

To: Council
Date: 5 October 2020
Title of Report: Questions on Notice from members of Council and responses from the Cabinet Members and Leader

Introduction

1. Questions submitted by members of Council to the Cabinet 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 will be republished after the Council meeting to include supplementary questions and responses as part of the minutes pack.
5. Unfamiliar terms may be briefly explained in footnotes.

Questions and responses

Cabinet Member for Affordable Housing and Housing the Homeless

1. From Councillor Wolff to Councillor Rowley – Rough sleeping rise

Question	Written Response
Following the virtual ending of rough sleeping in the City during the early weeks of the Covid crisis (following the provision of emergency support from Government), we are now sadly seeing	The numbers of rough sleepers have been consistently in the mid 20's since the beginning of May. The work we have undertaken with partners as part of the "Everyone In" initiative means that the data we have on people rough sleeping, and their circumstances is better than ever before. We now report weekly figures of rough sleepers to the Ministry

1. From Councillor Wolff to Councillor Rowley – Rough sleeping rise

rising numbers. This is presumably not, at this stage, due to increases in evictions (court proceedings having only re-started on 21st September).

What is the cause and what is the portfolio holder doing to get numbers of rough sleepers back down and get people the support they need?

of Housing, and our last reported figure was 25.

There are 12 people who have rejected offers of accommodation. The majority of the remainder are new rough sleepers waiting to be placed in accommodation. The main cause of people becoming homeless is relationship or family breakdown. Other causes are the breakdown of shared living arrangements, and people leaving prison. The council has secured the use of YHA until March 2021, and Canterbury House until July 2021, a total of 118 units, which means that there are accommodation offers for people who are rough sleeping. Where these have been rejected, the ST Mungo's outreach team continue to engage with people to try and find accommodation solutions.

2. From Councillor Wolff to Councillor Rowley – Rough sleeping count

Question

Can the Portfolio Holder please provide the most recent street count of rough sleepers?

When is the next street count scheduled?

Written Response

The first street count since the lockdown was undertaken in the early hours of 23rd September, and 23 rough sleepers were identified.

The next count will be the official annual street count which will be undertaken in November.

Cabinet Member for City Centre, Covered Market and Culture

No questions

Cabinet Member for Customer Focused Services

3. From Councillor Wade to Councillor Chapman – Repairs to Queen Street

Question	Written Response
<p>Repairs to Queen Street, undertaken by the Westgate Alliance management, commenced on 21 September.</p> <p>a) Why were repairs needed so soon after the street was made ready for bus and pedestrian travel in October 2017, and</p> <p>b) will the City be responsible for any of the cost of these repairs and,</p> <p>c) if so, what will that cost be?</p>	<p>Laing O'Rourke, the main contractor for the Westgate development, are responsible for Queen Street as it has not yet gained Highway Adoption sign off and was part of their works area.</p> <p>ODS were not involved in the original work, it was completed by one of Laing O'Rourke's contractors.</p> <p>ODS have been asked, in their trading capacity, to work for Laing O'Rourke and to reduce the camber on the road and re-lay the paving slabs. It is believed that the camber combined with the bus traffic across this area has caused the damage to the paving construction.</p> <p>Laing O'Rourke are funding all remedial works, this is part of their contract. They had to pay a bond to the County Council at the start of the project and will not have it refunded until highway adoption sign off has been achieved.</p> <p>Oxfordshire County Council, as the Highway Authority, are responsible for adoptions. Following Highway adoption sign off by the County, ODS will become responsible for the maintenance of these areas under the 101 Agreement. At present we do not know when this will be as it depends on when County sign off has been achieved.</p>

Cabinet Member for Finance and Asset Management; statutory Deputy Leader

4. From Councillor Simmons to Councillor Turner – Commercial property investment budget

Question	Written Response
<p>Has Council now finally abandoned its 2020 budget plans, labelled by the Greens at the time as 'crazy', to invest £60m in commercial property?</p>	<p>Any changes to spend on commercial property will be consulted upon as part of the revised Medium Term Financial Strategy</p>

5. From Councillor Roz Smith to Councillor Turner – City car park business rate costs

Question
How much does each city council owned car park cost in business rates??

