremely thankful to all of you who earlier joined in my initiatives to launch first two protests along other students and academia from Oxford university and showed

solidarity with Kashmiri people. I really appreciate all of you who endorsed my statement to highlight Kashmir issue which I emailed to all MPs in UK to apprise them about human rights violations in Jammu and Kashmir.

I really appreciate efforts of Ms. Anneliese Dodds MP Oxford East, video messages of Leader of Council Cllr Brown and Opposition Leader Cllr Gant, Councillor Lubna Arshad and Councillor Mr. Altaf Khan for being very vocal against undemocratic and brutal actions of Indian government in Jammu and Kashmir.

Once again thank you for giving me this opportunity to speak and become the voice of the voiceless people of Jammu and Kashmir.

Verbal response from the Leader of the Council, Councillor Brown

Thank you for coming to speak to us about this. We share your concerns about the situation in Kashmir.

Councillor Gant, having been named in the address, made a statement re-iterating his support for the speaker.

3. Address by Henry Owen, The Community Action Groups Project – in support of Motion (c) Community Wealth

The Community Action Group Network in Oxfordshire is made up of over 70 community groups and enterprises who are taking action to tackle climate change, and improve our local environment and the health of the communities we live in.

My job is to support and advocate for this amazing network of groups, and I wanted to add our voice of support for this motion.

CAG Oxfordshire whom I work for is also a co-operative, and are members are the community groups we support. Being a co-operative aligns with our values, but is also a practical and effective way of operating. Community or worker ownership and control means co-operative enterprises can better serve their communities, see opportunities and needs that might otherwise be overlooked, and demonstrate that we can achieve much more looking beyond a short-term profit motive. Giving people a stake in the enterprises that matter in their lives is vital if we are to build cohesive communities that can weather the challenges of the coming decades. Co-ops UK research also indicates better survival rates for co-operative businesses than non-co-operative ones.

Various community action groups (CAGs) could benefit, directly and indirectly, from the city council adopting a clearer community wealth building approach. There are many existing co-operative and community businesses in the CAG Network in Oxford, including: Broken Spoke Bike Co-op, Flo's – The Place in the Park, Oxford Green Print, Cultivate, Transition by Design, Hogacre Common Eco Park, Share Oxford – a library of things, Oxfordshire Community Land Trust, and SESI Refill.

Each of these could benefit in different ways from being a larger part of the supply chains of our anchor institutions. This could be: cycle training from our local bike co-op for students, more food from local ecological farmers in our healthcare facilities, to a local zero-waste co-operative providing soaps for our public toilets.

I also see large potential for the city council to play a key role in working with partners locally, such as my team and local community action groups, to develop new cooperative community businesses to fill gaps in local co-operative provision of goods and services. This could be anything from laundry, to prepared food, to security services. By finding and filling these gaps we can meet the needs of anchor institutions in our city whilst providing increased social value in the community. We could have more and better local jobs, more connected communities, and a more equal distribution of wealth. We have an opportunity in front of us to work around the confines of national austerity to help build a fairer, greener local economy. This motion is a useful step towards taking that opportunity.

Verbal response from the Leader of the Council, Councillor Brown

Thank you for your speech in support of the motion later on the agenda. We are supporting and encourage co-operative groups in the city through the work of the council and the Councillor Champion for co-operatives.

4. Question from Judith Harley – Oxford Direct Services Cowley Marsh depot

Lord Mayor, Councillors,

Just over two years ago, in August 2017, the City Council granted itself planning permission to temporarily extend, for up to 5 years, the City Council's Marsh Road Depot " ... **to provide additional storage space** ... " and to reconfigure and extend the adjoining Cowley Marsh Park car park to accommodate parking for Depot employees. Land for expansion of both Depot and car park was taken from Cowley Marsh Park, and for the former from its wildflower meadow. The decision notice issued in September 2017 had the condition that the Depot expansion would be temporary, " ... **for a limited period of 5 years only, expiring 5 years from the date of permission** ... " when the permitted use would be " ... **discontinued and the land returned to its former condition** ... ".

The Marsh Road Depot is occupied by the City Council's private limited company Oxford Direct Services Ltd (ODS) which, on its website, describes itself as " ... **the commercial arm of Oxford City Council ... made up of two companies that work together to deliver cost-effective public and commercial services** ... "

With numerous services advertised, and now comprising TWO companies, ODS is clearly a growing enterprise in a location of limited capacity. In a residential location, and next to leisure facilities, the Marsh Road Depot cannot sustain, and is totally unsuitable for, this expanding operation.

In April 2018 I asked Council what progress ODS had made in their plans to relocate from Marsh Road. In a written response, Councillor Turner said:

"Part of the ODS plan is to consider its corporate property portfolio to review whether it is fit for purpose to support the business expansion plans and this will be looked at over the next couple of years. The Council is mindful of the 5 year planning permission granted at the Cowley Marsh Park site."

Now that it is over 2 years since the grant of planning permission, and 18 months since Councillor Turner's comments, I am sure that the City Council will wish to reassure residents that it will ensure that ODS relocates within the next 3 years, and restores the wildflower meadow to its previous state.