Written Response

Below is a list of the rated car parks:

Car Park	RV	Gross Rate	Notes
Oxpens Road	£630,000	£322,560	<i>Will decrease soon when platform is re-located</i>
Worcester Street	£450,000	£230,400	
Gloucester Green	£312,500	£160,000	<i>Includes Bus Station, Market Stalls, Mgmt Areas and Public Toilets</i>
Redbridge Park & Ride	£218,000	£111,616	
<i>Thornhill Park & Ride</i>	<i>£152,000</i>	<i>£76,608</i>	<i>Payable to SODC</i>
Peartree Park & Ride	£134,000	£68,608	
Seacourt Park & Ride	£114,000	£58,368	
Worcester Street Overflow	£63,000	£32,256	
Old High Street, Headington	£60,000	£30,720	
Banbury Road	£58,000	£29,696	
St Clements	£48,000	£20,958.66	
Court Place Farm	£43,500	£21,706.50	
Ferry Pool Road	£39,500	£19,710.50	
Union Street (Cowley Road)	£29,500	£14,720.50	
St Leonards Road	£23,500	£11,726.50	
Walton Well Road	£13,500	£5,056.09	

5. From Councillor Roz Smith to Councillor Turner – City car park business rate costs

Alexandra Courts Recreation Ground	£13,000	£4,905.17	
Hinksey Park	£10,000	£4,990	
Ferry Hinksey Road Recreation Ground	£5,600	£2,641.24	
	TOTAL	£1,227,247.16	

Other car parks are both attached to parks and are free of charge are exempt as a park amenity.

Cabinet Member for Green Transport and Zero Carbon Oxford; non-statutory Deputy Leader

6. From Councillor Gant to Councillor Hayes – Natural Capital initiative

Question	Written Response
<p>At its meeting on 22 July 2019 this council confirmed its commitment to the government’s initiative to assess Natural Capital in our county, and offered to act as a pilot.</p> <p>Can the Cabinet member update Council on actions arising from this resolution?</p>	<p>Officers wrote to Defra Ministers to offer Oxford as a pilot location. A reply from Rebecca Pow MP, at that time Parliamentary Under Secretary of State was forwarded to Cllrs Goddard and Landell-Mills on 7 November 2019. At the time the advice was that the Minister would ensure that the offer was “kept in sight by Defra officials, as they advise in future on this very important initiative”. I have asked officers to forward the reply that was sent to Councillors. In July, a £5m pilot on establishing a new Natural Capital and Ecosystem Assessment was announced, officers are exploring that fund and others to further boost biodiversity work in Oxford. The City Council has also submitted a response to the Draft England Tree Strategy consultation in September 2020.</p>

7. From Councillor Gant to Councillor Hayes – Tranche 2 transport schemes

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Question

Were city council cabinet members or city officers consulted before the county submitted its proposals for tranche 2 transport schemes in the city?

Emergency active travel fund: Funding allocations for emergency active travel schemes for local authorities in the region of the United Kingdom due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

tranche 1 supports the installation of temporary projects for the COVID-19 pandemic

tranche 2 the creation of longer-term projects

Written Response

Neither city council members nor officers were involved in the development, drafting, or sign off of the Tranche 2 bid.

City council cabinet members were not consulted at any point. Officers were shown an outline presentation of the County Council's emerging thinking for Tranche 2 on 30th July 2020, but on a confidential basis as it had not yet been shared widely with County members.

The County Council did not share the final bid document with City Council prior to its submission.

8. From Councillor Simmons to Councillor Hayes – Tranche 2 Active Travel Grant bid

Question

Does the portfolio holder think it is acceptable that I had to resort to a Freedom of Information request to get Oxfordshire County Council to release a copy of the Tranche 2 Active Travel Grant bid?

Written Response

No. We are deeply concerned by the County Council administration's refusal to engage members, let alone consult them. We make this point repeatedly and would welcome it being acted upon. This concern about the lack of engagement extends to members in this City Council and members elected to the County Council itself.

9. From Councillor Henwood to Councillor Hayes – Low Traffic Neighbourhoods in Cowley

Question

I have campaigned for Low Traffic Neighbourhoods in Cowley.

Can the portfolio holder explain why this scheme which is a collaboration between the City and County Council hasn't been delivered on time or

Written Response

The County Council, as highway authority, is proposing several Low Traffic Neighbourhoods (LTNs) in Oxford.

These have come forward as a result of local neighbourhood campaigning - and have been included in the County Council's, Emergency Active Travel Fund (EATF) Tranche 1 work and within the

9. From Councillor Henwood to Councillor Hayes – Low Traffic Neighbourhoods in Cowley	
when the scheme will be delivered?	<p>subsequent Tranche 2 bid.</p> <p>The City Council supports the principle of liveable streets and the inclusion of some low traffic neighbourhood measures. However, we have not been involved in the development of these specific schemes.</p> <p>The City Council believes that consistent and extensive engagement and consultation with the public and stakeholders (including businesses and schools) is essential for the success of transport schemes. We will continue to emphasise this message to the County Council.</p>

10. From Councillor Henwood to Councillor Hayes – Low Traffic Neighbourhood consultation	
Question	Written Response
<p>During the introduction of Low Traffic Neighbourhood consultation local businesses and schools were not consulted, can I seek reassurance that the city council portfolio holder will urge county council counterparts to proactively seek the advice from local businesses and schools on how best to introduce the scheme?</p>	<p>The County Council, as highway authority, is proposing several Low Traffic Neighbourhoods (LTNs) in Oxford.</p> <p>These have come forward as a result of local neighbourhood campaigning - and have been included in the County Council's, Emergency Active Travel Fund (EATF) Tranche 1 work and within the subsequent Tranche 2 bid.</p> <p>The City Council supports the principle of liveable streets and the inclusion of some low traffic neighbourhood measures. However, we have not been involved in the development of these specific schemes.</p> <p>The City Council believes that consistent and extensive engagement and consultation with the public and stakeholders (including businesses and schools) is essential for the success of transport schemes. We will continue to emphasise this message to the County Council.</p>

11. From Councillor Simmons to Councillor Hayes – Climate emergency actions	
Question	Written Response

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Now that the majority of Councillors on Scrutiny Committee decided not to continue with the Climate Emergency Review Group, what is happening to the recommendations made by the Group last year and what plans are there to continue with this workstream?

(the Review Group only had time to look at buildings last year)?

I want to place on record, again, the Council’s warm thanks to Scrutiny Committee for establishing the Review Group and the members of the Group for their contributions to the Review. A significant amount of care, thought, and time was dedicated to the conclusion of the 59 cross-party recommendation of the Scrutiny Review Group and we want to ensure that each one is properly considered. That process is underway.

I shared the view with the Review Group at the time that the Council would benefit from aligning the various strands of activity taking place to address Oxford’s climate emergency response. The Citizens’ Assembly produced exceptionally useful insights which formed the basis of a December 2019 Cabinet response which, in turn, informed the commitments of the first budget to follow the declaration of the climate emergency. The Scrutiny Review Group has identified a number of recommendations. Work is ongoing to address the causes of the 99% of emissions in our city. To the greatest extent, I want the Scrutiny Review Group’s recommendations to join up with existing work-streams, so that the sustainability of those recommendations can be guaranteed.

Our intent is to produce a response to the Review Group’s recommendations by mid-November, in order that proper consideration has been given to them and that alignment of work-streams can take place.

12. From Councillor Simmons to Councillor Hayes – electric cars

Question

In a previous budget, the Greens suggested that the Council invested in the purchase of long range electric cars that could be made available to residents and community groups via existing – or new - car sharing schemes generating a reasonable financial return.

Although, this idea was

Written Response

The Greens proposed a £0.3m investment in the City’s car sharing schemes (adding 10 long distance electric vehicles) at the Budget in February 2019. The proposal was declined at the time of the Budget because the City Council works with partners to promote car sharing social enterprises in the city, in particular Co-wheels Car Club. Indeed, a few month on from the Budget, Co-Wheels Car Club announced the addition of 100% electric BMW i3 4-door hatchbacks to be based at 10 locations across the city. With a range of up to

12. From Councillor Simmons to Councillor Hayes – electric cars

rejected at the time, does the portfolio holder agree that it is now worth re-visiting given the urgent need to tackle air quality in the City as well as address the Climate Emergency?

(Note that existing car clubs are investing in electric vehicles but they still make up only a small part of the fleet).

190 miles, the BMW i3 EVs are an ideal fit for those travelling around the city and further afield.

The new EV roll out was part of the Go Ultra Low Oxford project, a government funded project run by Oxford City Council and Oxfordshire County Council to provide electric car charging points across the city which will power the vehicles. Some existing bays were switched from petrol to electric and there new on-street EV locations in Jericho and West Oxford were added.

Oxford has more shared electric vehicles per head of population than any other UK city. The roll out of 10 new car club EVs on the city's streets in 2019 meant that residents and visitors to Oxford have more opportunity to make their journeys in a zero-emission car than anywhere else in the country. This gives the Council confidence in our current approach of supporting social enterprises to do good and achieve our goals.

13. From Councillor Gant to Councillor Hayes – Westgate parking pricing

Question

There is considerable anecdotal evidence that many people choose to drive into Oxford city centre in order to park at Westgate because it is cheap, contributing to congestion in our city.

I understand that the Westgate management is required to take into account pricing at the city council's car parks in setting its own charges. A recent comparison with nearby Worcester St car park revealed that Westgate charges are significantly lower at every price-band, mostly around 2/3 of the rate charged at Worcester St, at some price-points as much as 50% lower.

Does the Cabinet member believe the Westgate centre is

Written Response

There is a mechanism for an annual review of the car park management plan within the lease to Westgate.

Officers met with Westgate Alliance to undertake this in January 2020. At that point they informed the Council that they did not intend to increase charging at that point, but did stress that they review this position on an annual basis.

The agreement with Westgate Alliance states that they must have regard to Worcester Street Car Park charges and that the Council should be consulted should they make any changes to their tariff. We do not have direct control over the charges levied but we will be meeting to discuss and review their car park management plan again in January. This review will include the tariff levels.