To reinforce this reassurance, my question today is:

What is the outcome of the ODS review on whether its property portfolio is fit for purpose to support its business expansion plans, and what action is proposed to ensure ODS vacates Marsh Road within 3 years?

Written Response from Cabinet Member Councillor Chapman (read out at the meeting)

ODS is still in the process of reviewing its property portfolio in consultation with the Council and I hope we can complete the review in the next six months. Getting the right configuration of bases from which the expanding and increasingly successful ODS companies can operate is critical to their long term business success. We need to remember that the surpluses ODS makes are passed over to the Council to help us maintain and improve our public services. These monies make an increasing contribution as direct central funding from this Government for vital local services reduces to zero.

The planning permission relates only to the temporary extension, not the entire depot site. The Council and ODS will comply with the conditions of the planning consent. There is no requirement to relinquish occupation of the original Cowley Marsh depot site.

5. Address by Judith Harley - retaining the William Morris Sports Field as a sports field

Monitoring Officer's Note regarding this address – for all councillors

This address on William Morris Close should be noted without further comment and should not have any verbal response from the Cabinet member or councillors for the following reasons:

- *Councillors are reminded that the address relates to a live planning application which will be determined by the East Area Planning Committee in due course.*
- *It is important for the Council not to fetter its discretion by stating in advance how a particular application will be determined. Officers must also be free to exercise their professional judgment when making recommendations for the determination of planning applications and they should not be constrained in that exercise by decisions made by Council.*
- *Equally, members should keep an open mind before an application is determined and therefore members who may sit on the committee should not give a view on this matter or they may be deemed to have formed a pre-determined view and be unable to participate in the determination of the application when it comes before the committee again in the future.”*

Lord Mayor, Councillors,

I have addressed Council several times in the last two years over the William Morris Sports Ground in Temple Cowley, because residents value this as a protected open space and wish to see it returned in its entirety to public use for open air sport and informal leisure activities. I last spoke to you in July, just before a planning application for housing on this site was considered by the East Area Planning Committee (EAPC). The planning application was deferred, but had been recommended for approval by the planning officer dealing with this application.

In Local Plan 2016 this site is identified as protected open space, a protection which has resulted in all previous applications for housing development on this site being recommended for refusal by City Council planning officers, and being refused by planning committees. 8 previous planning applications have been submitted for this site since 2012. One was withdrawn; City Council planners refused to determine another; and the remaining 6 were all recommended for refusal and subsequently refused. 4 planning appeals have been made against these refusals. 2 were withdrawn and the remaining 2 were dismissed. On behalf of residents I have spoken at every planning committee, and at every appeal, where this site has been discussed, opposing the developments.

In draft proposals for Local Plan 2036 (LP2036) the City Council indicated that this site could, in future, be allocated for leisure or housing. During last year's public consultation for this I, and several other Temple Cowley residents, submitted specific requests to preserve and enhance our leisure and community facilities, which included **retaining the William Morris Sports Field as a sports field, protected as open space by Policy SR2 as it is at present**. When, last October, I asked Council to support Temple Cowley residents with this request Councillor Hollingsworth replied, verbally, that this site allocation had been a difficult one for the planners to make, and that it would be left for an independent planning inspector to determine the allocation when LP2036 was decided at its public hearing.

Old Temple Cowley Residents' Association (OTCRA) has submitted a formal objection to the City Council's proposed allocation of this site for housing, and will provide a vigorous defence for retaining this for leisure only when given the opportunity at the Local Plan hearing. I am most concerned that, until LP2036 has been determined by the Planning Inspectorate at an independent hearing, any recommendation for housing on this site will deny OTCRA the opportunity to argue our case for allocating this site for leisure only; will usurp the authority of the planning inspectors and prevent them from reaching an independent decision which can actually be implemented; and will prejudice a fair outcome of the Local Plan.

Because the allocation of this particular site has been formally challenged, I had wanted to ask Council to ensure that no further recommendations for approving housing are made *for this particular site* until Local Plan 2036 has been independently inspected, objections heard, arguments defended, and the planning inspectors' decisions reached for allocation of sites. However, I have been advised by the Monitoring Officer that Council is not able to do this. If this is the case, will Council tell me how any recommendation, or approval, for housing on this site prior to inspection of LP2036 will not fetter the Planning Inspector's ability to independently determine this site's allocation?

OTCRA has the right to challenge the Council's allocation. As well as not fettering the Planning Inspector, how will Council ensure that we get a fair opportunity to present our case and formal challenge, with the expectation of having the site allocation changed, if a prejudicial decision to allow housing has been made?

Thank you.

Written response from the Cabinet Member for Planning and Sustainable Transport, Councillor Alex Hollingsworth (read out at the meeting)

The site in question is subject to a live planning application. As with all planning applications the City Council's officers must make recommendations to the planning committee, taking into account the national and local planning policies that might apply. The relevant planning committee or committees must then use their judgement to arrive at a decision on that planning application in the light of that advice

He drew attention to the advice from the Monitoring Officer.