While there is a price differential between the two car parks on the longer stay charging, the short stay tariffs are more comparable. If a customer is to park for up to an hour during the week, the charge at Worcester Street Car Park is £1 higher than that of Westgate. The evening charging is similarly

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<p>taking city pricing into account?</p> <p>Can he itemize actions taken by the council to ensure that it is?</p>	<p>aligned with the charge for the Westgate, being 50p less than that of Worcester Street for use mid-week, and £1 less on a Saturday or Sunday.</p>
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14. From Councillor Wolff to Councillor Hayes – Car Free Day

Question	Written Response
<p>What did the Council do to celebrate world car free day (Tues 22 September) this year?</p>	<p>During the COVID-19 pandemic, there has been a need to secure safe distancing between people and therefore to support active travel, this Council has been working with the transport authority Oxfordshire County Council to ensure more parts of the city can be spared vehicle traffic for more days of the year. During this time, we have been progressing plans to enhance air quality by targeting harmful emissions from transportation—this includes the setting of a new local target for air pollution. The Communications team has been working flat out – with more than 200 press releases and over 1,000 social media posts in the past 6 months as well as films, posters, leaflets and so on. This has reduced the team’s spare capacity to do anything specifically for this awareness-raising day, although we were able to mark other awareness raising days including World Environment Day in June, World Electric Vehicle Day earlier this month, and we will be celebrating Clean Air Day in October.</p>

15. From Councillor Wolff to Councillor Hayes – George Street pedestrianisation

Question	Written Response
<p>Can the portfolio holder please give us the results from the recent public questionnaire about the pedestrianisation of George Street and inform Council about the next steps?</p>	<p>The public survey was published on 18th September 2020 and runs until 5th October 2020. The results will then need to be analysed and we will then publish the results. As such, I am not able to give you the results at this point in time.</p> <p>A similar exercise is also underway capturing feedback from adjacent businesses and stakeholders, including the bus companies and taxis.</p> <p>In terms of next steps. We will take this information, alongside costs and operational considerations, to</p>

15. From Councillor Wolff to Councillor Hayes – George Street pedestrianisation

inform a final evaluation and lessons learned report. This work will also set out how we can deliver similar projects in the future, working with the County Council and key partners, including the bus companies and taxis.

16. From Councillor Wolff to Councillor Hayes –e-scooters

Question

Given the rapid rise of e-scooters on the streets of Oxford, can the portfolio holder please inform Council of the current legal status of e-scooters and progress on the promised trials?

Written Response

Since July 2020, the legal status of privately-owned e-scooters is different from the legal status of e-scooters which are part of an approved hire scheme.

Private e-scooters cannot legally be used on the public highways. They can only be used on private land. E-scooters rented as part of an approved hire scheme can be legally used on the road.

The County Council, as the highways authority, is undertaking a procurement exercise for an approved e-scooter hire operator as part of the process mandated by Department for Transport. The City Council is a key stakeholder in this trial, for example we hosted the County Council and their preferred operator at a session of the inclusive transport and movement focus group. However, the City Council has no formal role in the licensing of the scheme. The County Council will communicate the outcome of the procurement exercise and nature of the proposed trial in due course.

17. From Councillor Wade to Councillor Hayes – Aristotle Bridge repairs

Question

Could the Cabinet Member confirm that discussions are underway with Network Rail about urgent remedial work to the ramp from Aristotle bridge into Port Meadow, where the underpinning shale structure is collapsing?

Written Response

This is a County Council matter, as the highways authority. A similar question was raised at the County Council's 17 September 2020 meeting "Delegated Decisions by Cabinet Member for Environment". Cllr Constance's response was an inspection will be carried out and County will liaise with Network Rail as appropriate.

18. From Councillor Wade to Councillor Linda Smith – Signs in Cutteslowe Park

Question

Could the Cabinet Member advise where negotiations have reached for the provision and placing of signs for the Charterville Horticultural Therapy Nursery and Garden Centre in Cutteslowe Park?

Written Response

We are looking at installing signposts by the end of the financial year which have not been historically replaced. This is to help guide visitors to points of interest within the park.

19. From Councillor Simmons to Councillor Linda Smith – Tree planting activity

Question

Am I correct in understanding that the Council has paused its tree planting efforts including its work with community groups due, apparently, to coronavirus restrictions?

Given the importance of tree-planting, and the fact that this outdoor activity can be conducted by small groups that are socially distanced, would the portfolio agree to re-consider this decision?

Written Response

Tree planting has not been paused we are looking to plant over 100 trees this year during November. Maintenance to the existing community tree planting projects (Sunnymead, Croft Road and Rose Hill) went ahead during the summer.

We are planning on carrying out additional planting at King George's Meadow and potentially Court Place Farm. This is all subject to COVID guidelines on social distancing.

20. From Councillor Goddard to Councillor Linda Smith – Verge cutting

Question

Given that one consolation during full lockdown was the degree to which grass verges in the city -- an important habitat for wild flowers, insects, and other wildlife -- thrived, does the cabinet member agree that a light-touch approach to cutting back verges is to be preferred and should be the city's policy from now on?

Written Response

Verge cutting was indeed significantly reduced at the outset of lockdown and has gradually returned to normal service levels. I've been working with officers from the council and ODS over the past few months to examine possible changes to our grass cutting policies for both verges and designated areas within parks which would have a positive impact on biodiversity.

I hope that these proposals will be brought forward in the forthcoming budget cycle.

21. From Councillor Wade to Councillor Linda Smith – Cutteslowe Park cricket nets

Question

Could the Cabinet Member advise whether the City Council is making a contribution and, if so, how much to the cost of cricket nets at Cutteslowe Park?
What is Sport England's contribution?

Written Response

The Council have supported Wolvercote Cricket Club in developing a project to deliver new cricket nets at Cutteslowe park to support the growth and development of Cricket at the site.

As land owner for the site we have supported the clubs application to Sport England for funding of £20,000 towards the project with the remaining costs being funded through the clubs fund raising. The project has no cost to the Council but will be a significant improvement in the sporting facilities at the site.

We have supported initial consultation on the location of the new facilities in conjunction with the club, local members and key stakeholders for the park. The club are anticipating putting forward a planning application within the next two weeks.

22. From Councillor Wade to Councillor Linda Smith – Port Meadow clean up costs

Question

Could the Cabinet Member advise what additional costs have been incurred in clearing rubbish and for other management duties at Port Meadow from the Easter weekend: 11 April 2020 to the present date?

Written Response

Approximately £3000 of additional costs have been incurred mostly associated with additional overtime and additional waste containers and their servicing. Further resources have been provided without additional cost through the redirection of staff from within the service onto Port Meadow. Some staff also volunteered to work additional hours during the weekend to monitor the situation and I'd like to thank them on behalf of the council for their hard work and commitment to keeping Port Meadow beautiful for us all to enjoy.

23. From Councillor Henwood to Councillor Hollingsworth – Carbon neutral development

Question

The shadow chancellor recently announced that in the case of any new housing developments the Labour party would not build new developments contributing to an increase in carbon.

Will the local Labour leadership take a carbon neutral approach when planning new developments?

Written Response

As the councillor has been unable to provide a reference for this ‘announcement’ beyond saying it was ‘on an interview on the TV’ it has proved difficult to clarify to what exactly the question refers. The Shadow Chancellor has made a number of announcements on the need for Government policy to improve carbon standards, and for any Government policy or programme to be clear about whether it contributes to increasing or reducing the level of carbon emissions overall. I am sure that everyone would agree that it is imperative that the Government does exactly that, and prioritises investment in transforming the entire economy to one that reflects the urgent necessity to reduce carbon emissions from all sources.

The City Council has already committed to policies in its Local Plan and in the business plan for Oxford City Homes that go considerably beyond national standard for minimising carbon in developments, and aims to continue to do so while balancing the needs for providing desperately needed social and affordable housing.

24. From Councillor Henwood to Councillor Hollingsworth – Carbon neutral evidence

Question

When announcing low-carbon schemes such as new developments, charging points, will these provide evidence that the scheme is indeed low-carbon and provide evidence to justify the statement?

Written Response

Whenever the Council issues a statement about anything, included low-carbon schemes, the details are carefully checked by both the relevant departmental officers and the press team for accuracy. To suggest otherwise is to impugn their professionalism and integrity.

For new build developments the Local Plan sets out our aspirations in Oxford and evidence is required throughout the planning process. Planners work with specialist advisors to determine whether the evidence base meets the criteria. If the Councillor

24. From Councillor Henwood to Councillor Hollingsworth – Carbon neutral evidence	
	has any concerns about a specific statement, it would be helpful if he were to raise that with the appropriate officers.

25. From Councillor Henwood to Councillor Hollingsworth – Littlemore Priory	
Question I have asked many times for the report detailing the works that have been carried out on the priory in Littlemore. When will I and other interested parties receive this report?	Written Response The councillor was sent the report on 17 September.

26. From Councillor Henwood to Councillor Hollingsworth – Rhodes statue at Oriel College	
Question Can we have an update on the Rhodes statue at Oriel college? When is the planned removal of the statue?	Written Response As part of a listed building, listed building consent is required for the removal of the statue. No listed building consent request has yet been submitted by the College to date. It was widely reported in the media that Oriel College has appointed a Panel to advise them, and that they will wait for that Panel to report before submitting the application.

27. From Councillor Simmons to Councillor Hollingsworth – Seacourt parking costs	
Question Following the recent, and repeated, cost increases the construction of the Seacourt Park and Ride extension (which, by my reckoning, now exceeds £6m), can the portfolio holder please let Council know the latest cost per parking space created and the expected payback period?	Written Response The cost per parking space created is £9,028, and the total cost is £5.376m. The payback period remains 17 years, as per the Cabinet report of 12 June 2019, which is based on the assumption that there are inflationary increases to car parking charges.

28. From Councillor Wade to Councillor Hollingsworth – Seacourt P&R completion

Question

Could the Cabinet Member give a date for completion of the Seacourt Park & Ride extension, and advise whether any further costs are anticipated beyond the additional £225,000 agreed in August?

Written Response

Completion of the car park is anticipated for 30 October 2020, and no additional costs are anticipated beyond the £220,000 agreed by Cabinet in August.

29. From Councillor Wolff to Councillor Hollingsworth – Barton house prices

Question

Does the portfolio holder agree with residents (as reported in the Oxford Mail) that £1.1m for a new house on previously Council-owned land in Barton, by a joint venture between Oxford City Council and Grosvenor is 'staggering' and will do little to help solve the City's dire housing crisis?

Written Response

The councillor appears to fundamentally misunderstand the entire basis of the Barton Park scheme, which is that it is a mixed development where the sale of some of the housing on the open market pays for the infrastructure costs of making the development possible, providing the school and other facilities that make the development a community not a dormitory, and above all pay for the costs of the social housing. Without the market housing, there would be no scheme, and no social housing. The two are inextricably linked.

The site of Barton Park was first safeguarded for future development and then allocated for development in successive Local Plans, followed by a detailed Area Action Plan which was initiated in 2009. At that time the then Homes and Communities Agency, the government body to support housing development, was heavily involved and was assumed to be a potential source of grant funding for the development of the site.

However, following the change of Government in 2010 the HCA's budget was severely reduced, and it indicated that while it remain supportive of the scheme in principle, there would be no funding support.

The first stages of the AAP were also completed by late 2010 along with work on potential development models, including initial assessments of the costs of developing the site. These **estimates** (which were heavily caveated, and which are using 2010 prices) included costs of £22.2m for infrastructure, in particular works on land remediation, drainage, the road junction at the A40, and relocation of power lines from the substation, and £14.7m for s106 requirements, including for the new primary school, off-site education contributions, and on

29. From Councillor Wolff to Councillor Hollingsworth – Barton house prices

and off-site leisure and community facilities. These enabling works would need to be largely completed, or the funds transferred to the County Council, before the development of housing on the site could be started.

At the CEB meeting on 10 November 2010 the results of this work were published in a report on the public agenda, showing that the costs of developing the site were greater than the funds that would be available. As a result the AAP removed the requirement for intermediate housing from the planning policy requirement for the site, while retaining the requirement for 40% of the site to be social housing, as elsewhere in the city.

The report also explained the development options available: as the Council was barred from borrowing within the Housing Revenue Account at that time, an 'in-house' option would have involved the Council attempting to borrow very substantial sums through the General Fund, and taking on the entire risk of the project itself. Even if had such a degree of borrowing been allowed by the then Government – which might be considered unlikely - the degree of risk to the rest of the Council's services was considered to be too great by the officers writing the report at the time.

As a result the recommendation was to proceed with a joint venture, where the risks of additional costs arising would be shared with a financing partner – in effect, in relation to this site the Council was land-rich and cash-poor, and therefore looked for a partner who was able to provide the financing in exchange for taking on the bulk of the risk of the scheme. The agreement with that partner included an objective that any return to the Council above that anticipated could, if the Council so wished, be reinvested in the provision of additional social or affordable housing.

The total costs of the infrastructure, s106 and so forth that made up the enabling works that allowed the development to go forward are between £50m and £60m, in today's prices.

However, it is crucial to understand that the basis of ANY scheme for taking Barton Park forward, once the HCA confirmed that no grant funding would be made available, was one where houses sold on the open market would generate the funds necessary to build the infrastructure, the school and community facilities. Irrespective of the model chosen, without the market housing, the scheme would not have happened.

29. From Councillor Wolff to Councillor Hollingsworth – Barton house prices

So in summary, since the sale of market housing at Barton Park has already delivered nearly 100 new council houses, along with a new school, park, leisure facilities and open space, and will deliver another nearly 300 council houses. It is simply false to suggest otherwise.

30. From Councillor Wolff to Councillor Hollingsworth – Barton Park viability and pricing**Question**

Did the viability assessment for Barton, which established the level of affordable housing on the site assume that the private homes would be on the market for the sorts of sums now being advertised?

Written Response

The viability assessment uses 2010 prices for both construction costs and potential values. The values for market housing on the site in 2010 prices are at about £250-255 per square foot, with some variance by size of dwelling, while the social housing valued at £127 per square foot. As noted in the answer to the earlier question infrastructure construction costs were higher in price terms, but in line with real prices given the rates of infrastructure price inflation over the last decade. Similarly construction costs, and house price indices for both market and social housing have changed, with market housing increasing more than social housing. While a specific index for the OX3 postcode doesn't exist estimates for Oxford show an increase in house prices over the period since 2010 of around 70%. Based on estate agents' particulars for floorspace, a typical detached house sold on the open market has a square footage valuation of around £435, which is 72.5% higher than the equivalent value in the viability assessment. Given the margins for error in any estimate, particularly one 10 years old, it would appear that the viability assessment assumptions for market housing were reasonable.

31. From Councillor Henwood to Councillor Upton – Covid19 public safety powers

Question	Written Response
<p>The Chief Executive has been given special powers to close premises that do not comply with social distancing or other emergency measures to secure public safety.</p> <p>Has the Chief Executive introduced such measures?</p>	<p>The County Council have delegated powers to the City Council to issue directions to close premises, outdoor places or events if there is a serious and imminent threat to public health. These powers have been approved and accepted by the City Council. The powers have not yet been needed by the City Council and the Director of Public Health has not requested their use.</p>

32. From Councillor Wolff to Councillor Upton – Bike thefts

Question	Written Response
<p>What is the portfolio holder doing about the recent rise in bike thefts?</p>	<p>Most crimes are rising following lockdown ending and we do recognise that Oxford has one of the highest bike theft rates in the country. That is why we set up the Bike Crime Partnership which includes the University and British Transport Police, as well as representatives from the cycling community.</p> <p>We are encouraging cycling through additional racks and are making it safer by patrols, bike registration and more CCTV.</p> <p>We encourage bike owners to mark their bikes using a national bike registration scheme.</p> <p>The Council also carries out a huge amount of work to keep abandoned/fly-parked bikes off the racks.</p> <p>The East Oxford Safer Streets project (TVP funded) will invest up to £500,000 in bike theft reduction activities in East Oxford which will have a significant impact on bike theft. I have had discussions about this with the relevant police officers.</p> <p>Finally, last week I personally cut overgrown ivy off a number of bike stands on Parks Road.</p>

33. From Councillor Wolff to Councillor Upton – Antisocial activity

Question	Written Response
<p>Where there are ongoing problems with persistent antisocial and illegal behaviour by groups of street dwellers in particular parts of the city, the various agencies (various Council departments, police, property owners) involved seem unable to deal with this effectively. Could we have an explanation for this collective failure to promptly address these concerns?</p>	<p>I wish there were quick and easy answers, but there are not. However, there is no failure here: all the agencies involved work together to deal with complex cases involving vulnerable people where there is no simple solution. Officers try to support people into accommodation or to help with addiction problems, whilst working with the Police to bring a prosecution when anti-social behaviour is impacting on local communities.</p> <p>Worried residents should always email saferoxford@oxford.gov.uk</p> <p>Concerns are triaged and the correct agencies - be that the Council's antisocial behaviour team, the police, the Council's housing team or our homeless outreach service - will be involved. It can also help us build up an evidence base if a prosecution is appropriate.</p>

Cabinet Member for Supporting Local Communities

34. From Councillor Wolff to Councillor Tidball – Racially motivated incidents

Question	Written Response
<p>The Councillor for Hinksey Park ward will be well aware of the racially-motivated attack on Wytham Street.</p> <p>I thank her and Cllr Donnelly for acting promptly.</p> <p>What actions are being taken following this incident and, more generally, are there any wider learnings or issues Councillors need to be aware of?</p>	<p>The council is absolutely committed to tackling racism in all forms in Oxford and to celebrating difference and championing diversity in our city and as such will support all those experiencing racially motivated injustice or attacks.</p> <p>In terms of the incident referred to, I can't disclose specific details at this time as there is an on-going criminal investigation but I can assure you the police are taking the matter very seriously and have taken prompt action against the individual concerned. In response to this incident, I have helped to set up a Neighbourhood Watch Scheme in the area.</p> <p>More generally, this reinforces the importance of the work we are taking</p>

34. From Councillor Wolff to Councillor Tidball – Racially motivated incidents

	<p>forward to increase trust and belonging between the Council and communities, based on inclusive values and reflecting the rich diversity in Oxford. This includes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Undertaking a strategic review of our Equality, Diversity and Inclusion strategy – this includes focus groups to understand lived experience and actions that the Council could take to promote race equality and diversity.• Launching an Anti-racism charter• Promoting and delivering a number of initiatives throughout October during Black History Month.
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Leader of the Council, Cabinet Member for Economic Development and Partnerships

35. From Councillor Simmons to Councillor Brown – Oxford University’s record number of state-educated students

Question	Written Response
<p>Will the portfolio holder join me in congratulating Oxford University for the record number of state-educated students in this year’s intake (68% of all undergraduates)</p>	<p>Yes. This improvement is very welcome and I know that the University is working to encourage increased access to young people from state schools. Nonetheless, this still shows a great over-representation of pupils from private schools who only make up 6.5% of pupils in the UK.</p> <p>More also needs to be done to ensure greater access for young people from under-represented and disadvantaged backgrounds including from state schools within our city. These issues are regularly raised in my discussions with the University and Colleges and we have encouraged them to expand their access programmes within the city. For example, we facilitated a twinning arrangement between New College and Wood Farm Primary school, a model which other colleges are now interested in replicating.</p>

36. From Councillor Henwood to Councillor Brown – BAME representation on the Cabinet

Question

When was the last time a member from the BAME community served on the executive board of the Oxford City Council?

Does the Leader agree with me that a member should serve on the executive board sooner rather than later?

Written Response

Councillor Saj Malik served on the City Executive Board in 2010/2011.

My view is that the Labour Group comprises excellent councillors who could - and many no doubt will - serve on the Cabinet. The ruling Labour Group reflects our local city quite well and I expect our Cabinet to do so in future. I have been working with colleagues in the Group to ensure this happens.

37. From Councillor Henwood to Councillor Brown – ‘thank you’ Flag

Question

As well as Key workers, groups and individuals during the pandemic have sacrificed and contributed much to our community.

Will the portfolio holder consider commissioning a ‘Thank you’ flag to be flown from the town hall?

Written Response

I will take this opportunity to again thank all the key workers in our city, retail staff, care workers, NHS workers and city council staff to name a few groups, who supported us through lockdown and continue to provide our vital services.

It is not currently possible to fly flags as it is not possible to safely access the roof.

In any case I think that the best way currently that we can thank all of those people is by following the rule of six and other national guidance and not spreading COVID-19.

On a personal level, I visited our hubs and also ODS in order to thank people for the excellent work that they do.

38. From Councillor Gant to Councillor Brown – Localis sponsorship

Question

The think tank Localis is advertising on its website a research project into potential governance models for Oxford. The project is described as “sponsored by Oxford City

Written Response

In the context of the impacts of Covid, Brexit and the government’s levelling up and devolution agendas, Localis is undertaking independent research looking at the case for place-led growth and renewal around Oxford. Part of the work will seek to understand priorities and views of local

38. From Councillor Gant to Councillor Brown – Localis sponsorship	
<p>Council”.</p> <p>Could the Cabinet Member clarify the nature of this sponsorship, and any costs to the council?</p>	<p>stakeholders and consider what more is needed from local governance to address them. This will inform our response to the forthcoming Devolution and Local Recovery White Paper. This work is also intended to complement the emerging City Economic Strategy, our work with Oxfordshire LEP and our position in the Oxford-Cambridge Arc.</p> <p>The city council is providing £25,000 in sponsorship for the work which is being funded from within existing budgets.</p> <p>http://www.localis.org.uk/research/right-level-strategic-case-city-led-growth-innovation-renewal/</p>

39. From Councillor Simmons to Councillor Brown – Local government reorganisation	
<p>Question</p> <p>At the time of writing, the Government’s Local Recovery and Devolution White Paper promised this autumn has yet to be published.</p> <p>Can the leader update Council on the likelihood that one or more authorities in the County are intending to make a submission to Government that will threaten the future of Oxford City Council, as currently constituted?</p>	<p>Written Response</p> <p>Members will be aware of the recent PwC report commissioned by the County Council and Cherwell District Council which purported to be an analysis of options for local government reform in Oxfordshire. The City Council with West Oxfordshire District Council responded to this report highlighting that it is fundamentally flawed and based on misleading and inaccurate information (you can read our response online).</p> <p>The City and other District Councils were not informed of or consulted on this work before it was commissioned and similarly have not been informed of any subsequent work underway on a submission to Government, though we are aware that other county councils in the country have been working on such submissions. This would be a question better asked of the County Council.</p>

40. From Councillor Gant to Councillor Brown – Local government reorganisation 2	
<p>Question</p> <p>The prospect of Local Government Reorganisation as part of the promised White</p>	<p>Written Response</p> <p>We do not yet know what the content of the Devolution White Paper will be, but recent statements from Ministers as reported in the Local Government trade press suggest that the White</p>

40. From Councillor Gant to Councillor Brown – Local government reorganisation 2

Paper appears to have receded. Does the Leader agree with me that this development puts the actions of the leadership of Oxfordshire County Council in an even worse light, having wasted large amounts of officer time and taxpayer money on a proposal which their party in government had no intention of pursuing, and even going as far as to seriously propose cancelling elections on the back of an initiative from this government which ended up being ditched in yet another screeching U-turn?

Paper will not impose top down local government reorganisation and that any proposals will require strong and broad support across an area.

I would agree therefore that the County Council's actions were premature and have been disruptive and wasted significant time and resources of both County council staff and of the City and Districts. I will continue to put the case that our top priority must be to focus all our efforts on supporting residents and businesses through the COVID crisis and supporting recovery of the local economy and not allow that focus to be distracted by hasty and divisive arguments about reorganisation.

I also agree with Cllr Gant that the outrageous attempt by the Leader of the County Council to abolish local elections was an anti-democratic move too far – fortunately stymied by concerted opposition. One might conclude that the Leader of the County Council had something to fear from local elections...